

YHDP Partners

*Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency*

*TCAPS Students in Transition Empowerment Program (STEP)*

*Goodwill Industries of Northern Michigan*

*Child and Family Services of Northwestern Michigan/Third Level Youth Services*

*Department of Health and Human Services*

*Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians*

*Northwestern Michigan College*

*Traverse Area District Library*

*Rotary Charities of Traverse City*

*NorthSky Nonprofit Network*

*Traverse City Housing Commission*

*Traverse Health Clinic*

*Habitat for Humanity Grand Traverse Region*

# The Northwest Michigan Plan to End Youth Homelessness: Executive Summary

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This report summarizes the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan, a coordinated community plan for working together in a different way to prevent and end youth homelessness in the region.

Annually, **500 youth** in the five-county Grand Traverse area are living with housing instability and struggle with knowing where they will sleep at night.

Youth homelessness is not always evident or obvious. It is often the youth sleeping on their friend's couch because of traumatic events in their own home. It is youth camping or sleeping in a car, because they have aged out of the foster care system. It is the youth using the baseball dugout at the local park as their bed for the night. **Youth homelessness is real, but often invisible to the community – until now.**

Youth in the area experience homelessness not because they simply do not want to live by their parents rules, but because often it is **NOT THEIR CHOICE** and/or **IT IS SAFER TO RISK BECOMING HOMELESS.**

In January 2017 the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) granted the Greater Grand Traverse Area Continuum of Care a 4-year \$1.3 million grant for a Youth Homeless Demonstration Project (YHDP). The Greater Grand Traverse Area Continuum covers Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska and Leelanau counties and is a local workgroup of the greater 10-county Northwest Continuum of Care.

A youth needs assessment and youth focus groups honed in on the reasons why area youth are homeless, where they live when not at home, and where they go for help. Additional data was collected and analyzed by key partners, which enriched the scope of the issue as well as inform potential projects.

## VISION

**TO CREATE LASTING SOLUTIONS FOR YOUTH AT RISK OF AND EXPERIENCING HOUSING INSTABILITY WITH COORDINATED COMMUNITY SUPPORTS TO END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS.**

**Youth Driven, Permanent Connections, Education/Employment, Social/Emotional Well-Being**; these are the four GUIDING PRINCIPLES that drive the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan. The Plan also proposes 11 GOALS and 15 OBJECTIVES, along with 20 ACTION STEPS all categorized within a Community Response System.

Paramount to the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan was providing and supporting a space for the youth voice and leadership. The **Foundation for Youth Advisory Board (YAB)** was created to ensure youth take the lead in creating and solidifying a doable action plan. The YHDP leadership team includes YAB members, the most critical piece needed in order to successfully address this issue – the youth voice, lived experience, and beyond – **NOTHING ABOUT THEM, WITHOUT THEM.**

## Ending Youth Homelessness

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Great strides and efforts currently happen to help reunify families and keep youth in their homes. And often these efforts are successful; thanks to the tremendous work done by community members and service providers. However, when family reunification is no longer a safe option, there needs to be alternative for these youth.

Community members and partners brought forth innovative project concepts and strategies. A Request for Innovation was disseminated far and wide throughout the community, soliciting creative solutions for tackling youth homelessness. Existing efforts to reunify youth with families will be strengthened, coupled with innovative ways to address housing instability for youth. Proposed projects were evaluated for best practices and vetted by the YAB to ensure they aligned with the Plan’s goals and objectives. Following is a listing of the projects proposed in the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan that will be developed in the next several months<sup>1</sup>:

### **Coordinated Entry System for Youth (CES-Y)**

A centralized intake system for youth to access anytime and from anywhere to connect to the right services and housing options needed for that individual youth.

### **Education-Based Outreach and Training**

Through the Northwest Michigan Students in Transition Empowerment Program (STEP) trained liaisons may provide referrals to local youth outreach works when a student has “disappeared” from school to find out what is going on with that youth and engage them back into school and connect them to the right services.

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<sup>1</sup> For detailed descriptions of each proposed project see the full Northwest Michigan Youth Plan.

### **Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)**

Local providers are currently using this data system. This project would allow providers to increase capacity for using the system and expand its use so as to measure the Plan's progress moving forward.

### **Runaway Homeless Youth (RHY) Transitional Living Program**

This federal grant would allow Child and Family Services/Third Level to employ a dedicated Case Manager for youth, connecting them with the right services, including reunification with their families.

### **Rural Drop-In Center and Employment Social Enterprise**

A rural drop-in center would serve as a safe space for youth to come, and serve as an access point for CES-Y. An array of services would also be available, including the opportunity for job training, skill building, and the chance to explore employment amongst partnered businesses.

### **Open Table**

This mentorship model is faith-based and brings government, business, non-profits and the faith community together. Each Table is composed of a group of volunteers that serve as a team of life specialists, encouragers, and advocates for a youth.

### **Matched Savings Program and Financial Counseling Services**

A tailored matched savings program for youth that encompasses individual financial counseling services. Youth would have the opportunity to save toward a purchase that address a barrier to success, such as first month's rent, security deposit, car repair, books for school, work uniforms, and more.

### **Youth Shelter Beds – Temporary Host Homes**

Developing and supporting temporary host homes as a viable option for youth in need of shelter, especially in the more rural communities. This would include funding coordination of training and placements, providing choices for youth, and to ensure the right supports and services.

### **Street Outreach and Street Medicine**

Through a partnership with local medical providers, this project would increase the screening and identification of health problems, as well as substance use and mental health issues. These services would be brought out to the youth and would help fill gaps especially in the more rural regions.

### **Community Built Shared Homes**

This unique partnership includes a small local church with vacant land, the Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District's Career Tech construction trades program, and Habitat for Humanity. By joining forces, these partners envision building and supporting a housing development for youth in the area.

### **Level Up Housing Program**

This program would provide 12 single room units in a shared housing style for youth. It would also ensure the right support services for each individual youth to prepare them for eventually living independently.

### **Rural Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) and Support Services**

This project would provide rental or leasing assistance, as well as case management supports for youth. The housing may be single-family housing for youth parents and their families, one bedroom or efficiency apartments, or a shared housing model with the necessary supports that help youth learn the skills needed to live with a roommate.

### **HUD Long Term Rapid Rehousing**

This scattered-site model would provide assistance for youth to reside in individual apartments, single room rentals, or efficiency apartments. As with the other housing options, the right supports and case management would also be provided.

To better serve youth, new approaches for using existing resources was also explored, including re-designing Pete's Place Youth Shelter, partnering with Legal Services of Northern Michigan, the SEEDS Youth Conservation Corps, and more.

To request the full Northwest Michigan Youth Plan and to learn more about how to get involved with making the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan a reality, please send an email to [yhdp.nwcoc@gmail.com](mailto:yhdp.nwcoc@gmail.com) or call (231) 714-9611.

