



# ENDING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS:

The Northwest Michigan Youth Plan

December 2017

Youth Homeless Demonstration Project

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# Section 1: Introduction

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The Northwest Youth Homeless Demonstration Project (YHDP) was launched by way of the Homeless Youth Initiative (HYI), a local sub-committee of the Greater Grand Traverse Area Continuum of Care (GGTACOC). Within this nearly 2,200 square mile geographic expanse, over 170,000 people reside. Grand Traverse is the most populated county in the region and is in the center of the service area, with Leelanau, and Antrim counties to the north and bordered by Benzie and Kalkaska to the west and east, respectively. The rural geography borders Lake Michigan and is sprinkled with natural water features. Renowned for its natural beauty, it is a travel destination and desirable second home location.

However, in this Pure Michigan idyllic location, there are hundreds of youth experiencing homelessness. The Northwest Michigan Students in Transition Empowerment Program (STEP) counted 485 homeless AND at-risk for homelessness youth during the 2015-16 school year. This means that during that school year alone nearly **500 youth** in the five-county region were living with housing instability and struggling with knowing where to sleep at night.



*Above: Site where someone had been sleeping at night. Located under a bridge on Old Mission Peninsula where some of the most expensive homes in the region are located.*

In Northwest Michigan, 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.**

The Northwest YHDP aims to bring awareness, education, and meaningful solutions to serving these invisible youth, and implementing a coordinated community plan that makes homelessness a rare brief, and non-recurring experience for the youth in our community. But this work cannot be done in traditional service agency silos; to be successful it must encompass community members, advocates, champions, and most importantly, the youth themselves – the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan incorporates their voice, their ideas, and their passion for assisting others; working together in a different way to prevent and end youth homelessness in the area.

## **Need Statement**

Addressing the needs of young people in the community has been a focal point of the GGTACOC for the past two years. The GGTACOC efforts have been focused on strengthening the HYI committee, whereas previous efforts were geared toward educating the community. During the summer of 2016 the HYI committee received a \$5,000 grant from Rotary Charities to conduct a Youth Needs Assessment, which provided a snapshot of what homelessness for young people looks like throughout the greater Grand Traverse area. The Youth Needs Assessment (see Appendix A) incorporated two separate components: focus groups comprised of youth experiencing homelessness and an online survey.

### **Youth Needs Assessment**

There were five youth focus groups conducted in four counties covered by the GGTACOC. Four of the five focus groups were completed in alternative high schools and the fifth was a group of youth participating in a summer program. Students in foster care placement, parenting youth, youth in the McKinney-Vento Students in Transition Empowerment Program (STEP) and anyone in other at-risk programs were specifically targeted to participate in the focus group. There were 36 youth who were identified and participated in the focus groups and who currently are or have experienced homelessness at some time. Youth ages ranged from 15-19 years old and consisted of an equal ratio of female to male participants. These focus groups helped determine the questions that were asked on the online survey.

The Online Youth Survey was conducted throughout the five county area of Antrim, Benzie, Kalkaska, Grand Traverse and Leelanau counties during the summer/fall of 2016. The survey was available for any youth to fill out, however, partnering agencies assisted in encouraging youth to complete it so information could be gathered. A total of 120 online surveys were completed. The age of the youth filling out the survey ranged from 14-24 years old with the majority (68%) constituting females between the ages of 18-21 years and of those, 15 identified as young parents. Most of the youth (55%) had lived with a parent in the past year but had experienced different settings including living with family members, friends, couch-surfing, staying in shelters, tents, cars and other places.

### *Where do YOU sleep at night?*

The resulting needs assessment showed that the majority of youth are doubled-up with a friend or relative, couch surfing or landing on the floor in an overcrowded situation. For those under 18 years old, this was the reality for 18% of youth and 24% for those between the ages of 18 and 24 years.

The next most common places for youth to live were in tents or a camper, in a car or abandoned building, the Goodwill Inn or Pete's Place shelter, outside, or at a host home.



**Right:** *A camper being used as shelter during the harsh winter months in Northwest Michigan, where the average temperature hovers around 20 degrees Fahrenheit.*

### *WHY are youth homeless?*

The need is great to find the entry points and identify the at-risk indicators before a youth enters homelessness. One-fifth of the respondents said they were 14 years old or younger the first time they were living by themselves without a parent or guardian and another 20% were 15 to 16 years old.

The three primary contributing factors resulting in youth experiencing homelessness were: family problems, economic factors and residential instability. Family problems broadly encompassed reasons ranging from emotional and physical abuse to youth being kicked out because of becoming pregnant. Safety was a common theme exposed. Family violence and feeling unsafe was overwhelmingly reported by youth.

Data from the Youth Needs Assessment showed that 12% of youth left because their “home was unsafe”. Another 58% were kicked out of their home while 20% experienced family violence.

Another common theme contributing to youth experiencing homelessness was poverty. Nine percent of youth reported that their “house was too crowded for me to stay” and that their “family lost their house and had to leave” (11%).

Overwhelmingly, it became clear that 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 collecting this information, it was noted that youth living in rural counties want to remain in their communities and that they want their own apartment with financial assistance or their own room with a family they already know. The Youth Needs Assessment set the stage for identifying areas of focus in the Northwest’s efforts to plan and collect further data that will support future YHDP projects.

### Local Data Findings

A data subcommittee convened to dive deeper into capturing accurate and meaningful local data on youth homelessness to shed light on the current state of youth experiencing services within the adult homeless response system. The committee identified various data streams including the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), McKinney-Vento, Runaway and Homeless Youth Crisis Services, foster care systems, and identified universal data elements to capture the various pathways for youth at risk or experiencing homelessness in our region. Questions identified include:

- How are youth moving through the system currently?
- Are they involved in more than one system?
- Are sub-populations experiencing better/worse outcomes than the general population?
- Do service transaction types correlated to destination at discharge?

### *What we know... so far*

How are homeless youth identified? The majority (46%) of youth are identified through the school system. Specifically, by the McKinney-Vento Students in Transition Empowerment Program (STEP). The next most common place where youth are identified is through Child and Family Services/Third Level, specifically via their crisis line (see Section 3 for description of Key Partners). It was discovered that youth usually stay with the same provider or initial identifying entity, after the first contact.

How do youth access the housing system for help? Youth access services for housing needs through a variety of avenues, including reaching out to such key partners as Child and Family Services/Third Level, Northwest Michigan Community Action

Agency, Goodwill Industries of Northern Michigan, STEP, and Department of Health and Human Services. A need for a coordinated entry system, specifically for the youth population and encompassing these key partners, emerged as a very real need. Only 5.6% of the youth captured in the data entered from one provider and exited from another. Without a formalized coordinated system, providers lack the ability to serve youth in a seamless manner so as to house them safely and quickly. Data analysis also showed youth at-risk for experiencing homelessness falling through the cracks without a coordinated entry system that embeds a safety net for those in emergency crisis situations.

What happens to youth that enter the system? Local data for length of stay in emergency shelters and support service transactions was analyzed. It was found that clients with positive destinations received more counseling, and that those who stayed in an adult shelter had the highest rate of negative destination. This illuminated the need to focus efforts on providing the right kinds of supports for youth and to improve or reduce the experience of youth in adult shelters. The data supports the need for safe housing choices outside adult shelters, coupled with appropriate supports such as housing based case management, life skills development training, and self-sufficiency plans.

#### *Who are the youth being served?*

An initial data analysis of the total number of people under the age of 24 served by multiple providers in our region (i.e. crisis hotline, coordinated entry intake line, temporary shelters, McKinney-Vento program) identified 836 individual youth served. Not all of these youth were experiencing homelessness, however the data did show that 5.3% identified as LGBTQ+<sup>1</sup>, 5.3% were pregnant/parenting, 49.3% were 18 years old or younger and 90.3% were from counties within GGTACOC. There are gaps in identifying out-of-school youth. This data will be used as a baseline for capturing youth at risk or experiencing homelessness in the region. The Northwest Michigan Youth Plan will address tools to better identify youth outside of our systems of care.

The data below was captured for 409 of the 836 youth in the dataset. Again, these 409 were not necessarily homeless, but were served by the various services providers described above. Of those youth who reported their racial background:

American Indian or Alaskan Native - 7.6% (31/409)

Asian - 0.7% (3/409)

Black or African American - 6.6% (27/409)

White - 84.8% (347/409)

The count of homeless youth who identify as American Indian (31 individuals) was

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<sup>1</sup> Data captured only youth under the age of 18 years for this specific data set.



compared to 2016 census projections (151 individuals) and implies that 20.5% of the American Indian population between the ages of 14 to 24 in Grand Traverse County have touched the homeless service system. This is in contrast to a total population percentage of 1.3%. This is also true for the Black and African American youth population. 20.0% have touched the system, while the demographic group makes up only 1.2% of the total population.

#### ***What we still need to find out***

A better job needs to be done of identifying youth in the more rural communities and integrating the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) with key partners. By doing so, the picture of what youth homelessness looks like will be enriched and therefore youth better served by learning about their needs and what solutions best fit those needs. The Northwest YHDP team has learned a lot about who is out there and what is needed, but more needs to be done particularly with literally homeless youth and how providers can work closer together to address their needs. This can be accomplished by incorporating strategies to improve and better connect current resources, and embedding these strategies in the Continuous Quality Improvement plan (See Section 5 Measuring Progress).

Moving forward, the data captured so far will assist in determining the areas of focus in efforts to plan, collect data and implement proposed projects. Data will be used to assist in setting metrics, determining what projects fit the need, and how projects can be part of the solution for resolving youth homelessness. Section 5: Measuring Progress describes more fully the process for how data is used and how it will continue to drive the work of the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan.

#### **Sub-Populations**

The need to improve data collection and identify strategies around serving sub-populations is evident. Over a dozen community partners and key stakeholders were tapped in order to garner a richer picture of the housing, educational, employment, and social and emotional well-being needs of particular sub-populations. This effort also served to better ascertain the current gaps in the system and identify key partners and allies. It was found that although each sub-population has unique needs that are critical to consider, there are also overarching similarities that need to be addressed to successfully provide housing for youth experiencing homelessness, such as transportation and availability of affordable, safe housing. It is also important to note that although particular housing solutions are mentioned for individual sub-populations, this is not to say such housing would not work for others. Below is a listing of each sub-population that Northwest sought to learn more about serving and the unique qualitative data gathered.

#### ***Pregnant and Parenting Youth***

The original data analysis Northwest undertook, examining data from multiple providers, elicited 376 pregnant and parenting youth in the five county region. Using

this data source, as well as information from Head Start, Early Head Start, Department of Health and Human Services, and the Doula Teen Parent program, and based on the assumption of need, there is an estimated 165 pregnant/parenting youth at-risk for homelessness and an estimated 20 experiencing homelessness.

Ten years ago, Head Start programs began to prioritize families experiencing homelessness. Since then the number of children in Head Start experiencing homelessness has nearly doubled<sup>2</sup>. In the five county Northwest region, there are 30 Early Head Start families and 48 Head Start families where one parent is between the ages of 18 and 24 years. Out of these 78 parenting youth, six are currently doubled-up and experiencing homelessness. Given that families must be below 100% of the poverty rate to be eligible for these programs, it stands to reason that the remaining 72 parenting youth are potentially at-risk for homelessness.

There are also 72 pregnant and/or parenting youth engaged with the Doula Teen Parent Program, which operates within Benzie, Grand Traverse, and Kalkaska counties. Many of these pregnant and/or parenting youth have experienced or are currently struggling with housing instability, putting them at-risk for homelessness.

No shelter option exists for parenting youth, under the age of 18 years, within the Northwest region. Youth who are parenting and involved with Child Protective Services often could be diverted from foster care and retain custody of their child if a family-style host home or licensed foster home was available to take both mother and child, providing placement for both. These ideal placements would provide a nurturing environment for the pregnant and parenting youth and incorporate a mentoring aspect as well, encouraging positive social connections. This option would avoid the removal of an infant, allowing the parenting youth and child to stay together and reduce their risk for homelessness. Although Northwest does not necessarily anticipate that most of pregnant/parenting youth will be involved with the child welfare system, such a housing solution could be incredibly useful for those who find themselves in such a situation. Additional housing options for pregnant/parenting youth need to accommodate the needs of a young family, such as places that tolerate noise from young children, located near schools and childcare options, and with easy access to public transportation.

Many pregnant and parenting youth, both at-risk and currently homeless, experience shame, low self-esteem, and become isolated from their former peer groups and natural supports. Connecting these youth with at least one positive adult, in a supportive environment is the very least needed for their social and emotional wellbeing.

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Human Services Policy, ASPE Research Brief *“Head Start Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness: Trends, Characteristics, and Program Services”* September 2017

The lack of affordable, quality childcare further complicates the issue in terms of pregnant/parenting youth pursuing their education and employment. Income support from the federal government includes requirements around work. For pregnant/parenting youth, this may serve as a barrier for completing secondary and post-secondary education. Thus pregnant/parenting youth experience less opportunity to secure meaningful employment with self-sufficient wages, placing them at-risk for homelessness. Pregnant and parenting youth, both at-risk and experiencing homelessness, need education and employment opportunities that support young families and offer a living wage.

*(Source: Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency Early Head Start and Head Start Programs, Doula Teen Parent Program Women's Resource Center, Department of Health and Human Services)*

### **LGBTQ+ Youth**

As with all youth, having a safe space is paramount for LGBTQ+ youth. In the Northwest there is a lack of inclusivity and safe spaces for LGBTQ+ youth, and many are fearful of shelters, as they have experienced harassment and abuse in the past. Housing needs for this population includes a shelter option specifically for LGBTQ+ youth, LGBTQ+ foster parents, LGBTQ+ specific drop-in centers and transitional housing, and interim, safe housing as a respite from home. Having a housing option, with counselors available that know what its like to be homeless and queer, was also expressed as a need. Discriminatory practices related to housing and employment was expressed as well. This stresses the importance of partnering with fair housing advocates and legal services, as well as providing occupational skills training and exposure to career pathways.

Inclusion. Safety. Acceptance. These themes highlight LGBTQ+ youth needs and must be at the forefront of any housing choice, intervention, services, or supports. LGBTQ+ youth need to feel part of a community, not separate from it. This is an especially difficult barrier in the most rural counties, where LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to experience feelings of isolation. LGBTQ+ youth are at higher risk for alcohol and drug abuse and it was reported more likely to engage in illegal activity in order to meet their housing and survival needs. Subsequently, some LGBTQ+ youth become involved in the justice system, resulting in even more barriers to overcome.

*(Source: Equality Michigan, Up North Pride, Polestar)*

### **Justice Involved Youth**

Youth involved with the justice system risk institutionalization, and often struggle with the inability to build trust. They often need help in healing broken relationships and lack natural supports. Additionally, they can suffer from the stigmatization that often comes along with becoming involved with the justice system. There is a lack of suitable educational programs for those youth in detention facilities, and an overall instability in their education.

In Grand Traverse County, 12 out of the 78 juveniles involved with the 13<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court Family Division struggle with housing instability. Once involved with the juvenile justice system youth typically experience a separation from their support system, gaps in their education, an increase potential for substance use/abuse and re-offending.

Educational needs are a big part of system involved youth. Most of them are behind academically and/or have missed a large amount of school. More places that allow for alternative education that will help youth catch up academically are needed.

The five county area lacks adequate mental health support for youth. Mental health can be a huge barrier for these youth. More counselors, therapists, psychologists, and psychiatrists that are skilled in working with justice involved youth are needed. More providers are needed that not just treat behaviors but help youth work through possible trauma. Also, collaboration between the court and mental health networks is needed. Sending a youth away to detention for a couple of days is not the answer when there is a clear mental health illness not being properly treated.

More short-term and long-term housing for youth, such as Pete's Place that can provide adult supervision or a residential facility for justice involved youth was identified as a need for this sub-population. Any type of housing or facility should focus on not just housing youth, but also offer treatment services, such as behavioral health, substance abuse, family counseling, and more. A dorm type living structure, or a house, that offers single room occupancy was also identified as a suitable housing option for this sub-population, in addition to affordable/low-income apartments. Overcoming such barriers as a potential criminal record, lack of independent living skills, transportation, and funding for housing will be vital for justice involved youth.

*(Source: 13<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court Family Division; Department of Health and Human Services)*

### **Youth Aging out of Foster Care**

Youth aging out of foster care are often moved to independent living placements outside of the youth's local area. This is unfortunately necessary in order to find a housing placement solution, especially in the more rural areas where often there are no housing options for youth experiencing homelessness. When this occurs youth struggle with the loss of relationships, school connections, and resources. The severing of these ties leads to even more instability for youth, resulting in that independent living placement being unsuccessful placement for that youth aging out of the foster care system.

Youth will then typically try to return to their local area. However, many lack the natural supports, social connections, and resources necessary, causing the return to be unstable. The youth often enter into leases that are unsustainable, poor

roommate situations, and/or dangerous living conditions in order to work, go to school or simply just to survive.

Lack of social connections, severed relationships and disconnect from natural supports often leads to continued housing instability, inability to attain a higher education, working at minimum wage jobs and involvement with the child welfare system in those instances when they too become parents.

DHHS has multiple resources and could help these youth sustain stable living through provision of services and resources IF more housing choices were available for independent living placements. Such placements could be affordable/low-income apartments or houses that offer single room occupancy.

Developing a community and relationships around the youth is needed for the social and emotional well-being of youth aging out of foster care. Many within this sub-population experience loss in terms of relationships, school connections, and resources. It is important to address the repeated severing of relationships that impede a youth's ability to trust and develop meaningful relationships.

*(Source: Department of Health and Human Services)*

#### ***Minors (under 18 years of age)***

Minors that are experiencing homelessness need help navigating the system. The availability and continuity of services is needed for those minors with emotional instability and/or trauma experiences especially. Educational instability is a significant barrier for these youth and the need for continuity in education is critical.

Blended families and intergenerational families may impact a minor's risk for experiencing homelessness. For instance, a blended family may come together and the older minor children (i.e. 16 or 17 years old) may experience homelessness as a result of younger children joining the household, or due to conflict with a new stepparent. Intergenerational families, living in the same household may also pose a risk for minors in terms of experiencing homelessness, when there simply may not be enough room for everyone. Minors who are also parents of young children must also be considered.

Shelter options and availability of low-income housing that will accept housing vouchers would begin to meet the need of minors. Meeting the housing, employment, and other needs of a minor's parent is critical in order to prevent youth homelessness as well as to foster family reunification whenever possible.

*(Source: Child and Family Services/Third Level Pete's Place Shelter)*

#### ***Native American Youth***

Within the five county area the population of Native American youth experiencing homelessness between the ages of 14 and 24 is over twice the national average. Through discussion with the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians

Tribal Council, it was found that this number is likely understated since culturally tribal members are much more likely to live with older relatives rather than seek out help via other avenues when experiencing homelessness.

Members of the Grand Traverse Band receive tribal dollars at the age of 18 and again at 21 years. This often slows the experience of homelessness until after the age of 24 when for many youth, that money is gone. Understanding this dynamic makes it vital to take preventive measures before the age of 24 so as to help keep Native American youth out of homelessness in the years following.

There are Tribal housing opportunities, but the need is so great that the waiting list is long. The Tribal Council made it clear that help with personal finances and understanding the importance of budgeting for large influxes of cash would make a significant impact on youth homelessness.

Significant services related to education and employment related needs are available through the Tribe. Youth are provided with a variety of career opportunities and given prioritization at any of the Tribal owned properties and businesses. There are real distrust issues by Native American youth toward the non-Native population. Special care must be taken to earn and deserve trust.

*(Source: Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians Tribal Council)*

### ***Victims of Human Trafficking***

As a region, Northwest Michigan is at the beginning stages of identifying and addressing human trafficking, which includes labor trafficking and sex trafficking. There is no formal organized entity or agency locally addressing this issue. Therefore, little is known at this time about the unique needs of this sub-population in the area.

In order to identify potential opportunities and in an effort to leverage experts in this field, Northwest YHDP leadership attended the Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence (MCEDSV) conference titled “*Combating Myths and Facing Realities in Combating Human Trafficking*” in October 2017. The state sponsored conference brought an industry expert and the head of the University of Michigan’s Human Trafficking Clinic to present on identification and advocacy surrounding human trafficking, statewide and locally.

According to the National Institute of Justice, the number of victims is unknown due to the underground nature of trafficking. In 2016, the National Human Trafficking Hotline forwarded 249 cases of human trafficking in Michigan, over to law enforcement for investigation. Since the University of Michigan Human Trafficking Clinic opened in 2009, it has served 130 victims of human trafficking, 30% of which were under the age of 18 years old. The majority of these 130 clients were female (80%) and victims of labor trafficking (55%).

The conference drew attention to the increased risk of trafficking for migrant seasonal farmworker populations, as well as hospitality and service workers from other countries; both prevalent industries within Northwest Michigan, known for both its agricultural and resort nature. Migrant farm workers and service industry workers are a uniquely invisible population, particularly in rural communities. This makes this sub-population easy to exploit since the general public does not necessarily interact or “see” them. Reaching out to such partners as the Northwest Michigan Migrant Resource Council as well as others will be the first steps in learning more about the intersection of these two sub-populations locally and establishing next steps for identifying their unique needs and developing appropriate interventions. *(Source: National Institute of Justice; Human Trafficking Clinic University of Michigan Law School; Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence)*

## Governance Structure

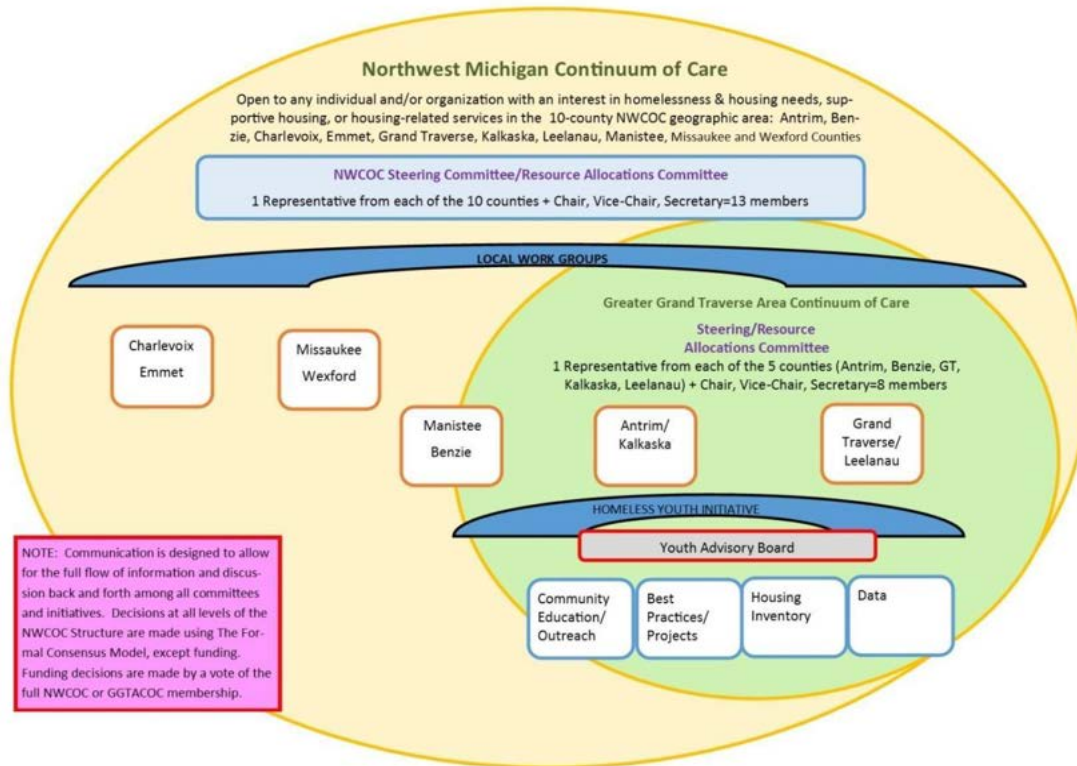
### Our Current State

The GGTACOC is part of the larger 10-county Northwest Continuum of Care (NWCOC), comprised of Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee and Wexford counties. NWCOC membership is open to any individual or organization with an interest in homelessness and housing so that anyone interested is included. There is a 13 member Steering Committee/Resource Allocation Committee made up of a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary and a representative from each of the 10 counties. The Steering Committee is responsible for conducting routine business of the NWCOC between regular meetings, setting meeting agendas, and provides communication between the Local Work Groups and full NWCOC membership.

There are five Local Work Groups within the NWCOC. Each Local Work Group is comprised of two counties. However, the GGTACOC consists of five counties that are local collaborative bodies of: Antrim-Kalkaska, Grand Traverse-Leelanau, and Benzie county only (from the Benzie-Manistee Local Work Group). The GGTACOC also has a Steering Committee/Resource Allocation Committee. The Local Work Groups ensure the best service among all geographic areas and allows for representation and development of best practices at each local level to be shared with the NWCOC membership.

The HYI operates as a subcommittee of the GGTACOC and is led by a Chair or Co-Chairs. HYI members are considered members of the larger NWCOC and as the structure is now, have no unique membership rights or responsibilities. As a result of the YHDP, the HYI created several subcommittees, one of which is the Youth Advisory Board (YAB). The subcommittees of the HYI and YHDP are the Community Outreach and Education, Housing Inventory, Best Practices, and Data subcommittee.

Below is a visual of the current structure:



## Future Structure

Currently, there is no representation of either the HYI or the YAB on the NWCOCC Steering Committee. The YHDP brought to light the need to change this so as to ensure that youth have a voice at all levels of the NWCOCC and are embedded locally in each of the Local Work Groups.

### Step One

The first recommendation is to add the Chairpersons of the HYI and YAB as members of both the NWCOCC and GGTACOC Steering Committees/Resource Allocation Committees.

One of the roles of the NWCOCC Steering Committee is to set goals for membership inclusion at Local Work Groups. Although most youth serving agencies are currently active in many of the Local Work Groups, there has not been a concerted effort to make sure these youth stakeholders attend meetings and are then part of the COC decision-making process. Anyone attending three out of the past four NWCOCC



meetings is able to vote in any financial or By-law vote. If youth advocates are not present at meetings they will not be able to vote.

### *Step Two*

Create HYI and YAB committees at each Local Work Group and add reports from each of those committees as standing agenda items at both the Local Work Group and full NWCOC level.

NWCOC is a 10 county collaboration with only five of those counties involved in YHDP. Our intention is to expand the youth involvement in all of the 10 counties by making sure there is an HYI and that youth are represented on all Local Work Groups. The flow of communication between youth, the HYI and the Local Work Groups needs to be enhanced.

### *Step Three*

Set goals for membership at Local Work Groups that includes at the very least, the following stakeholders:

- Youth Advisory Board (YAB)
- Housing Assessment and Resource Agency (HARA)/Emergency Solutions (ESG) Recipients
- Child Welfare/Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
- Local Health Agency/County Health Department
- Local Government Representative
- Local McKinney-Vento School Liaison(s)
- Local Runaway and Homeless Youth Program Recipients
- Local Colleges/Universities
- Local Advocacy Organizations (i.e. Human Services Collaborative Bodies)
- Local affordable Housing Developers
- Local Domestic Violence organizations
- Local Workforce Development agencies (Michigan Works)
- Local Legal Services organizations
- Faith-based organizations
- Philanthropic organizations

Given the geographic nature of the NWCOC, it is sometimes difficult for members to travel the distances necessary to participate in meetings. Transportation is particularly difficult for youth who are experiencing or have recently experienced homelessness. Although members often ask if they are able to call-in to meetings and use a cell phone call to do so, it is important to offer further electronic options for meeting involvement.

#### ***Step Four***

Develop a variety of electronic options for all levels of meeting attendance with the goal of inclusionary discussion and decision-making. This includes Steering Committee/Resource Allocation, Local Work Groups, and all committee meetings.

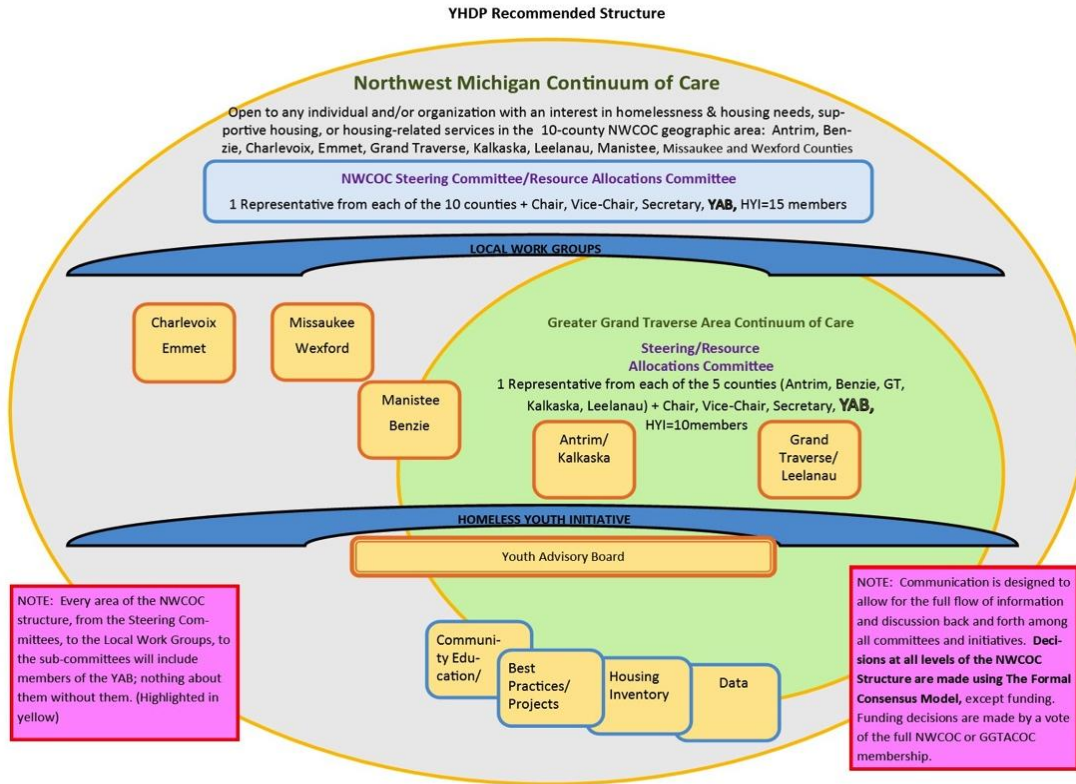
Currently, there is no emphasis on the discussion of youth homelessness in NWCOC. Although the Grand Traverse Area Local Work Group does have monthly updates from the HYI, there has been no specific youth focus. The NWCOC and other Local Work Groups have been concentrating on program changes that allow for the prioritization of those experiencing homelessness with the highest VI-SPDAT (Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool) scores and/or are chronically homeless. Now that NWCOC has a functioning housing prioritization process, it is time to put a greater emphasis on preventing homelessness in the future and working on the issues of youth homelessness.

#### ***Step Five***

Review current policy on the ranking of HUD (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) project applications to ensure the prioritization of projects serving youth.

Currently PSH (permanent supportive housing) projects serving those who are chronically homeless are prioritized for funding through HUD dollars. In the past we had no projects specifically serving the youth population. Since the GGTACOC HUD allocation will be nearly doubled through YHDP there needs to be policy in place to ensure the prioritization of all projects aimed at ending youth homelessness.

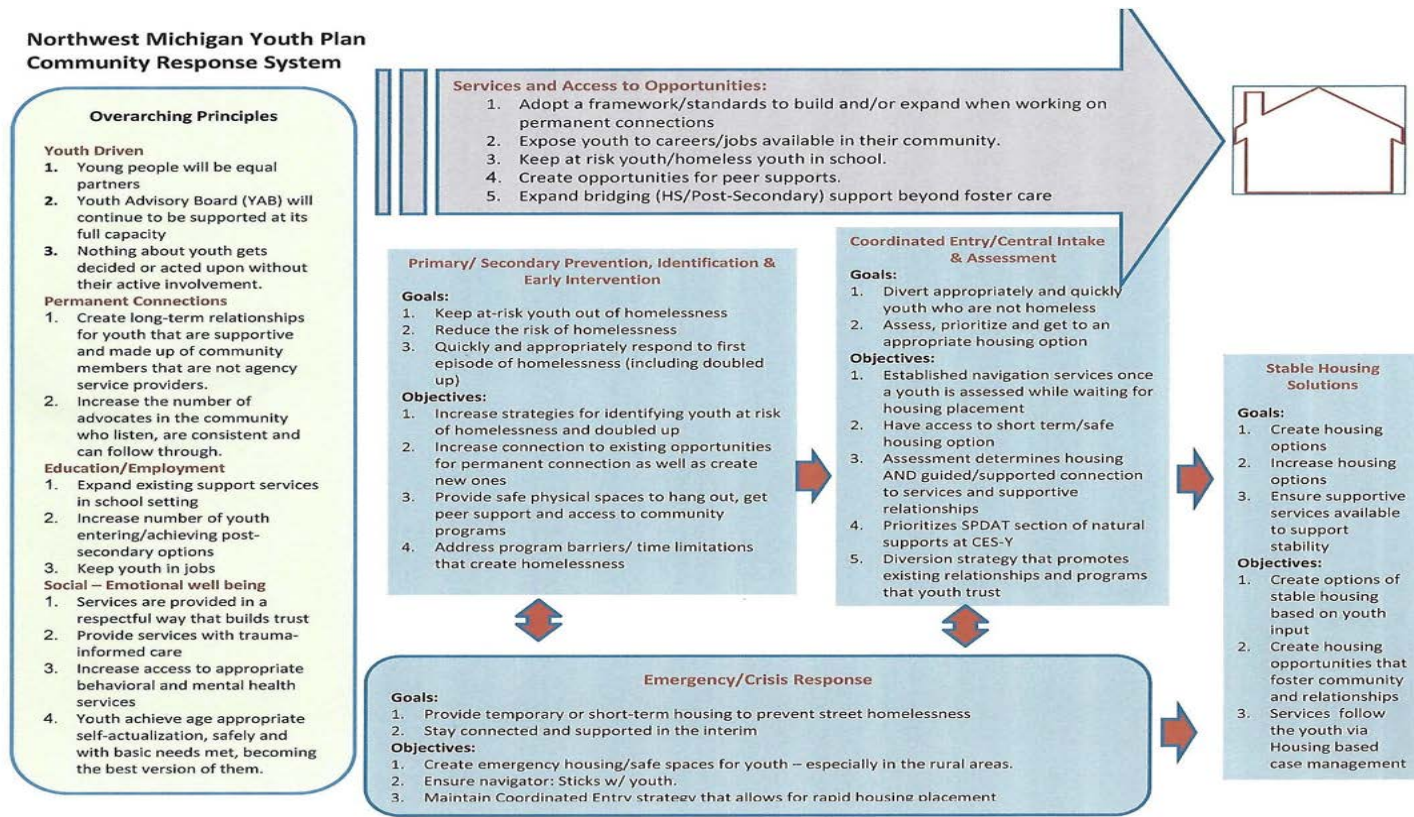
Below is a visual of the future recommended structure. For more information on the governance structure, see Appendix B.



# SECTION 2: VISION, GOALS, OBJECTIVES & ACTION PLAN

## VISION

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



## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Four Guiding Principles were identified as overarching throughout the Plan and the work associated with ending youth homelessness in Northwest Michigan. Those principles, along with the corresponding Action Plan will drive the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan and are listed below.

### **YOUTH DRIVEN**

- ❖ Young people will be equal partners.
- ❖ Youth Advisory Board (YAB) will continue to be supported at its full capacity.
- ❖ Nothing about youth gets decided or acted upon without their active involvement.

### **PERMANENT CONNECTIONS**

- ❖ Create long-term relationships for youth that are supportive and made up of community members that are not agency service providers.
- ❖ Increase the number of advocates in the community who listen, are consistent and can follow through.

### **EDUCATION/EMPLOYMENT**

- ❖ Expand existing support services in school setting.
- ❖ Increase the number of youth entering and achieving post-secondary options.
- ❖ Keep youth in jobs.

### **SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING**

- ❖ Services are provided in a respectful way that builds trust.
- ❖ Provide services with trauma-informed care.
- ❖ Increase access to appropriate behavioral and mental health services.
- ❖ Youth achieve age appropriate self-actualization, safely and with basic needs met, becoming the best version of themselves.

Guided by these principles, the following Action Plan was created for ending youth homelessness in Northwest Michigan.

## NORTHWEST MICHIGAN YHDP ACTION PLAN

The Plan proposes 11 GOALS and 15 OBJECTIVES, along with 20 ACTION STEPS. These are all categorized within specific sections of the Community Response System and described below. The continuous review, improvement and implementation of the community plan will align with the following timeline. Please note in the Action Plan additional milestones related to each goal area.

- Project development and approval by HUD by January 2018
- YHDP project implementation and monitoring. January 2018-December 2020
- Review projects based on performance measures developed and YAB monitoring reports
- Review and update plan by December 2018
- Review and update plan by December 2019
- USICH benchmark and criteria met – December 2020

### PRIMARY/SECONDARY PREVENTION – IDENTIFICATION & EARLY INTERVENTION

Goals:	Objectives:
G-1. Keep at-risk youth out of homelessness. G-2. Reduce the risk of homelessness. G-3. Quickly and appropriately respond to first episode of homelessness (including doubled up).	O-A. Increase strategies for identifying youth at risk of homelessness and doubled up. O-B. Increase connections to existing opportunities for permanent connections as well as create opportunities for new ones. O-C. Provide safe physical spaces to hang out, get peer support and access to community programs. O-D. Address program barriers and time limitations that create homelessness.
Action Steps	Dec-17    Mar-18    June-18    Sep-18    Dec-18    Mar-19    Jun-19    Sep-19    Dec-19    Mar-20    Jun-20    Sep-20
1. Provide case management that advocates for the needs of youth clients on an individual basis. G-3; O-A, O-B, O-C, O-D ACCOUNTABLE LEAD: Housing Based Case Management providers	ONGOING
2. YAB will develop best practices and standards that reflect mutual respect and trust building with youth. G-1, G-2, G-3; O-A, O-B, O-C ACCOUNTABLE LEAD: YAB	[Empty cells for tracking]
3. Increase capacity of schools as first contact for youth, especially in the rural areas G-1, G-2, G-3; O-A, O-B, O-C, O-D	[Empty cells for tracking]

ACCOUNTABLE LEAD: STEP						
4. Review current crisis services options to address high barriers and limitations to access. G-3; O-A, O-B, O-D ACCOUNTABLE LEAD: YHDP Leadership Team	ONGOING					
5. Reach out and collaborate with workforce development agencies to expose youth to available job opportunities. G-1; O-A, O-B, O-C ACCOUNTABLE LEAD: YHDP Leadership Team	ONGOING					
6. Explore partnerships with available public transportation providers and where there are none; explore opportunities to increase mobility options. G-1; O-A, O-B, O-C ACCOUNTABLE LEAD: YHDP Leadership Team	ONGOING					
7. Create mentoring programs that increase youth capacity to develop their own community connections. G-1, G-2, G-3; O-A, O-B, O-C, O-D ACCOUNTABLE LEAD: YHDP Project Team						
8. Create a street outreach model that connects youth with drop-in, medical and mental health services. G-1, G-2, G-3; O-A, O-B, O-C, O-D ACCOUNTABLE LEAD: Goodwill/Third Level						
<b>Output Measurements:</b>	<b>Outcome Measurement:</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in outreach services (street and community based locations).</li> <li>Increase in mobility and accessibility within geographic area.</li> <li>Increase in new funding sources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decrease in newly unsheltered homeless youth.</li> </ul>					

**COORDINATED ENTRY/CENTRAL INTAKE & ASSESSMENT**

<b>Goals:</b>													<b>Objectives:</b>												
G-1. Divert appropriately and quickly youth who are not homeless.						O-A. Ensure navigation services once a youth is assessed while waiting for housing placement.						O-B. Have access to short-term/safe housing options.													
G-2. Assess, prioritize and get to an appropriate housing option.						O-C. Assessment determines housing AND guided/supported connection to services and supportive relationships.						O-D. Prioritizes VI-SPDAT section of natural supports in the CES-Y.													
						O-E. Diversity strategy that promotes existing relationships and programs that youth trust.																			
<b>Action Steps</b>						<b>Dec-17</b>	<b>Mar-18</b>	<b>June-18</b>	<b>Sep-18</b>	<b>Dec-18</b>	<b>Mar-19</b>	<b>Jun-19</b>	<b>Sep-19</b>	<b>Dec-19</b>	<b>Mar-20</b>	<b>Jun-20</b>	<b>Sep-20</b>								
1. Develop a CE model and implement it so that more youth are housed quickly and appropriately G-1, G-2; O-A, O-B, O-C ACCOUNTABLE LEAD: NMCAA (supported by Goodwill, Third Level)						Implement Diversion Strategies			Assessment & Navigation Services Implemented																
2. Develop coordinated By Name List of homeless youth that matches clients to both services and housing options. G-2; O-A, O-B, O-C, O-D ACCOUNTABLE LEAD: NMCAA																									
3. Coordinate the TAY-VI SPDAT prioritization tool into the By-Name list. G-2; O-C, O-D ACCOUNTABLE LEAD: NMCAA																									
4. Develop prioritization matrix for both services and housing program placement so that those most vulnerable are given the most intense case management and housed most quickly. G-2; O-C, O-D ACCOUNTABLE LEAD: NMCAA																									
<b>Output Measurements:</b>						<b>Outcome Measurement:</b>																			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversion strategies integrated into HMIS.</li> <li>• Housing navigator positions integrated into CE process.</li> <li>• CES is operating a youth specific By Name List.</li> </ul>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced length of time youth remain homeless.</li> <li>• Increased exits to permanent housing options.</li> </ul>																			



**EMERGENCY/CRISIS RESPONSE – SAFETY NET**

<b>Goals:</b>													<b>Objectives:</b>																						
G-1. Provide temporary or short-term housing to prevent street homeless.						G-2. Stay connected and supported in the interim.						G-3. Add capacity for building out a network of resources and connections to those resources for youth.						O-A. Create emergency housing and safe spaces for youth, especially in the rural areas.						O-B. Ensure a navigator stays with the youth.						O-C. Maintain a coordinated entry strategy that allows for rapid housing placement.					
<b>Action Steps</b>						<b>Dec-17</b>	<b>Mar-18</b>	<b>June-18</b>	<b>Sep-18</b>	<b>Dec-18</b>	<b>Mar-19</b>	<b>Jun-19</b>	<b>Sep-19</b>	<b>Dec-19</b>	<b>Mar-20</b>	<b>Jun-20</b>	<b>Sep-20</b>																		
1. Provide connections to permanent housing options. G-1; O-A, O-C ACCOUNTABLE LEAD: NMCAA																																			
2. Provide dorm-like overnight options without time limitations, incorporating rules and guidelines that are age appropriate. G-1, G-3; O-A, O-C ACCOUNTABLE LEAD: YHDP Project Team																																			
3. Review current shelter restrictions to ensure warm transfers into Transitional Living Programs (TLP) and permanent housing options, incorporating rules and guidelines that are age appropriate and approved by the YAB. G-2, G-3; O-B, O-C ACCOUNTABLE LEAD: Third Level																																			
4. Provide host homes overnight options without time limitations, incorporating rules and guidelines that are age appropriate and approved by YAB. G-1, G-3; O-A, O-C ACCOUNTABLE LEAD: YHDP Project Team																																			
<b>Output Measurements:</b>						<b>Outcome Measurement:</b>																													
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in number of short-term housing options.</li> <li>• Funded housing navigator positions in place.</li> <li>• Improvements in referral network.</li> </ul>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced length of time youth remain homeless.</li> <li>• Increase exits to permanent housing options.</li> <li>• Increase in number of safe and supportive adults, youth can identify.</li> </ul>																													

STABLE HOUSING SOLUTIONS												
Goals:	Objectives:											
G-1. Create housing options. G-2. Increase access to housing options. G-3. Ensure supportive services are available to support stability.	O-A. Create options of stable housing based on youth input. O-B. Create housing opportunities that foster community and relationships. O-C. Services follow the youth via housing based case management.											
Action Steps	Dec-17	Mar-18	June-18	Sep-18	Dec-18	Mar-19	Jun-19	Sep-19	Dec-19	Mar-20	Jun-20	Sep-20
1. Provide a variety of permanent housing options that allow for housing choice and personal freedom for under and over 18 years of age, without time limitations, incorporating rules and guidelines that are age appropriate: dorm-like setting with own room; efficiency apartments; full apartments or houses, with or without roommates; provide host homes options for parenting youth in places that allow noise from kids. G-1, G-2; O-A, O-B ACCOUNTABLE LEAD: YHDP Project Team												
2. Provide personal financial and credit management education. G-3; O-C ACCOUNTABLE LEAD: NMCAA												
3. Provide training on how to live with other people, such as in a dorm setting and/or with roommates. G-3; O-B, O-C ACCOUNTABLE LEAD: Third Level (supported by Goodwill)												
4. Provide youth with personalized individual self-sustainability action plans. G-3; O-B, O-C ACCOUNTABLE LEAD: Third Level (supported by Goodwill, NMCAA)												
Output Measurements:	Outcome Measurement:											
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase capacity of housing stability based services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase exits to permanent housing options.</li> </ul>											

- Increase number of new permanent housing options.

- Reduce returns to homelessness.

- Reduce number of youth who become newly homeless.

## YOUTH VOICE AND LEADERSHIP

Ensuring youth take the lead in creating and solidifying a doable action plan is paramount. Youth have been and continue to be active in developing and vetting every step along the way. Youth are equal partners at the table in the process, creating goals, objectives, and actions steps. As the action steps and corresponding projects are rolled out, youth will be empowered to take the lead in voicing their support, concerns, ideas, and more – **NOTHING ABOUT THEM, WITHOUT THEM.**

### Foundation for Youth Advisory Board (YAB)

The YHDP leadership team includes YAB members and they are the most critical piece needed in order to successfully address this issue – the youth voice, lived experience, and beyond. The YAB was created in order to fully incorporate consistent youth voice into the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan. The McKinney-Vento District Liaison reached out to past students who had experienced unstable housing at some point in their life as a means for engaging and recruiting YAB members.

The YAB board meets every other Monday evening for two hours at a time. Structurally, it is made up of a Chairperson and four members. Job descriptions for members and a Chairperson were developed to better define the role of YAB members when reaching out to other youth (see Appendix D). There is currently discussion around whether to develop an application for interested youth in order to screen for YAB membership. Preliminary plans to consistently compensate YAB members for their time on projects, meetings, and specific skills used have been established. The current membership meets HUD's requirement of having more than three members, two-thirds of whom have experienced homelessness, and representation from youth of color, LGBTQ+, and parenting youth.

At a minimum, the YAB Chairperson is an active member of the YHDP planning team and leads YAB meetings to develop Plan strategies. Members of the YHDP leadership team attend YAB meetings in order to get direction with creating goals, objectives, and policies, as well as to ensure that the YAB members approve all parts of the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan.

Before the Northwest became an YHDP site, youth from across the region participated in focus groups from four out of the five counties. Following the focus groups was a survey that addressed questions established from the feedback of the focus groups. These initial

activities were the first steps in capturing the youth voice for the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan. The YAB was integrated at this point in the process. They too completed the survey and examined the data that came from this first round of feedback.

At the beginning stages of planning, there were many questions that the YHDP leadership team had that were then asked of the youth. This feedback was key to the formulation of what the youth viewed as useful and what they thought should be included to support youth more effectively. It took a couple of initial meetings for the YAB members to get to know each other and understand why each of them were interested and committed. They told their stories to each other, with the understanding that the space was non-judgmental and a safe circle to share as much as they felt comfortable doing so.

The beginning of the YAB meetings was a bit like the blind leading the blind. No one involved had formed a YAB before and there was some initial difficulty in explaining to youth their purpose and the value they would bring to the YHDP process. The YAB Advisor continued to teach and bring back information from the larger leadership team and to work with the YAB members on what was happening. It was eventually pointed out that there were challenges in organizing the YAB members to regularly attend the larger YHDP weekly morning meetings. It was then suggested that instead, YHDP leadership should attend the YAB meetings. This is a prime example of the learning curve many had in terms of youth engagement. Thus began the true integration of YAB into the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan.

YHDP leadership posed questions and youth discussed in a non-confrontational way the pieces that needed to be answered within the Plan. YAB members were candid, open and comfortable providing direction and perspective on all components of the Plan. Draft components of the Plan were then brought back to YAB as a checks and balance measure. The YAB members would often rearrange, rework, ask questions, and even in some cases rewrite pieces of the script in order for it to make sense and truly reflect what they had expressed.

There is nothing in the Northwest Michigan Plan that was not directly developed by and/or reviewed and approved by the YAB. The Chair as well as other members consistently attend the larger planning meetings, the technical assistance calls, and take part in various panels and presentations across the community. Each youth has a different lived experience and with that each has a unique perspective. The YAB are always discussing ways to reach out and engage other youth, especially within the more rural counties, through social media, direct invitations and remote access so that youth from miles away may be involved. They are also cognizant that their perspective isn't the only perspective of youth. The group continues to discuss ways to get more voice from within the most rural areas in the region.

The YAB also participated in the COC Point In Time (PIT) count in January 2017 and extended their understanding of rural homeless youth by putting on a Youth Connect event in August 2017 in Traverse City. The Youth Connect served as the first attempt at a youth specific PIT count in the area, but more than that it connected youth, not only to their peers but also to the agencies in the area that can be helpful. A voluntary survey was also given out and

asked such questions as “Is the place you stayed last night safe?” and other questions aimed at better identifying sub-populations, as well as to gauge interest in participating on the YAB.

The Traverse City Youth Connect was a success in reaching out to youth who have experienced homelessness in Grand Traverse County but locating and engaging youth from other counties, during the summer months, proved extremely challenging. In light of this, a local COC workgroup is planning another Youth Connect to be hosted in either Kalkaska or Antrim County.

The Kalkaska/Antrim County Youth Connect will be held in either the town of Mancelona, which is near the border and in the center of the two counties, or in the town of Kalkaska. These two locations were selected because of the site opportunities and access and ease of transportation. The event will be held sometime in January 2018 on a school day, after dismissal. Having the event on a school day will help to ensure that homeless liaisons in the school can assist in locating and transporting youth to the event. COC members are checking possible dates against school and community events so as to avoid any conflict that would impact attendance.

As with the Traverse City Youth Connect, resources that serve youth, as well as such services as haircuts, manicures and other pleasurable experiences and self-care opportunities that were found to be successful at the original event would be offered and highlighted. Give away items will be collected and outreach to local businesses for donations and food will also be done. Successes from these two Youth Connect events will be presented to the two remaining counties in the area, Leelanau and Benzie, in an effort to engage them in creating a similar event or other plan for locating and engaging the youth in those counties.

The YAB work diligently on recruitment strategies. For example, see Appendix E for a flier created by a YAB member, a recruitment tool created by youth for youth. This flier has been and will continue to be distributed at various festivals and other popular events for youth in the region. In addition to the Youth Connect events, YAB members and other YHDP leadership had a presence at the UpNorth PRIDE event in Traverse City during the summer of 2017 (see Appendix F). There youth took the opportunity to reach out to the LGBTQ+ community, bring awareness of youth homelessness and to hear the LGBTQ+ youth voice explicitly.

Opportunities to attend youth center conferences, forums, and panels are made available for YAB members, providing them with the ability to garner additional knowledge and resources, as well as share their experiences on a broader scale. The YAB Chair and HYI Chair have also co-presented to local community organizations.

Youth voice also needs to be better represented at the COC level. This will be addressed by incorporating YAB members into the overall COC Steering Committee and membership. The process and ensuring this representation is described more in Section 1 under Governance Structure.

YAB youth engagement strategies currently in place include:

- Development of Youth Advisory Board; Chairperson plus four members.
- McKinney-Vento Grant Coordinator acts as the Advisor and assists/supports with facilitation of the meetings.
- Developed job description for YAB members and Chair to better define roles when reaching out to youth.
- Incorporation of YAB members into overall COC governance structure and membership.
- Participation in COC youth PIT count.
- Youth Connect Events during summer in order to count and connect youth.
- Youth to youth outreach – word of mouth engagement and invitation.
- Attendance at youth centered conference, forums, and panels.
- Preliminary plan in place to consistently pay YAB members for their time (hourly) on projects, meetings, and other specific contributions.
- YAB participants are compensated with a stipend of \$20 for each YAB meeting in attendance. Dinner is also provided and transportation arranged as needed.

YAB youth engagement strategies to be further developed include:

- Identifying goals, objectives, and structured timelines to steer the YAB.
- Strengthening peer-to-peer approaches.
- Strengthen engagement of youth throughout the YHDP service area from each of the five counties.
- Continuing to seek funding resources for YAB members and needs of YAB.
- Participate in and create community awareness events.
- Participate in speaking opportunities for local community organizations and government.
- Develop interconnectedness with MYOI (Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative) and former foster youth.
- Implement YAB objectives once developed, within the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan.
- Continually ensure representation from special populations on YAB.
- Continually connect YAB to leadership and other professional development opportunities.

As the membership of the YAB continues to build, there is an understanding that there is a stigma attached to a young person experiencing housing instability and often living on their own. This can stand in the way of both attracting YAB members and providing services that are being developed to help. It takes a community of support and advocacy to make a significant impact in changing that stigma. To build needed support and advocacy, YAB will reach out to the general youth community in the following ways.

***Create an inventory of regional youth leadership/youth voice programs/committees.***

Local libraries, schools, churches, and community organizations currently have youth advisory groups that do everything from reviewing internal policy to making funding

decisions to providing outreach into the communities. Mapping these opportunities to reach out to youth who are already active in their communities is the first step to understanding the resources available to bring about an increased understanding of youth homelessness.

***Develop presentations to both inform and build advocacy.***

Those who have experienced it best tell the story of youth homelessness. YAB will develop presentations that both inform and provide suggestions for youth to provide community support and advocacy. YAB will reach out to identified community opportunities and provide presentations.

***Identify ways to add different perspectives.***

YAB youth are community youth. They are no different than anyone else other than the expertise they have from their lived experience of housing instability. That shared experience allows for a well-rounded perspective of youth homelessness. However, it is recognized that the perspectives of youth who have watched their journeys from the outside, or even those who have no related experience, can also contribute to understanding both the problems and solutions to youth homelessness. YAB will develop a process for bringing these outside perspectives into their decision-making including surveys and possible focus group discussions. It is important to understand the possible barriers that certain projects may face and then to identify opportunities to remove those barriers. A greater community perspective will be necessary to do that.

***Hold Youth Connect events for all youth.***

As discussed above, Youth Connect events offer a great opportunity to reach out and identify and engage youth. Events that are open to all area youth, regardless of housing status and offer connections to community resources will help develop relationships. Just hanging out together, listening to music, playing games, and sharing a meal is a way to learn more about each other in a variety of ways.



# Section 3: Community Matters

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## Partners and Community Involvement

### In The Beginning

The Homeless Youth Initiative (HYI) began as grassroots subcommittee of the Greater Grand Traverse Area Continuum of Care (GGTACOC). In early 2016, the HYI received a planning grant from Rotary Charities to start developing a community wide, systemic plan to address youth homelessness.

As a subcommittee for the GGTACOC, the HYI was critical in the COC actualizing the YHDP grant and served as the launch pad for intentional community outreach activities. The HYI provides direct review, input, and direction as project support.

The HYI community outreach group consists of members with undeniable passion for youth experiencing homelessness. These key players expended much time and energy in providing outreach about the YHDP project and the potential for making a truly meaningful impact on youth homelessness in the community. This group evolved into the Community Outreach subcommittee of the Northwest's YHDP.

The GGTACOC has worked very hard to improve collaboration across and between agencies to increase the efficient and effective use of the limited government housing funds allocated to the region. What has been missing from these efforts has been active engagement and involvement from the broader community-at-large, both in sharing the work being done and sharing input into the process.

The YHDP process has helped the GGTACOC expand the voices around the table, bringing in organizations and community members who have never been involved working towards ending homelessness. In doing so, a framework for an intentional community response to ending youth homelessness, one that capitalizes on expertise, resources and support that exist outside the traditional GGTACOC ecosystem began to be developed. This broader community response will no doubt improve efforts to combat youth homelessness, and the lessons and strengths gained from that can also be applied to the larger fight to end homelessness for all people.

### Educate. Identify. Engage.

From the very beginning of outreach activities, it became evident that there was a true lack of awareness and understanding of youth homelessness in the area. The need to **EDUCATE** was obvious. The Community Outreach subcommittee thus began their efforts by first educating individuals, collaborative bodies, and organizational staff simply about what youth homelessness looks like in Northwest Michigan and sharing the stories of youth right in their own backyard. Without this basic awareness and education, little in the way of community engagement could be accomplished.



*Left: Camper used as shelter hidden in the woods. Quite literally in the community's backyard.*

The next step taken was to **IDENTIFY** key community members and organizations that could be pivotal partners in the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan. The Community Outreach subcommittee identified individuals and groups throughout the five county area and worked tirelessly to reach out and connect them with the YHDP efforts. Members identified and connected with over 55 individuals and groups. Many of these encounters were formal in nature, such as presentations to agency staff or at Human Service Collaborative Bodies (HSCB). However, many more encounters were informal in nature, such as meeting for coffee to talk about the issues surrounding youth homelessness. These extensive informal connections demonstrated the true grassroots effort that is the cornerstone of not only the Community Outreach subcommittee, but also characteristic of the HYI work to date.

The momentum generated by the efforts of the Community Outreach subcommittee must not be lost. Looking ahead, the next steps will be to truly **ENGAGE** the identified key partners and potential stakeholders. Connecting back with those 55+ individuals, groups, and organizations so as to maintain clear communication about the issue and plans for moving forward, will begin the engagement process. Identifying and nurturing strong leadership within the Community Outreach subcommittee is paramount, so as to provide clear direction and purpose. The Community Outreach subcommittee will be charged with connecting the dots and relationships, so as to foster the strong community momentum towards actualizing the big picture – implementing solutions for preventing and ending youth homelessness.

## Community Partner Activities

To date, the intent for all community engagement activities was two fold; first, to bring awareness and shine a light on the issue of youth homelessness and second, to share the news of the YHDP award and the opportunity it presents for the community. Below is a description of the various activities the Community Outreach subcommittee executed in order to **EDUCATE**, **IDENTIFY** and **ENGAGE** community partners:

- Outreach to the media and press releases were distributed. A variety of media outlets were leveraged in order to bring awareness of youth homelessness as well as the YHDP recent project award.
- Community workshops were held in four counties in order to solicit innovative ideas in response to the Request for Innovation (RFI) as well as to build momentum for the YHDP project. Over 25 community members attended in total.
- Presentations were made at the HSCB meetings in each of the five counties. YHDP leadership presented at each of the county's HSCB, which are community collaborative bodies comprised of human service agencies, local government, school districts, and other interested community members.
- A Request for Innovation (RFI) was developed and distributed far and wide throughout the community (see Appendix C). It served as a way to seek input and ideas from providers, individuals, and government agencies on how best to provide comprehensive services to youth. As a result, ideas were solicited from potential partners and projects developed.
- YHDP leadership and YAB members hosted a booth at the PRIDE March in Traverse City. Three posters with questions to engage and bring awareness around youth homelessness are included in Appendix F.
- A TEDx pitch was made for the TEDx event in Traverse City. The YAB Chair and the YHDP Project Coordinator developed and made a pitch for the local TEDx event in Traverse City as a way of bringing awareness about youth homelessness.
- A Youth Connect event took place in August 2017. This youth engagement strategy brought awareness to the issues of youth homelessness, connected youth with available resources, and served as an attempt at a youth-specific PIT count.
- Planning for Homelessness Awareness Week (HAW) activities are to be focused on youth homelessness specifically. The HYI works closely and in conjunction with the GGACOC during HAW in order to raise awareness on youth homelessness within the community. Activities include community movies, panels, sleep outs, community signage, media coverage, email blasts, and more. There is a plan to organize a subcommittee within the HYI to manage and organize the activities across the five-county area in order to raise greater awareness and opportunity for the community to understand and engage with youth focused solutions.

## Key Partners

In addition to the Community Outreach subcommittee, key partners of the Northwest's YHDP converged to work in tandem with and support of the community's efforts. In addition to the YAB, below is a description of those key partners that comprise the YHDP planning and leadership team, as well as their level of involvement.

### *Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency (NMCAA)*

As the Housing Assessment and Resource Agency (HARA), NMCAA serves as the lead agency for the YHDP. As a member of the GGTACOC, NMCAA has actively participated in the HYI for the past 10 years. NMCAA acts as an access point for Coordinated Entry for youth aged 18-24 years in the five county area, and is the key partner developing the Northwest Michigan Coordinated Entry System for Youth (CES-Y).

They also provide Rapid Rehousing assistance and prevention services for youth over the age of 18 years. They bring expertise in working with this population as well as local landlords. Staff provides strategic planning and overall leadership for the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan. NMCAA is a key partner in the YHDP leadership team.

### *Students in Transition Empowerment Program (STEP)*

STEP is a program administered by Traverse City Area Public Schools (TCAPS), and serves the five county area, encompassing 20 local school districts. The STEP program provides free supportive, education-related services to youth, ages 3-20 years, who lack fixed, regular and adequate housing. Led by the McKinney-Vento District Liaison, STEP is integral in youth engagement and recruiting efforts.

In addition to actively participating in the GGTACOC, the Co-Chair of the HYI is held by the McKinney-Vento District Liaison/Director of STEP and has been for the past three years. The STEP Director also provides leadership for two HYI subcommittees -- the YAB and Community Outreach subcommittee. STEP is a key partner in the YHDP leadership team.

### *Goodwill Industries of Northern Michigan*

Goodwill provides a variety of programs targeted at homelessness prevention, including street outreach, emergency and transitional housing, housing support services, and veteran services. They also operate the Goodwill Inn, which provides shelter to those youth ages 18 to 24 years. These programs work together to provide a continuum of housing services as well as the tools and resources for individuals and families to return to and/or maintain independent living.

In addition to being a leader in the community for homeless and at-risk populations, the Director for Housing Services also serves as the Chair of the Northwest Continuum of Care. Goodwill is a key partner in the YHDP leadership team.

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

Third Level is a division of Child and Family Services of Northwestern Michigan. As such, they provide counseling and support to youth and their families, as well as help youth with accessing community resources. They also operate Pete's Place, which provides shelter to youth ages 14-17 years, and run a transitional living program for youth. They also offer the Free Legal Aid Clinic that can be a vital resource for youth experiencing unfair housing practices and/or other legal issues.

As a youth-specific service provider, their counselors work with youth who have threatened to or have run away, are homeless, or are experiencing conflict in their home. Third Level serves on the HYI and is a key partner in the YHDP leadership team.

### ***Department of Health and Human Services – Foster Youth Program***

As the child welfare agency, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has multiple programs that provide supports to youth up to and through their transition to adulthood. These programs include the Foster Care program, Independent Living Program, Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care program, Michigan Youth Opportunity Initiative (MYOI), as well as Education Planner services. Case Managers, Coordinators, and Education Specialists work with youth and will offer continued support from each program in coordination with the local CES-Y.

The local MDHHS Children's Services Specialist/Education Planner represents foster youth for the YHDP project and actively participates in the strategic planning process. The MDHHS is a key partner in the YHDP leadership team.

Other key partners and a description of how they have been actively involved thus far are described below.

### ***Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indian***

Two members of the YHDP leadership team requested to meet with the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians Tribal Council. There was the intention to make an ask of the Council to include the Band and its members in the overall engagement with the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan.

During the presentation the team shared with the Council members regional statistics and the outline of the YHDP and the Band being intricately involved to further engage American Indian youth with services and supports coordinated with the tribal supports to be a part of the larger community response system.

The Tribal Council appreciated the reach out to them and noted that they do have issues with young people losing their housing, but culturally either extended family members or other Band members tend to take them in during crisis. That being said, they would appreciate better connections with possible housing options and self-sufficiency and financial management services. It was a great starting conversation with an invitation to stay connected.

### ***Northwestern Michigan College***

Northwestern Michigan College is the local community college in Grand Traverse County. It brings expertise on higher education as well as shed light on the challenges at-risk youth encounter with accessing education. NMC provides housing for their students as well as supports for at-risk students in college.

NMC has been actively involved in the HYI for the past 5 years and the Director of Student Life Services serves as the Co-Chair for the HYI committee.

### ***Traverse Area District Library***

As a consistent location where youth converge, the Traverse Area District Library (TADL) is a natural fit as a partner in the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan. The Teen Services Coordinator serves on the HYI committee and has been actively engaged in YHDP strategic planning as well as with the YAB, providing space for their meetings and support for YAB members.

### ***Rotary Charities of Traverse City***

As a funder, Rotary Charities has provided financial support to the HYI for planning purpose and support for the YHDP project. They will continue to be engaged as the YHDP projects are planned and developed.

### ***NorthSky Nonprofit Network***

NorthSky provides non-profits with capacity building technical assistance, and is a program of Rotary Charities. As a partner in the YHDP project, NorthSky provides technical assistance to the HYI and the YHDP project, including system mapping and data analysis. Their partnership will help the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan with evaluation and system change strategies.

### ***Traverse City Housing Commission***

The Executive Director of the Traverse City Housing Commission (TCHC) has been an integral part of research and development of a youth group housing option. TCHC is willing to own housing, provide leasing administrative services, and property maintenance for any future developments serving youth.

### ***Traverse Health Clinic***

The Behavioral Health Manager of Traverse Health Clinic represented the Northwest YHDP at a SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) gathering in late July 2017 and participates in efforts to provide assistance to youth throughout the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan.

### ***Habitat for Humanity Grand Traverse Region***

Habitat for Humanity responded to the RFI with project ideas that included creating rental housing options for youth and providing renovation to existing buildings that are being considered for purchase to serve youth.

Efforts have been made to reach out to the following partners, however those listed below will require further engagement in the coming months. Intentional strategies for bringing

these partners to the YHDP table more fully will be developed as part of a specific community outreach strategic and education plan:

- Juvenile Justice
- Adult Corrections
- Health Care/Behavioral Health
- Housing Developers/Public Housing Authorities

## Transportation

Engaging partners from the transportation and workforce development sector in particular will be vital moving forward. In rural Northwest Michigan, reliable and timely transportation is a struggle for many community members, youth included. Currently, the STEP program employs one full-time staff person that coordinates transportation for youth connected with the school system. Third Level uses private contracts with area cab companies to assist with transportation for their youth clients. However these two assets are not nearly enough to meet the transportation needs of at-risk and/or homeless youth throughout the five counties. Two intentional strategies for engaging the transportation sector by December 2018 include:

*Explore plans to develop a pool of volunteer drivers.* Similar models of volunteer drivers have been successful with other populations, such as senior citizens. Exploring best practices for using such a model with youth will also help with engaging community members who are motivated to volunteer in helping at-risk and homeless youth; providing a ride for a youth is a very tangible thing to provide for eager community members wanting to help. Plans to identify agencies that operate successful pools of volunteer drivers and schedule to meet with them will take place by the third quarter of 2018.

*Leverage public transportation partners during Youth Connect events.* Public transportation providers have been enlisted for the Youth Connect events that have occurred in Grand Traverse County and are being planned for January or early February 2018 in Antrim and Kalkaska counties; they provide transportation for youth to attend the events. Using this opportunity to engage public transportation partners provides an opportunity to discuss the needs of youth experiencing homelessness and possible ways they can help.

## Workforce Development

Local workforce partners play a key role in addressing the employment needs of area youth, particularly those struggling with housing instability. The local Workforce Investment Board enlists the expertise of a regional advisory board, the Talent District Career Council (TDCC). The TDCC is squarely focused on coordinating the intersection between education and employment and is a subcommittee of the local Workforce Investment Board. This subcommittee is comprised of representatives from the intermediate school districts, community colleges, American Job Center (i.e. Northwest Michigan Works), adult education programs, parents, private sector employers, and more. The Northwest YHDP will approach the TDCC during the first quarter of 2018 with the aim to be placed on the next most feasible

agenda as a presenter to the TDCC. This will be the first step towards engaging the local Workforce Investment Board. Enlisting the TDCC and the Workforce Investment Board will bring prominent leaders that can foster real change related to the education and employment needs for those youth experiencing homelessness into the fold of the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan.

### **Next Steps**

Overwhelming support and energy has been generated around the prospect of preventing and addressing youth homelessness as a community issue. What next?

#### ***Step 1: Strengthen the Community Outreach subcommittee***

Strengthening the Community Outreach subcommittee will result in targeted and meaningful community and key partner involvement. Identifying strong leadership that can provide the subcommittee clear purpose and direction will strengthen the Community Outreach subcommittee. This strength will build upon the initial energy and groundswell of support actualized.

#### ***Step 2: Devise a strategic outreach and engagement plan***

Committee members will devise a strategic outreach and engagement plan, comprised of intentional action items, resulting in solid partnerships. Intentional engagement strategies will be developed with key partners in the community. Moving forward, follow-up meetings with the 55+ individuals and organizations initially contacted will be incorporated into the Community Outreach subcommittee overall strategic and engagement plan. These follow-up meetings will provide updates about the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan and anticipated next steps. The goal will be to establish a common understanding amongst all involved regarding how community members may become involved and be informed moving forward. The result of these interactions will be to move past educating and identifying partners, and towards truly engaging key partners in the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan with clearly defined roles and involvement. Also, on the horizon to be included in the outreach and engagement plan, will be established plans for presenting at local government boards and commissions.

#### ***Step 3: Doing business differently***

Preventing and ending youth homelessness can only be achieved through systemic change. And systemic change is not possible without truly involving the community as partners in a meaningful way. It has become clear that agency personnel and community members need to join their efforts in a new way. Agency staff need to trust in the expertise of community members and provide the capacity for strong leadership and support. Community members need to be supported, and have their voices heard and validated.

Ultimately, the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan will support a vibrant and visible HYI that drives authentic community involvement and support of implemented projects. Community members at all levels will know how best to get involved in the Northwest Michigan Youth



Plan and find just the right fit for their passion, interest, and level of commitment in preventing and ending youth homelessness.

# Section 4: Innovative Solutions

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The YHDP Best Practices sub-committee squarely focused on using a combination of local data, best practices and the youth voice to compliment innovative project concepts and strategies brought forth by community members. Contributors were challenged to refrain from developing project ideas based on limited information or preconceived perceptions of service gaps in the community. A key structural component to keeping contributors focused was organizing projects by intervention area (Primary/Secondary Prevention, Emergency/Crisis Response, Housing Solutions) and taking a deep dive into available local data, resources, and best practices before evaluating project ideas. This process assisted in balancing activities that affected key components of the Plan. While data/research was gathered from various sources and a Request for Innovation was circulating in the community, the YAB refined the goals and objectives for each intervention area during their bi-weekly meetings. Instead of approaching the YAB with a “We need feedback on the Plan” approach, YAB members were asked open-ended questions about each intervention area and what they would like to see in the future for that area. Adult facilitators then recorded and summarized their words for reflection, editing and final approval. Their direct words became the basis of the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan’s Goals and Objectives.

Simultaneously, community members submitted innovative project ideas to the YHDP team and were initially vetted by YHDP Team Leads for each intervention area. A Project Checklist Script and Worksheet (see Appendix G and Appendix H) was developed to provide consistency in understanding the purpose and goals of the Plan, required USICH and HUD elements of the plan, and various funding streams and programmatic elements to consider. This had added benefits of differentiating between project ideas and strategies for an improved system, and scaling project ideas appropriately based on local data and subpopulation information.

This transparent, inclusive, and information-based process set the tone for understanding what is needed to end youth homelessness. Focus was placed on identifying gaps in the system using data, researched best practice models for intervention, organizing around intervention areas and holding the youth voice at the core of the needs assessment and project identification methodology. Community members maintained engagement and thought deeply about how their ideas would meet the needs as described by youth. The process balanced innovation with meeting the Plan goals and was supported by partners, new and old, enthused to work together alongside youth to develop a cohesive and responsive Plan.

## **Request for Innovation (RFI)**

It was clear from the beginning that identifying and developing solutions for addressing youth homelessness would need to be innovative. As described in Section 3, a Request for Innovation (RFI) was developed in partnership with the YAB and in response to the Youth

Needs Assessment. The RFI was then disseminated throughout the community in an effort to seek ideas for proposed projects (see Appendix C).

The GGTACOC received more than a dozen return responses containing innovative ideas for serving youth experiencing homelessness. These ideas ranged from providing legal training to frontline workers to developing a drop-in center with a social enterprise component. The results were encouraging and evident that a groundswell of energy was emerging for creating and developing creative ideas for ending youth homelessness.

## **Proposed Projects**

As a result of the RFI process and work done by the YHDP partners and community, proposed projects for the YHDP emerged. Proposed projects were categorized by where they fell along the spectrum of intervention and align with the corresponding goals and objectives within: Primary/Secondary Prevention, Emergency Crisis/Response, and Housing Solutions. There were also key projects that intersected amongst all of these and were categorized as either a Coordination project or Outreach project. A review of available data through the coordinated entry system, the Youth Needs Assessment and an earlier data project to identify service utilizations, gaps and opportunities to develop new interventions through this process additionally took place.

YHDP leadership formed subcommittees for each area and held meetings with those agencies and community members that proposed projects. In an effort to be consistent amongst all the groups, a Project Meeting Script was created to help guide team leaders in facilitating the meetings (see Appendix G). Additionally, a tool was developed for each proposed project, to identify and ensure each project would address all the necessary HUD principals, and fit within the broader scope of the community's plan for addressing youth homelessness (see Appendix H).

## **Evaluating for Best Practices and Youth Driven Projects**

Evaluating projects using The Project Checklist allowed the YHDP leadership team to ascertain the level at which the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan addressed the HUD principles required in ending youth homelessness. This exercise made clear to YHDP leadership the areas in which more work needs to be done. For example, identifying and working to better understanding the most effective intervention strategies for special populations, such as LGBTQ+ and youth involved in the juvenile justice system. The Northwest Michigan Youth Plan will work toward this goal and keep such principles at the forefront in the coming months.

In reviewing the proposed projects, the YHDP planning and leadership teams believe that potential providers and key partners have the capacity to ensure the Northwest Michigan Plan reflects these principles. As primarily adult service providers, the GGTACOC recognize that additional training and community learning is needed around how to most effectively serve youth. The GGTACOC will lean on youth, existing youth providers, such as Third Level,

MDHHS, and others in order to build community competency around working with young people.

As the existing youth provider, youth choice is embedded in everything Third Level does. It starts with the initial interest, or not, in the voluntary programs. Youth are given the information, a description of what services would or could look like and then the choice to voluntarily opt in or not. If a youth opts out, or refuses services, they are encouraged to reconnect should they change their mind. If a youth agrees and chooses to engage in services, the processes of crisis intervention, counseling, and information and referral are led by the choices of each youth. This enhances their sense of psychological safety as they experience a complete lack of coercion. Techniques focus on the future, enhancing self-esteem, youth strengths, decision-making skills independent of trauma, and skill building. From meeting times and locations, to treatment plan goals and direction of service, youth choice is a pivotal part of the work done at Third Level, and this experience will be leveraged by the additional partners in the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan.

Vetting the proposed projects with the YAB and ensuring they align with the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan's goals and objectives were paramount to prioritizing the projects. The leadership team circled back to the Youth Needs Assessment to make sure the projects addressed the need and most importantly fit with what the youth said they needed and wanted from the community.

Youth shared that currently their experience with the community's homeless response system makes them feel as though the system fails to focus on them as people. To youth, it seems like providers start with program guidelines and then try to fit them into a particular program type. Moving forward, the YHDP leadership team will fundamentally and consciously shift its focus first and foremost on the *experience of the youth* and how they experience the help provided, and support programs and projects that embrace this philosophy.

The YAB dissected each goal area and explored what choices they would like to have with regards to each. Below is the result. A table depicting each goal area and how youth choice may be ensured. Overwhelmingly, across all of the goal areas, it was clear that there should be no time limits on services or housing.

Goal Area	Ensure YOUTH CHOICE By:
Primary/Secondary Prevention, Identification & Early Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing options to connect with homelessness system - no wrong door.</li> <li>• Allowing youth to decided NOT to move forward with resources, but continue to provide options to services upon request.</li> <li>• Providing a selection of people to be overall “point person” for housing services so that youth may choose the person they feel is the best choice for them. It doesn’t mean that they need to like everyone they work with, but there needs to be a consistent point person of choice. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Point person mentors to help work through individual needs while waiting for housing.</li> <li>○ Point person guides/doesn’t force.</li> <li>○ Point person makes housing a continual priority.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Coordinated Entry/Central Intake and Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allowing for personal diversion decisions.</li> <li>• Allowing for refusal of assessment.</li> <li>• Providing housing assistance and services even when diversion and assessment are refused.</li> </ul>
Emergency Crisis Response/Safety Net	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating process for short-term host homes that allows the youth to choose the family instead of the other way around.</li> <li>• Allowing for shelter refusal while maintaining other safety net options.</li> <li>• Providing housing assistance and services even when all types of shelter are refused.</li> </ul>
Stable Housing Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating housing options that allow for both housing program and physical space choice.</li> <li>• Continuing to provide for housing assistance and services if housing program or physical spaces are refused.</li> <li>• Ensuring that Housing Based Case Management once housed allows for guidance and isn’t force.</li> </ul>

## Project Descriptions

Below is the listing of the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan’s proposed projects. Following that is a more in-depth description of each one.

Intervention Area	Proposed PROJECTS
Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate Entry System for Youth (CES-Y)</li> <li>• YHDP Planning Grant</li> <li>• HMIS</li> </ul>
Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education-Based Outreach and Training</li> <li>• Rural Drop-In Center and Employment Social Enterprise</li> <li>• Street Outreach</li> </ul>
Primary/Secondary Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Runaway Homeless Youth Transitional Living Program</li> <li>• Open Table</li> <li>• Matched Savings Program and Financial Counseling</li> </ul>
Emergency Crisis Response/Safety Net	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Temporary Host Homes</li> </ul>
Stable Housing Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Built Shared Homes</li> <li>• Youth Rooming House</li> <li>• Rural Permanent Supportive Housing and Support Services</li> <li>• HUD Long-Term Rapid Rehousing</li> </ul>

Although projects were categorized accordingly, they are all ultimately interconnected into Northwest Michigan’s overall approach toward ending youth homelessness. They all have equal prioritization, however some projects may begin development more quickly than others based on the ease of project implementation, as well as resource availability and the unique intricacies of each individual project.

## Coordination

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

The overarching goal of the Northwest Michigan Coordinated Entry System for Youth (CES-Y) is designed to make it easier for young people who are homeless or who are at risk of becoming homeless to access the housing and resources most appropriate for them. Through a person-centered approach, the CES-Y will minimize the time and frustration young people often experience when reaching out for help.

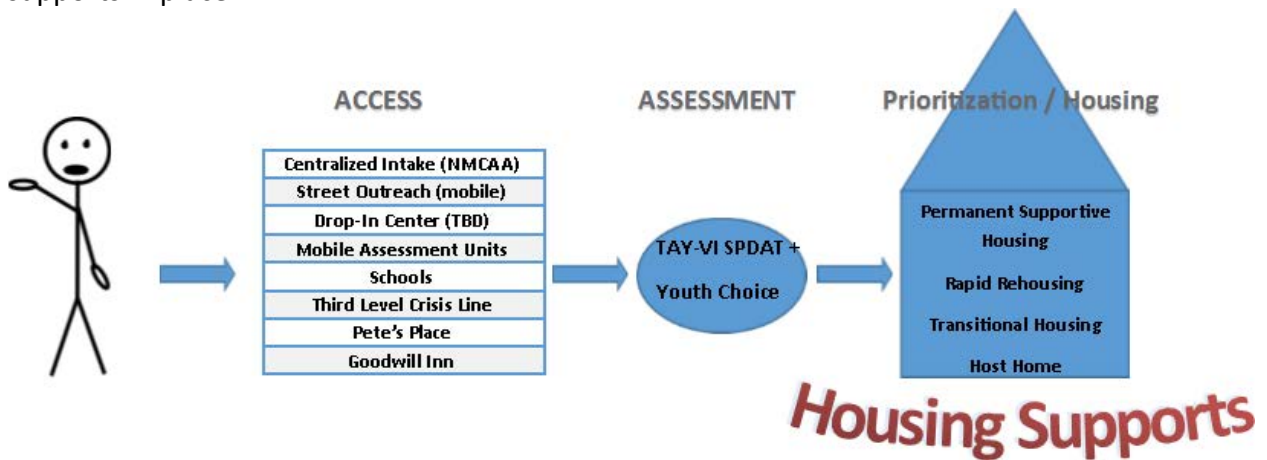
Members of the GGTACOC fundamentally believe in a housing first model and service delivery system. Providing centralized intake into the crisis response system, providers are reducing the number of times young people must re-tell their story and risk becoming re-traumatized. Regardless of how or where they present for services, the CES-Y must ensure

that the same standardized and coordinated process will take place through all access points into the system. Through a standardized assessment process, CES-Y will ensure that young people are matched appropriately with the housing option and services that are right for them. Informed also by youth choice, housing options available for young people will be coordinated and matched through the CES-Y.

The Northwest Michigan CES-Y was informed by voices from the local Youth Advisory Board (YAB) members and was also reviewed by YAB members prior to submission to HUD. System design informed by youth voice is an integral part of maintaining a person-centered approach.

Youth ages 12-24 can be served in some way by the CES-Y. Although a transitional or permanent housing matching process will occur for youth ages 18-24, linkage to support networks and emergency shelter access will be provided to youth ages 12-17. The CES-Y in Northwest Michigan will pay particular attention to the unique needs of young people who are extremely vulnerable to the effects of homelessness such as pregnant and parenting youth, child welfare involved youth, youth formerly or currently involved in the juvenile justice system, youth who identify as LGBTQ+, youth of color, runaway youth and youth with special needs or disabilities.

The CES-Y incorporates a housing first approach and has four key elements dedicated to coordinated, person centered, and standardized assessment and referral into housing that include: **ACCESS, ASSESSMENT, PRIORITIZATION** and **REFERRAL TO HOUSING** with housing supports in place.



### ACCESS

The goals of **ACCESS** focus on connecting with the CES-Y. It is important for the CES-Y to have both virtual and physical access points that are easily accessed throughout the five county region. These access points must be safe and inviting for young people and should be well advertised in order to target not only young people accessing services, but individuals coming into contact with youth who are in need of services such as service providers, schools, churches, parents, and more.

In some of the more rural counties, individuals often rely on word of mouth, and continued community collaboration and connections in order to build strong partnerships for referral. Some areas do not have centralized hubs for service delivery and will rely on non-traditional forms of outreach in order to access services.

Non-discriminatory access will be delivered at each access point to ensure that **ACCESS** is offered regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, familial status, marital status, handicap, actual or perceived sexual orientation, or gender identity. When reaching out to identified access points throughout the five county area, young people will be provided with standardized triage and assessment into the system, through referral if needed. Through some initial access points, referral can be made to a crisis response service such as shelter or directly into an appropriate housing program.

Currently, the Coordinated Access System has three points of **ACCESS**, including assessments. Youth have informed the continuum members that the current system is not working to meet their needs.

*“Not enough points of entry that focus on youth...un-realistic to call an access line to leave a message and get a call back at some time that day...nothing happens after assessment...not enough support during assessment and after to find housing...youth are not prioritized in the system as it stands.” -YAB members*

#### **Current ACCESS Points and Barriers:**

**Centralized intake:** The Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency (NMCAA) provides centralized intake services through both walk-in services, email appointment, as well as by calling a toll free number (1.844.900.0500) that operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Goodwill Inn of Northern Michigan provides the after hours services from 4:00 pm to 7:30 am. Centralized intake currently serves youth of all ages, but can only provide limited services to unaccompanied youth under the age of 18. Centralized intake covers the entire five county region via phone and is physically located in Traverse City.

Centralized intake will provide initial triage in order to assess the need of the caller and will then either continue with the standardized assessment process or will provide the caller with information and referral packets dedicated to services provided to youth. If information and referral services are determined as the appropriate intervention, the young person will also be directly referred to a youth provider such as Third Level for additional support services.

The initial triage process will also include a strategic diversion attempt in order to assist the young person with family reunification or to identify safe places to stay that do not include shelter.

**Barriers:** The current intake line does not operate as a live answering system during the day. It is staffed by two full time employees who are tasked with providing centralized intake to 10 counties (youth and adult population). The intake line does



not offer texting capability, and is a call only system where callers are asked to leave a message and receive a call back. When callers contact the intake line, a prompting system initially takes place that is not designed for youth and is not specific to needs faced by youth. The current intake staff at NMCAA is not trained to interact with youth and have not been specifically educated on the unique challenges young people face when accessing services.

**Goodwill Street Outreach:** Currently street outreach staff function as an access point for people experiencing homelessness who are living on the streets or places not meant for human habitation. Street outreach workers work to engage people and conduct the standardized assessment for referral into appropriate housing programs or options. Two full time employees operate this program right now. Street outreach serves the entire five county area.

**Barriers:** Street outreach staff cover the entire five county region and are often asked to complete tasks within the larger 10 county region as well. This results in limited staff time, extremely high workload and extensive travel time as the five counties alone cover almost 2,200 square miles.

These two outreach staff are serving both adults and youth, making it difficult to focus exclusively on youth driven models of outreach. Since outreach staff serves both adults and youth, capacity has become an issue, as the number of people served must be limited in order to provide effective services.



**Above:** Outreach workers following a path in the woods to where homeless youth use tents as shelter.



*Above: Tent being used as shelter, found in the woods by Outreach workers.*

**Emergency Shelter (ages 18+):** The Goodwill Inn of Northern Michigan not only provides emergency shelter for individuals and families experiencing homelessness, it also acts as an after-hours access point for the greater 10 county region for both adults as well as youth. Although potential shelter guests are directed to contact the centralized intake hotline prior to shelter entry in order to be provided with diversion services, as well as assessment (if necessary), the Goodwill Inn intake staff can also conduct assessment when necessary.

The Goodwill Inn serves youth over the age of 18 within the five county region and is physically located in Traverse City. The Goodwill Inn will often accept guests from other areas as well, due to shelter and housing shortages.

Safe Harbor is a seasonal shelter option for individuals over the age of 18 during winter months. The seasonal shelter is currently housed within rotating churches throughout Grand Traverse County; most located in Traverse City.

**Barriers:** Emergency shelter options for youth only exist within Grand Traverse County at this time. The location of the Safe Harbor seasonal shelter changes each week and is not easily accessible for youth in counties other than Grand Traverse.

Community members as well as YAB have informed the YHDP team that they will not often access the adult shelter, as they “don’t feel like they fit in.” Until recently, the

shelter did not operate consistent with a true “low barrier model” of service provision. As the shelter moves to adopt a low barrier model, perception and new experiences from shelter guests will inform outreach to new guests. Like NMCAA, intake staff at the Goodwill Inn have not received specific training related to the unique experiences of young people who access services.

**Other identified barriers with current Coordinated Entry System:** Youth stated they contact the Third Level 24-7 crisis line if they ever feel as though they are facing a crisis. Currently, the Third Level crisis line is not linked to the coordinated entry system nor does a homeless service model inform it. Third Level outreach services are also not fully incorporated within a homeless service model as these services are focused on many other aspects of a young person’s life, not just housing. Since two call center numbers are already established in the community and highly utilized, a priority for CES-Y will be to coordinate them effectively and efficiently.

Another barrier discovered through a deep dive into the current coordinated entry system was that there is no current follow up after diversion services are provided, at either Goodwill Inn or through the centralized intake line.

Barriers related to general access issues also include limited access to the more rural areas of the five county region. Most service providers are located in Traverse City, and are usually not equipped with mobile versions of their services in order to reach the outside areas. The school districts have also noted barriers related to capacity and access for their students. Many of the homeless liaisons within the schools are tasked with several other duties on top of identification and service provision to homeless or at-risk youth. Many districts would benefit from increased education and outreach to the schools related to the CES-Y as well as how to identify students who might be experiencing homelessness.

#### *Future CES-Y ACCESS Points and Solutions to Barriers*

**Centralized intake:** NMCAA provides centralized intake services through both walk-in services, email appointment, as well as by calling a toll free number (1.844.900.0500) that operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Goodwill Inn of Northern Michigan provides after hour services from 4:00 pm to 7:30 am.

Centralized intake will provide initial triage in order to assess the need of the caller and will then either continue with the standardized assessment process or will provide the caller with information and referral packets dedicated to youth-specific services. If information and referral services are determined as the appropriate intervention, the young person will also be directly referred to a youth provider such as Third Level for additional support services.

The initial triage process will also include a strategic diversion attempt in order to assist the young person with family reunification or to identify safe places to stay that do not include shelter. In the event that diversion is successful and the young person identifies a safe place to stay, follow up will be made via phone or in person within 48 hours of the initial call. Should problems continue to exist, the young person will be asked if they would be

interested in a referral to appropriate support services to either find a new place or work on issues allowing them to remain in their current housing.

If continuing with the standardized intake process, the caller along with the intake worker will determine if crisis or emergency response is necessary. Such services include direct referral to emergency shelter or motel, direct referral to street outreach as well as direct referral into host homes if needed. Direct referral to emergency shelter will be conducted within the Homeless Management and Information System (HMIS).

Some callers not requiring emergency intervention such as shelters will receive standardized assessment and referral into an appropriate housing program based on acuity/need. All callers ages 18-20 either at risk of homelessness or literally homeless receive a direct referral to Third Level youth services through HMIS.

Capacity building for at least one full time intake staff person (1 FTE) will be required in order to effectively serve and assess this population. An additional staff person will also be necessary in order to transfer to a live answer call line, as suggested by members of the YAB.

In addition to capacity building related to staffing, NMCAA would benefit from a further build out of the current phone system. An update would include a new prompting system for youth that has a live answer feature as well as options to leave messages. Ongoing training and education in terms of youth engagement, developmental stages, and unique barriers faced by youth attempting to access services will be made available to intake staff conducting assessments.

**Shelter:** The Goodwill Inn of Northern Michigan not only provides after hours centralized intake services, but also acts as an access point for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Standardized assessment, prioritization and referral to appropriate housing programs are provided through Goodwill Inn staff.

Low barrier models of service provision are under continued development, and will continue to be implemented throughout the shelter. Ongoing training and education will be made available to intake staff conducting assessment for youth engagement, developmental stages and unique barriers faced by youth attempting to access services. Local work groups in each county outside of Grand Traverse will address the need and issue surrounding no emergency shelter in their counties. Local work groups will decide whether or not development of seasonal shelter access will be a priority.

**Goodwill Street Outreach:** Street outreach staff functions as an access point for youth experiencing homelessness who are living on the streets or places not meant for human habitation. Street outreach workers will work to engage the youth and will conduct the standardized assessment for referral into appropriate housing programs or options. Capacity building will take place.

**Youth shelter:** Pete's Place Youth shelter will also provide standardized assessment for the youth population ages 14-17. Pete's Place is not currently an access point to the coordinated entry system, however, will become fully

integrated into the CES-Y. It serves youth across all five counties and is physically located in Grand Traverse County.

**Youth drop-in centers:** Youth drop in-centers will be identified throughout the five county area and will act as access and assessment points for youth experiencing or who are at risk of becoming homeless. Trained assessors will be dedicated to each drop-in center in order to provide diversion attempts as well as standardized assessment and referral into an appropriate housing program. Youth drop-in centers will help address barriers related to access in outer counties. Development has been proposed for Benzie, Grand Traverse and Antrim counties.

It is expected that the rural drop-in centers may be more like identified gathering areas in the communities where youth are comfortable and able to be together. Outreach services as well as standardized assessment and drop-in center assistance is planned throughout the more rural portions of the five county service area. Targeted outreach will focus on areas YAB identify, among other referral sources as places youth frequent but lack appropriate access to services. Areas that are not easily accessed by public transportation will also be targeted. This project would require community involvement to provide the physical space and the outreach team would be funded and developed through this HUD grant.

**Youth provider:** Third Level's Transitional Living Program (TLP) will also act as an access point for providing standardized assessment to young people ages 16-20. As TLP currently dedicates .5 of one FTE toward street outreach, it is imperative that the capacity of street outreach is expanded. Third Level serves all five counties with mobile case management teams and their main office in Grand Traverse County.

Third Level also operates a crisis line as described above. The next steps for the crisis line will be to fully integrate it into the CES-Y for the five county area.

**Schools:** Through school programs such as STEP, trained McKinney-Vento liaisons, in each district within the five county area, will be able to provide access through standardized assessment. In areas where capacity to conduct assessment is very limited, direct referral services to street outreach, drop-in centers or centralized intake will take place in order to link young people with housing services.

### ***Advertisement strategies***

Advertisement strategies will include paper, media and social media outreach, as well as community outreach and awareness trainings. Flyers, postcards, brochures and business cards with access numbers and locations, will be distributed to identified locations where youth congregate. Signage will be developed and displayed at youth drop-in centers, schools, social service agencies, as well as other identified places throughout the five county region.

Targeted media strategies will be developed by YHDP leadership in order to provide on-going community and area-wide outreach through local newscasts, newspaper articles, radio spots and more.

As informed by the YAB, social media blasts will be scheduled each month. Identified and willing members of both the YAB and other YHDP leadership will lead the social media blasts each month. Access points and contact information will be provided through social media sharing and re-posting (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, email and more.) Local service agencies will also be encouraged to share access information through their own social media pages.

Staff members of the HARA as well as other staff from other identified access points will work together to develop an outreach calendar each month that provides trainings and community outreach days, within each of the five counties at least one time per month. Trainings will be offered in communities through local service agencies, schools, and or other identified places where youth gather. Chairpersons of each local COC workgroup will be educated leaders within their service area and will attend trainings from the HARA or other access point staff on an ongoing basis.

Other important community stakeholders that will be targeted for community outreach/education and training include but are not limited to: law enforcement, teachers, the child welfare system, representatives from the juvenile and adult justice programs, health providers, as well as early childhood providers for pregnant and parenting youth. Trainings will walk individuals through the different access points and will provide information based on accessibility and hours of operation for each access point. Service providers will be encouraged to display information as well as to provide direct referral to an access point if needed.

## **ASSESSMENT**

**ASSESSMENT** for youth experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of becoming homeless will be standardized, uniform and consistent throughout the CES-Y in order to document the needs and preferences of those young people seeking services. Chosen assessments through the five county area include the TAY-VI SPDAT as well as the 9 Steps of Diversion. Only assessments that are driven to prevent and end homelessness will be used.

In some cases outreach works will rely on a phased approach at obtaining assessment documentation from youth, as appropriate engagement might require more than one meeting. Assessors might only collect information essential to meeting the person's needs and connecting them to the appropriate intervention.

Assessments will determine a household's current living situation, housing and service needs, risk of harm, risk of future or continued homelessness, as well as other adverse outcomes. Trained assessors will be certified as required to administer any assessment necessary. They will also be well educated in trauma informed care and motivational interviewing. Assessors will have a clear understanding not only of the rural area they are servicing, but also of the needs specific to different regions within the area. For example,

access and **ASSESSMENT** might look different in rural counties, as assessors might need to access individuals in poorly navigated areas of state forests rather than at a centralized drop in center in Traverse City.

It is important for assessment to happen in real time so as to reduce the amount of time it takes for individuals to access housing, as well as to reduce the amount of times individuals are assessed. Individuals will be educated on their right to refuse to participate in the assessment and/or the referral options provided.

**ASSESSMENT** will not only be used to gain a more comprehensive understanding of a person's housing crisis, but will also be crucial for determining project eligibility, prioritization and referral. Presumptive eligibility determinations will be made following assessment with the young person. Housing intervention and referral will always be informed by the choice of the young person. However, assessments will provide important information about the prioritization status as well as the housing intervention most appropriate for the youth in order to be successful in housing.

Assessments will be conducted within HMIS so as to improve reporting and real time data available to inform the by-name list. Diversion assessment will also be conducted and documented within the HMIS system in order to measure rate of successful diversion attempts as well as returns to homelessness. Follow up attempts 48 hours after diversion will also be tracked and documented within HMIS.

#### ***CES-Y Assessment Tools:***

**TAY-VI SPDAT:** The Transitional Aged Youth Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization and Decision Assistance Tool will be used as the assessment targeted to inform the most appropriate housing intervention for the youth being assessed. The TAY-VI SPDAT will not be the only tool in the decision making process related to housing matching for youth. Youth voice and choice will be prioritized first and foremost in choosing the housing option that best meets their needs, desires and preferences.

**9 Steps of Diversion:** The 9 Steps of Diversion is a semi-scripted process that guides individuals through an in-depth problem solving strategy, focused on identifying what is needed to keep someone out of the homeless serving system. This could include services ranging from assistance with family reunification, help with engaging newly identified support people in the young person's life, short-term financial assistance in order to stay or relocate to a safe place, and more.

Diversion attempts both successful and unsuccessful will be fully documented by assessors within HMIS in order to increase transparency among providers, as well as to decrease the amount of times a young person is diverted before accessing the homeless serving system.

Initially, training plans will need to be established for each newly established access point equipped with CES-Y Assessors, as these providers have not yet been using the TAY-VI SPDAT or the 9 Steps of Diversion. Ongoing training and coordination among assessors will need to be put into place and be administered by lead agencies with designated SPDAT trainers.

Additionally, some providers will need to be trained on real-time live entry of HMIS data. Data quality among providers within the NWCOC is critical to improving outcomes for clients.

**PRIORITIZATION**

**PRIORITIZATION** within the CES-Y will determine the order in which an individual or family enters a housing program identified to be most appropriate for their housing need. Program or project openings dedicated to youth will be managed through a prioritization and eligibility process. Individuals and/or families who have been assessed through one of the aforementioned access points will be prioritized for housing based on their need and acuity determined through assessment. In addition to assessment, youth voice and choice will be critical as the ultimate determining factor guiding housing matching for youth.

Following assessment, the youth will be placed on a by-name list dedicated to **PRIORITIZATION** and housing need and preference. Northwest Michigan has joined in the efforts of A Way Home America’s dashboard project. Through this process, a by name list will be created and managed alongside a community dashboard informed by youth placement into housing.

Active clients will be identified through the use of a by name list created and managed by NMCAA as the lead agency for CES-Y, as well as other service providers throughout the five county area. Active clients will be assigned a housing navigator when going through coordinated entry at any given access point. Navigators might be street outreach workers, mobile assessment team members, TLP Third Level staff, shelter staff and/or homeless liaisons within the school system. Housing navigation for youth will consist of relationship building as it relates to engagement, obtaining necessary documentation for the housing option the youth chooses and is identified for, as well as housing matching with assistance from the local housing locator.

Currently, housing options and programming are extremely limited in the five county area of the GGTACOC (see housing inventory table below, informed by the 2017 HIC). Due to the limited housing options within this service area, the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan focuses on developing housing options for youth rather than prioritizing youth over the adults in the adult serving coordinated entry system.

Project Type	Total Inventory (beds)	Total Inventory dedicated to youth
Permanent Supportive Housing	309 *189 MSHDA Housing Choice Vouchers not counted in 309	0 0 MSHDA and 0 PHA Housing Choice Vouchers are dedicated to youth
Rapid Rehousing	19	0
Transitional Housing	24	9 TOTAL
Emergency Shelter	182	5 dedicated to youth, non-residential at



		Pete's Place Shelter 4 dedicated to ages 12-17
Host Homes for youth	2-3 (availability is not consistent)	All are dedicated to youth

**REFERRAL**

Through HMIS, direct linkage to case management will occur with minimal lag time. Housing navigators will be linked with a young person immediately following assessment through the CES-Y. Housing navigation will occur parallel to identification and housing placement.

This system will not wait until the young person gets into housing to connect them to supports. Support connection will occur immediately following assessment through the CES-Y. Assessors stay connected with the young person until they are housed and ideally following placement, as determined by the youth. This process was informed by youth voice, as relationship and trust building are often difficult for young people.

**Housing options might fail young people, but young people do not fail housing options.** Needs often need to be assessed on a continuum, potentially while the young person is still searching for housing, or even after becoming housed. A young person's developmental journey and choices are critical when matching them with appropriate housing options. Housing matching and prioritization will also include the eventual seamless transition to another system or type of service provision based on the needs and choice of the young person.

No matter the housing intervention chosen by the youth, housing supports will be offered and encouraged. Service providers throughout the GGTACOC talk about housing supports in a way that encourages all tenants of housing projects to be engaged with housing support staff. Talking about supports as supports that come with housing and not housing that comes with supports encourages longer term housing stability. The level of support the young person is offered will be dependent on their choice, individual needs, housing intervention type offered, as well as a full SPDAT assessment on areas of need related to housing.

The CES-Y is prioritized as one of the first projects slated for development and NMCAA will serve as the host organization. HUD eligible populations to be targeted include literally homeless, imminent risk, at-risk, and fleeing domestic violence. Those that are defined as literally homeless will be prioritized within the CES-Y. This project aligns with the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan's goals, specifically within the areas of Coordinated Entry, Primary/Secondary Prevention, and Emergency Crisis Response, while addressing the social and emotional well being of the youth served and supporting permanent connections.

**YHDP Planning Grant**

GGTACOC has applied for a HUD YHDP Planning Grant to support the administration needs of the YHDP. The funding will be used to support a Strategic Outreach Coordinator a Community Projects Coordinator to oversee the projects of the Northwest Michigan Youth

Plan, as well as community financial and government support. Work done this past year has been supported by grants written to Traverse City Rotary Charities and Michigan State Housing Development Authority. These grants are not renewable but have provided assistance this year. In addition, staff from many agencies and volunteers have donated hundreds of hours that will be used as HUD match monies. The GGTACOC will be initiating projects once the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan is approved by HUD so there is still a great deal of development work that needs to be complete.

The YHDP Planning grant will be used to begin new projects, implement the CES-Y and support activities, collect data and make sure that decisions are youth based and support a strong YAB in overseeing activities. Once the projects are up and running YHDP policies and procedures, data collection standards and a project evaluation process will need to be developed. Some of the preliminary work has been completed, but there is still much to be done.

The Strategic Outreach Coordinator will be making presentations to county officials, service clubs, grantees, and community members, providing an opportunity for them to become involved and take on YHDP projects as a long-term solution for youth homelessness. In addition, these contacts will generate revenue to support YHDP projects financially and to annually support the YAB. This position will also work with the Community Outreach subcommittee in developing a strategic outreach and engagement plan that will engage community members in support of the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan. The YAB will be presented with the strategic outreach and engagement plan and be involved in the implementation, hopefully benefitting from the financial support received from community members.

The Community Projects Coordinator will be working primarily with community project partners in order to make them a reality. This position will coordinate the necessary developmental and implementation pieces amongst all involved. This position will work closely with the YAB to ensure their oversight and guidance each step of the way.

This HUD YHDP planning grant will be used to maintain hours of these Coordinator positions in order to make sure that projects get up and running, the creation of policies and standards occur, set metrics standards for data collection established and to recruit and build the structure and guidance of the YAB.

All of the proposed activities will take place simultaneously; some in smaller committees and then brought to the larger group during regularly scheduled monthly YAB and YHDP meetings. These planning dollars will be used to implement the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan that the GGTACOC has developed and submitted to HUD for approval. But most importantly, to develop a youth response system throughout the area that will help respond to youth at risk and provide housing to those experiencing homelessness.

Key project development milestones include: YHDP Planning Grant submission to HUD by November 1, 2017; Community Projects Coordinator start date of October 16, 2017; and

Strategic Outreach Coordinator start date of November 1, 2017. This project will not require a waiver.

The YHDP Planning Grant will fulfill planning infrastructure needs for the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan and NMCAA will serve as the host organization. All of HUD eligible populations will be targeted as a result of this planning grant, including literally homeless, imminent risk, at-risk, fleeing domestic violence, and those homeless under other statutes.

### Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

HMIS capacity will be added to meet the increased usage and expanded Universal Data Elements as needed to measure progress of the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan's projects. The capacity will leverage existing HMIS capacity for the adult homeless response system as funded by HUD COC and MSHDA Balance of State funds for our region. The HMIS capacity, along with the dashboard being explored for YHDP will inform the overall homeless response system with timely and intentional interventions, and their success.

The HMIS project is prioritized as a one of the first projects slated for development and Goodwill Industries of Northern Michigan will serve as the host organization. It will fulfill the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) planning infrastructure needs for the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan. As such, all of HUD eligible populations will be targeted including literally homeless, imminent risk, at-risk, fleeing domestic violence, and those homeless under other statutes.

## Outreach

The need for outreach has risen as a critical need for the Northwest site. As mentioned earlier, the current capacity for outreach to those either at-risk or experiencing homelessness is at capacity and often times over-extended in terms of geographic area and staffing. Reaching out and identifying, engaging, and meeting the needs of homeless youth is a critical piece. As the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan projects began to take shape, three primary outreach projects evolved and overlapped in exciting ways. These three projects are the Education-Based Outreach and Training project, the Rural Drop-In Center and Employment Social Enterprise, and the Street Outreach project. It was found that these three outreach projects stand to have an even greater impact if developed and implemented as interconnected, opposed to being silo stand-alone endeavors. For those reasons, **Outreach** is being conceptualized as a broad, encompassing umbrella over those following three projects.

Goodwill Industries of Northern Michigan will serve as the host organization for **Outreach** projects. All of HUD eligible populations will be targeted including literally homeless, imminent risk, at-risk, fleeing domestic violence, and those homeless under other statutes. **Outreach** projects align with the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan's goals, specifically within the areas of Coordinated Entry, Primary/Secondary Prevention, Emergency Crisis Response, and Stable Housing Solutions, while addressing the social and emotional well being of the youth served and supporting permanent connections.

## Education-Based Outreach and Training

If youth are not in school, they often fall through the cracks, both in education, post-secondary planning, and employment opportunities. The purpose of the Education-Based Outreach and Training project is to go to the youth who are at-risk of and/or experiencing homelessness and have dropped out or stopped attending high school. The project would allow for an Education-Based Youth Outreach worker to go and seek the youth out if they are missing from the school system. The vision is to create a safety net that if a youth is no longer attending school, then the following outreach and engagement activities would take place: finding the youth; finding out if and how to connect the youth back to school; connect youth to the drop-in center if school is no longer a goal of the youth; and, connect the youth with the Coordinated Entry System for Youth (CES-Y) if at-risk or literally homeless.

The current street outreach in the region is as effective as it can be, given its limited capacity. Furthermore, the McKinney-Vento program currently reports the majority of youth at-risk across the region. There is a clear gap in the data that shows if a youth is not in school, it is nearly impossible to pinpoint where they are living and if they are in need of services. This project would offer the outreach needed to connect with youth while they are in school, or if they are no longer attending. The Education-Based Outreach worker can reach out to those no longer attending school, locate them and assess their immediate needs. If the youth needs to get back into school, the worker can facilitate that. If the youth need services, the worker can connect them to the local drop-in center. If they are at-risk or literally homeless, the worker can connect them to the CES-Y, emergency shelter, or toward a longer term housing solution and supports. An outreach worker that a youth knows can be a consistent and trusting adult or peer in their life and make a difference when a youth goes off the school system's radar.

Through school programs such as the Northwest Michigan Students in Transition Empowerment Program (STEP), trained McKinney-Vento liaisons will be able to provide referrals to the local Education-Based Youth Outreach workers when a student has "disappeared" from the school system. The workers would be primarily tasked with connecting with youth in order to get them enrolled back in school and remove barriers to do so. In the event where education is no longer their goal, then the worker would connect them to a certificate program, occupational skills training, employment, and/or other needs they may have. The outreach workers would be an invaluable asset and addition to the McKinney-Vento work that is already happening in the five county region. YAB members, when asked what would have been helpful to them when they were experiencing homelessness, unanimously said a drop-in center and outreach.

Youth have expressed, through focus groups, surveys and the YAB, that they want to stay in the area they call home, no matter how rural. Youth will go without services before moving to another area. Therefore, if they have lost the school connection then there needs to be an outreach safety net in place to reconnect youth into whatever services they may need. This is the basis for the Education-Based Outreach and Training project.

The street outreach model was recognized by YAB as being helpful and useful to youth, especially when they were without a place to go and did not know what to do. YAB members and other youth also identified school as a main place many feel safe coming back to in times of need, particularly if they have relationships there. YAB member overwhelmingly expressed that they felt "assisted and supported" by the McKinney-Vento Program when they were in school. They all speak of that as a "trusting, supportive, and unconditional" relationship that helped them in some way during any episodes of homelessness.

The needs of homeless youth in the outer areas may be different than those in Grand Traverse County; someone taking services to those youth in particular would prove to be beneficial. Youth choice and youth led support by the workers will be paramount. YAB will be directly involved with the evaluative processes and could eventually be trained as peer-to-peer outreach staff.

The expectation is that there will be three Education-Based Outreach staff to cover the five county GGTACOC area: one worker for Antrim and Kalkaska counties, one for Leelanau and Benzie counties, and one for Grand Traverse County. The outreach workers would provide added capacity to the already-stretched McKinney-Vento District Liaisons within each of the county's school districts.

The Education-Based Outreach and Training project stresses the importance of increasing identification of at-risk and homeless youth, both within the schools and out of school. The rural nature of the regional school system allows for very limited capacity of McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaisons, often the Liaison sharing several other roles within the district. Preliminary data shows that schools identify the majority of youth, however, there has not been an educational based access point for youth once they no longer attend school.

This educational based approach would mirror the traditional Street Outreach model but would take the established access point of the schools and offer more leverage with identifying and serving youth who have dropped from the school system. The Education-Based Outreach and Training project would offer the integration, support, and built in procedures already established within the schools. It will offer the safety net between school and housing.

The school would be the "monitor" of the youth and identify if a youth drops from attending school. The Education-Based Youth Outreach worker would have the mobility and skills to reconnect with the youth outside of the school setting and work on individual goals with the youth. They would connect the youth to a safe and familiar person for the needed connections to best prevent youth homelessness and both seek shelter and eventually house youth; acting as the mobile piece to already existing McKinney-Vento district programs.

Key project development milestones include: street outreach for youth in all areas to ensure the ability to connect youth with the drop-in center and/or the homelessness service system (Years 1 and 2); YAB will develop the Education-Based Outreach services, including the

resources that need to be delivered and how that delivery should take place (Years 1 and 4); and annual monitoring and reassessment/redesign of the outreach efforts (Years 1 and 4).

Content experts and key stakeholders to be engaged in the development and implementation of this project include: YAB; Goodwill Street Outreach program as the outreach experts; Child and Family Services/Third Level as the local youth provider; Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency as the HARA and central intake system provider; and Northwest Michigan Students in Transition Empowerment Program as the Coordinator of the McKinney-Vento programs. This project will not require a waiver.

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

To reach youth who are at-risk of and/or experiencing homelessness, service providers need to go to them and provide avenues for youth to come to the providers. YAB members, when asked what would have been helpful to them when they were experiencing homelessness, unanimously said a drop-in center and outreach. A drop-in center is a physical space that can provide comfort and connection. In urban areas, drop-in centers provide such a place for youth to just hang out and connect with community resources, and also serve as key access points into the homelessness service system.

In rural Northwest Michigan, the known numbers of unaccompanied youth and those at risk do not reflect the reality in the community. This project provides an opportunity to connect services with youth who would not otherwise be identified. It also allows for early identification of those at-risk so that services may be offered that could possibly keep them from experiencing homelessness.

The resources for youth are seldom local in the more rural counties and are therefore not sought out. Through discussion forums and surveys, youth have expressed that they want to remain in the area they call home, no matter how rural. They will go without resources before they move to another area. Therefore, it is imperative that services go to them. This is the basis for the Rural Drop-In Center project.

Rural Drop-In Centers will look a little different in Grand Traverse County compared to the other four more rural counties within the GGTACOC. In Grand Traverse County, the regions most populated, a rural drop-in center will involve a dedicated location that will be in working order with the goal of having a safe space for young people. It will serve as an access point for the CES-Y and will offer an array of services, as well as offer an employment social enterprise opportunity. Based on YAB input, the drop-in center may offer 24-hour service as well.

Unique to this project's design in Grand Traverse County is a business component integrated into the overall drop-in center model. This would include job training, skill building, and coordination and opportunity for young people to become employed within the local community as well as opportunities to partner with other small businesses. A local business stands ready to develop this project further and envisions a large multipurpose space that provides supports for at-risk youth through mentorship programs, community outreach, and skill building programs by offering a barrier free community gathering center for all youth.

In the more rural counties of Antrim, Benzie, Kalkaska and Leelanau, youth drop-in centers, will be identified and act as access and assessment points for youth experiencing or who are at risk of becoming homeless. This project will provide outreach services for areas that currently do not have consistent staffing from outreach providers. Drop-in centers fit the need of the rural population, as each outlying community can be as many as 45 miles from Traverse City, where many services are located. Transportation to service providers is often an issue in these communities and having a drop-in center that is local and offers outreach services would be immensely beneficial.



**Left:** Youth in the most rural communities must travel several miles to currently access services. The lack of reliable transportation makes it even more difficult.

The vision is to connect with existing spaces in communities that are already attractive to rural youth: coffee shops, schools, libraries, parks, and possibly even church basements. The drop-in centers would be available for ALL area youth, with homelessness outreach and engagement being an integral part of programming during specific days and hours of the week.

Trained assessors will be dedicated to each drop-in center in order to provide diversion attempts, as well as standardized assessment and referral into an appropriate housing program of the youth's choice. In this way, intake and assessment can be provided on-site at the drop-in centers rather than in school or through a phone system intake line. Services in the outlying areas would be enhanced with the implementation of rural drop-in centers and identification of at-risk and homeless youth is also likely to increase by having this type of local effort.

This project originated with YAB members. The drop-in center idea in the more rural counties was first proposed as a truck or van style mobile drop-in. As this idea evolved and YAB evaluated it further, they came to the strong belief that the idea of a truly mobile outreach van or truck would single out youth who approached the vehicle for services, calling it the “homeless van”. The YAB thought a less stigmatizing experience would be to have a drop-in center for youth in each county that was already part of the community, such as a storefront, or a room within an existing place. Youth would feel less stigmatized by entering a public space rather than being singled out for approaching a van or truck used primarily for outreach type services.

YAB has already begun working on the design of the drop-in centers recognizing that the needs are different in the most rural areas than in Traverse City proper. Work will continue to identify the resources that need to be delivered and how that delivery will take place, ensuring that youth choice is a constant priority.

In the rural villages throughout the five counties, early ideas have emerged and enthusiasm generated around the idea of local youth drop-in centers. They would be available to ALL area youth, as well as for youth experiencing housing instability so as to be better identified, assessed and served. Further engagement is planned over the coming months to better develop these drop-in centers, as this idea holds promise for the most rural counties in the Northwest project area.

Key project development milestones include: identifying what can be funded through the CES-Y project under HUD guidelines; identifying spaces for the drop-in centers; outreach and advertising amongst youth; and identifying staffing and lead agency for the project. The first drop-in center will begin in the areas where there is the most community support for providing a location for the drop-in, so there will be several milestones as time goes on (Years 1-4). Even before the drop-in centers are physically identified and developed, street outreach for youth in all areas will expand to ensure the ability to connect with youth with the homelessness services system (Years 1-2). YAB develops the drop-in design, including the resources that need to be delivered and how that delivery should take place. Annual monitoring and reassessment/redesign of the outreach efforts at the drop-in centers will be crucial to success (Years 1-4). And finally, to provide a best practices framework that will allow this project to be easily replicated in other rural communities.

Content experts and key stakeholders to be engaged in the development and implementation of this project include: street outreach providers (Goodwill and Third Level); McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaisons, YHDP lead agency and HARA (Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency), Jubilee House (daytime drop-in center in Traverse City, as experts in providing drop-in services), community outreach staff, local businesses for locations, and school districts. This project does not require a waiver.

### **Street Outreach**

The Street Outreach project aims to increase youth engagement into services and supports. It proposes to do so by going to the places across the region where youth experience homelessness or housing instability, hearing what their needs and goals are, and assisting



the youth in choosing which connections are right for them. By bringing outreach services to youth, problems can be identified and addressed more quickly.

This project would expand to youth the comprehensive, intensive outreach practices Northwest Michigan has developed in working with the adult population. These practices include using such evidence-based models as housing first, motivational interviewing, coordinated entry, trauma-informed care, and more. Goodwill has worked in partnership with housing, healthcare, emergency services, workforce, faith communities and the people it serves for over 30 years and is on the cusp of leading initiatives in ending rural homelessness. This project will serve as a model to leverage multiple streams of resources and engage across disciplines to end homelessness for the most vulnerable individuals and families in our community.

Another key partner in this project is the Traverse Health Clinic. The Traverse Health Clinic is in the process of hiring a Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) or Licensed Professional Counselor with Certified Advanced Alcohol and Drug Counselor (CAADC) credentials. This staff person will use HRSA/SAMSHA defined evidence-based strategies to provide mental health services and substance abuse services. S/he will provide case management for patients with co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders. In addition, s/he will provide patient education/opioid abuse awareness onsite at the clinic and will engage in community outreach efforts around opioid abuse prevention and awareness. As a component of this community outreach, this staff member will engage the region's homeless population through partnerships with Goodwill and Safe Harbor (seasonal emergency shelter) to increase access to mental health and substance abuse services for those experiencing homelessness.

The proposed services of the Street Outreach project will meet significant gaps in this rural community and maximize the resources available, by allowing providers to serve homeless individuals and families more comprehensively, with a goal to end their homelessness permanently.

## **Primary/Secondary Prevention - Identification & Early Intervention**

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

Child and Family Services of Northwestern Michigan has applied for a Transitional Living Program (TLP) Grant from the Federal Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families – Family and Youth Services Bureau. This federal grant would allow for Child and Family Services/Third Level to employ a dedicated Case Manager for this specific population and program.

Youth, ages 16 to under 22 years, will be served in the TLP up to 18 months, after which they will transition into stable housing that may include rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing, moving in with family, and/or a substance abuse residential treatment facility. Youth ages 16 and 17 years entering the TLP will be provided safe, stable and appropriate shelter through Pete's Place, Child and Family Services/Third Level shelter facility. Youth ages

18 to 22 years will be provided safe and appropriate shelter through host homes scattered throughout the five-county area.

TLP connects youth with providers in the system of care so that any needs they have are met and connections to formal supports are well in place. This includes providers that assist with physical health, substance abuse, mental health, personal safety and sexual risk behaviors. The risk of sexual exploitation and human trafficking is identified and reduced through the use of a standardized assessment tool and effective intervention methods.

Wherever possible, TLP reunite runaway and homeless youth with their families. By developing positive adult/youth partnerships, Case Managers use a hands-on approach and persist in efforts to engage youth and work hard to earn their trust.

Staff are trained in the developmental needs of LGBTQ+ youth, are ready to serve minors, and are specifically attuned to the needs of pregnant and parenting youth, youth involved in the juvenile justice system and foster care systems as well as victims of sexual trafficking and exploitation. Services are provided in congruence with Positive Youth Development and Trauma Informed Care approaches. Youth have choice in the creation and updating of their unique Transitional Living plans, which includes supports that the youth identify. The work is truly collaborative between the TLP Case Manager and the youth.

Child and Family Services/Third Level will serve as the host organization for the RHY-TLP project. All of HUD eligible populations will be targeted including literally homeless, imminent risk, at-risk, fleeing domestic violence, and those homeless under other statutes. This project aligns with the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan's goals, specifically within the areas of Primary/Secondary Prevention and Stable Housing Solutions, while addressing the social and emotional well being of the youth served, including their education and employment needs, and supporting permanent connections.

### **Open Table**

Youth experiencing homelessness are very much an invisible population in the community. The Northwest Michigan Youth Plan seeks to educate the community in recognizing and understanding the issues of youth homelessness so as to respond effectively with supports that are evidenced-based and will ensure youth have the resources and skills needed to remain stably housed throughout their adult years.

Research has shown that one of the main differences between those in poverty and those who are not is community. Relationships, and the resources they bring, provide the guidance, wisdom, mentoring, and cushion that can make the difference in maintaining or losing stability. The Open Table project educates community volunteers and builds community and relationships around the young person that can meet their needs in every aspect of life, helping them out of homelessness and providing the skills, relationships, contacts and resources necessary for a person to navigate the difficult challenges that life can bring.

Open Table is a faith-based model that brings government, business, non-profits and the faith community together to work toward a common goal of ending poverty. Open Table provides technical support, training, structure, and process to communities implementing the model. The Table refers to a table where the youth and congregation and community members come together around weekly to support the youth in every area of need. It consists of the youth, referred to as “Sister” or “Brother”, seven to 12 volunteers (depending on the need of the youth), and possibly one or two consultants (professionals involved in serving the youth in other capacities).

A Table commitment is for one meeting per week for one year. Volunteers making this yearlong commitment take on the role of expert in areas such as education, finance, housing, healthcare, transportation and insurance, and coaching. The Table model varies according to the need and circumstances of the youth being served. The Sister or Brother learn early on to lead her or his own table. Volunteers are expected to develop personal relationships with the youth as they would with family members; inviting them to holiday dinners, attending important events, providing emotional support and mentoring. This results in the development of lifelong relationships that continue as sources of support for the youth.

Over the course of a year, the Table works together to set goals, foster accountability, and implement a plan to create change for the young person it is serving. The core of Open Table is the core of human development, intellectual and social capital. Table members invest what they have learned on their life journeys and connect to their personal networks in their congregations and community to bring skill building, services and door opening to the plan.

Open Table is a service that can be offered to any youth that is 18 years or older, is willing to participate, and is assessed to be ready for the program. Youth who are identified as homeless or not stably housed will have the opportunity to participate in this project. Open Table services can be designed to work with a wide range of youth who are homeless, or who may be in adult voluntary foster care or have experienced foster care as a minor, youth who identify as LGBTQ+, those that have been involved with the justice system, pregnant or parenting youth, as well as those who have been victims of human trafficking and exploitation. YAB will be welcomed to participate as consultants to the Table volunteers, and youth members may also be Table volunteer participants.

A local pastor has stepped up and is willing to introduce Open Table to the clergy of six different churches in the area. Presentations will be planned at each individual church for November 2017. A plan will need to be developed to raise the funding necessary to bring the program to the area. The faith community and partners who become licensed to develop Tables will be responsible for recruiting volunteers. Open Table provides technical support, training, structure and process. Costs are contained to a one-year time frame and in subsequent years only minimal costs for licensing are required. The costs for starting Open Table and the licensing of communities covers background checks of volunteers and youth, assessments of youth for readiness, training of volunteers, and Open Table staff site visits to ensure program success.

The purpose of the Table is to grow community. This project will increase community connections for the youth served, create lifelong relationships for youth, help youth develop the skills that are essential for independence, and develop community investment in our youth, which could lead to employment and many other opportunities. Outcomes of the program have demonstrated that of the Table recipients surveyed, 95% retained one or more permanent relationships, 80% said they now had the skills to access help from others in the community, 85% stated they were able to get through crises better since the Table, and 100% were more optimistic about the future.

Open Table is an existing program that operates in over 20 states, including Michigan. The State of Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, a key partner in the YHDP, has embraced and helped to promote this program as a resource for youth who have experienced foster care. In particular, DHHS has encouraged the coordinators of the Michigan Youth Opportunity Initiative to embrace this program and assist in bringing it to communities that serve youth who have been in foster care. This model has also been successfully used with other sub-populations, including but not limited to LGBTQ+, parenting youth, persons experiencing homelessness, and veterans.

A key goal of the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan is to ensure services are available to support stability. Open Table is such a support that assists youth in developing personal relationships, community connections as well as skills for meeting personal needs that impact housing stability. Open Table has the potential to lift youth out of homelessness and provide them the tools to remain stable in the future.

This project uses the community in developing lasting relationships and the resources that they can provide. It provides an avenue for community members to personally invest in the success of the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan. Open Table can span the breadth of community plan partners, capturing their assets and resources and bringing them directly to the youth served. The access of multiple volunteers from every aspect of the community will complement the efforts of the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan by engaging even more community members in working towards ending youth homelessness.

Key project development milestones include: the operation of an Open Table within one year and serving up to three youth at that time. Content experts and key stakeholders to be engaged in the development and implementation of this project include: members of the local faith organizations; DHHS; YAB; coordinated community plan members, and other interested community volunteers. This project does not require a waiver. Funding for this project will come from the faith community that chooses to become licensed through the Open Table organization.

The Open Table project is prioritized as one of the first projects slated for development and an identified faith organization will serve as the host organization. This project aligns with the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan's goals, specifically within the areas of Primary/Secondary Prevention, while addressing the social and emotional well being of the youth served, including their education and employment needs, and supporting permanent connections.

## Matched Savings Program & Financial Counseling Services

As the Regional Coordinating Organization for the Northern Region of the Michigan Individual Development Account Partnership, Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency (NMCAA) proposes to develop a tailored matched savings program for youth that encompasses individual financial counseling services.

In addition to educational workshops, the one-on-one coaching sessions will allow Financial Capability Coaches to review the youth's financial goals, budget, and credit report. Coaches will work with youth to improve their credit, increasing their chances to secure housing, and create a budget and savings plan tailored to their unique situation. Financial Capability Coaches are required to receive continuing education annually to maintain their certification and receive specific training related to counseling youth on financial capabilities and specific topics such as handling student loan debt.

A matched savings program would be made available so that the youth could save toward a purchase that address a barrier to success such as, but not limited to first month's rent/security deposit, car repairs, books for school, work uniform, and more. Unique to this savings program is that it would be tailored to the individual youth and their specific needs, related to obtaining and maintaining safe, stable housing.

NMCAA will serve as the host organization for the Matched Savings Program and Financial Counseling Services project. This project aligns with the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan's goals, specifically within the areas of Primary/Secondary Prevention, while addressing the social and emotional well being of the youth served, including their education and employment need, and supporting permanent connections.

## Emergency Crisis Response/Safety Net

### Create Youth Shelter Beds – Temporary Host Homes

Currently, the GGTACOC community has one shelter for youth under 18, another for anyone over 18, and another rotating seasonal shelter for those 18 and over. These shelters are all located in Traverse City, which could be more than 60 miles from



many of the more rural communities. In addition, youth in these more rural communities have made it clear that they do not see going to Traverse City as an option for them. Another shelter option can be the motel voucher program but in many of the rural areas there are just no motels around. Building shelters to cover such a wide rural geography is not cost effective and not a desired option by youth.

Temporary Host Homes has been identified as a viable option in both the rural and Traverse City areas. Both community organizations and churches have expressed interest in developing the stock of Temporary Host Homes. There would be a need for funding coordination of training and placement in Host Homes, providing choices to youth, and to ensure coordination with support services to help move the Youth toward permanent housing options.

HUD eligible populations to be targeted include literally homeless. This project aligns with the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan's goals, specifically within the area of Emergency Crisis Response, while addressing the social and emotional well-being of the youth served and supporting permanent connections

## **Stable Housing Solutions**

### **Community Built Shared Homes**

Considering the lack of affordable rental housing availability in the Greater Grand Traverse region, including the most rural areas, there will be no end to youth homelessness unless we create physical housing opportunities. This project combines the resources and expertise of three community organizations (New Waves Church, Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District, and Habitat for Humanity for the Grand Traverse Region) to provide one house per year over the next five years, until there is one in each county based on the availability of property.

New Waves Church is located about 10 miles from Traverse City in Leelanau County and is dedicated to serving the community. During the past year they have talked to community leaders to ascertain gaps in services for local social issues. They determined that they would like to be involved in providing housing to homeless youth and to serve people who identify as LGBTQ+; they have included working on the needs of homeless youth in their overall mission. They own 20 acres of vacant land and have offered to develop the infrastructure required for a housing development. Their goal is to build a community that is a safe place for youth, those who identify as LGBTQ+, and possibly pastors in need of respite.

Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District (TBAISD) provides high school level Career Tech programs for the school districts in the GGTACOCs five counties. They have a construction trades course that builds one house per year, containing two-three bedrooms. They would like to provide one house per year for youth who are experiencing homelessness. The first home would be placed on the church property with a goal of placing a house in one of the five GGTACOC counties each year. However, the program does not have the expertise to move the house to a permanent location or to build the foundation, septic and well systems required in rural areas.

Habitat for Humanity of the Grand Traverse Region would like to provide the construction needs not met by TBAISD. Habitat for Humanity brings together both community resources in the way of building materials and the volunteer expertise of professionals in the areas missing from the school's projects. They currently build single-family homes and sell them

to approved applicants. They are currently considering options for constructing, owning, and renting apartment units to youth experiencing homelessness. They would build these units on the church property.

Housing is needed to end homelessness. This project responds to that need by providing a housing option that has been identified through focus groups and surveys of area youth, as well as through the YAB. Rural youth are not interested in moving to the more populated city of Traverse City and will shun help if that is the expectation for them to be offered housing. Large housing developments do not make sense in rural areas, but smaller homes that allow for roommate situations do. If this model works well, it will provide a new house for youth in each county every five years and will be a sustainable way of adding to the housing options for youth.

Youth will be given the opportunity to be permanently housed with case management services until they reach a point in their lives where they can either move forward to house themselves through their own resources or experience life changes that require they live in a different housing model. This housing choice will give them the chance to stop focusing their lives on the basic human right of housing and begin to work on other parts of their lives such as education, work, mental health issues, substance abuse disorder, or just being able to feed themselves on a regular basis. The impact of positive life changes is immeasurable.

YAB have been involved in the project from the beginning as it provides a significant housing option for youth in the most rural areas. YAB will be involved in choosing each of the project locations to make sure that there are transportation, education, and job opportunities available to the residents. As the project moves forward the YAB will lead the process of how decisions are made by occupants, contracting with a Resident Assistant, and final physical design. YHDP leadership will get the houses built and YAB will lead all other decisions. These are their houses.

This will be an on-going project with one house created per year. For each year's project the following will need to take place and serve as key project development milestones: develop donation opportunity of property for home; construction trades program completes home; Habitat for Humanity moves and completes home on-site; lease up and move in of youth.

Content experts and key stakeholders to be engaged in the development and implementation of this project include: Habitat for Humanity for their expertise in building affordable housing through the use of community resources and volunteers; Traverse Bay Intermediate School District construction trades courses to build one house per year; New Waves United Church of Christ who owns the property to be developed for affordable youth housing on the edge of two counties in the GGTACOC; Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency and Goodwill Industries as the experts in housing development and funding, and for housing based case management; and Child and Family Services/Third Level as the owner of one of the housing options and is the Runaway and Homeless Youth local provider.

This project will require a waiver to use HUD COC leasing assistance dollars in a new way. The Northwest will be asking permission to house youth aged 18 to 24 years old in these

SROs who are either Literally Homeless, Fleeing Domestic Violence, and at Imminent Risk and At-Risk of homelessness. Youth in all of these categories will be prioritized for housing options, but given the nature of rural youth homelessness it is the expectation that many highest acuity youth may be couch surfing and technically not Literally Homeless as required through HUD COC program funding.

This project creates five, two to three bedroom rental housing units that can be shared by youth, funded through HUD COC leasing assistance dollars. This same funding will also be used to provide housing based case management once youth are housed, giving the best possible opportunity to stay in stable housing. Some of that rental assistance would also help to support the on-going housing costs. Since these are simply rental houses, they may serve youth through Single Room Occupancy units or for pregnant and parenting youth as single family homes; options that fit the particular needs of youth with the highest priority of need. Together, these projects would allow the community to provide a variety of permanent housing options for youth in a community setting that would be welcoming and supportive.

New Wave Church, TBAISD, and Habitat for Humanity will serve together as the host organizations. HUD eligible populations to be targeted include literally homeless, imminent risk, at-risk, and fleeing domestic violence. Those that are defined as literally homeless will be prioritized within the Community Built Shared Homes project. This project aligns with the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan's goals, specifically within the area of Stable Housing Solutions, while addressing the social and emotional well being of the youth served, including their education and employment needs, and supporting permanent connections.

### **Youth Rooming House**

There is one resource that is needed to end homelessness: housing. The Youth Rooming House project responds to that need by providing a housing option that has been identified by focus groups and survey of area youth, as well as through YAB. This project will consist of either the renovation an existing building or new construction into 9-12 Single Room Occupancy (SRO) units. It will include shared living and kitchen spaces and allow for one of the rooms to be occupied by a Resident Assistant. Individualized Housing Based Case Management will be provided to each of the residents to link them to requested community resources, to help them remain housed and move forward to eventual self-sufficiency. The Youth Rooming House will be located in Traverse City, where we find the highest population of youth, as well as public transportation, jobs, high school and the local community college.

Youth will be given the opportunity to be permanently housed with case management services until they reach a point in their lives where they can either move forward to house themselves through their own resources or experience life changes that require they live in a different housing model. This housing choice will give them the chance to stop focusing their lives on the basic human right of housing and begin to work on other parts of their lives such as education, work, mental health issues, substance abuse disorder, or just being able to feed themselves on a regular basis. The impact of positive life changes is immeasurable.



The YAB has been involved in this project from the onset. It is 100% driven by the youth involved in focus groups, surveys, and the YAB. This project was not a real consideration until youth themselves expressed the desire to live in group housing with peers. YAB has been involved in securing funding through community grant opportunities, designing the needs of the house itself, and the location of the final project. As the project moves forward the YAB will lead the process of how decisions are made by occupants, contracting with a Resident Assistant, and final physical design. YHDP leadership will find the financing and YAB will lead all other decisions. This is their house.

With the lack of affordable rental housing availability in the Greater Grand Traverse region and more specifically in the City of Traverse City, there will be no end to youth homelessness unless physical housing opportunities are created. The Level Up project will create 12 available housing units to be funded through HUD COC leasing assistance dollars. This same funding will also be used to provide Housing Based Case Management once youth are housed, giving them the best possible opportunity to stay in stable housing.

Key project development milestones include: offer for property purchase option (Year 1); securing financing for purchase and renovation (Year 1-2); final property purchase (Year 1-2); renovation (Year 2-3); lease up/move-in (Year 2-3).

Content experts and key stakeholders to be engaged in the development and implementation of this project include: Traverse City Housing Commission as an expert in housing development and funding, property maintenance and management; Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency and Goodwill Industries as experts in housing development and funding, and Housing Based Case Management; Child and Family Services/Third Level as the owner of one of the housing options and as the Runaway and Homeless Youth local provider.

This project will require a waiver to use HUD COC leasing assistance dollars in a new way. The Northwest will be asking permission to house youth aged 18 to 24 years old in these SROs who are either Literally Homeless, Fleeing Domestic Violence, and at Imminent Risk and At-Risk of homelessness. Youth in all of these categories will be prioritized for housing options, but given the nature of rural youth homelessness it is the expectation that many highest acuity youth may be couch surfing and technically not Literally Homeless as required through HUD COC program funding.

Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency, Traverse City Housing Commission, and Child and Family Services/Third Level will together serve as the host organizations. HUD eligible populations to be targeted include literally homeless, imminent risk, at-risk, and fleeing domestic violence. Those that are defined as literally homeless will be prioritized within the Youth Rooming House project. This project aligns with the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan's goals, specifically within the area of Stable Housing Solutions, while addressing the social and emotional well being of the youth served, including their education and employment needs, and supporting permanent connections.

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

Without services, the picture of rural homelessness is one of doubled-up families and couch-surfing youth. Currently, federal and state funding streams for PSH and support services are targeted to those who meet the definition of Literally Homeless leaving rural youth without options for moving beyond their precarious and often unsafe housing situations.

According to HMIS data, over the past two years current programming for Rapid Rehousing, Transitional Housing, and PSH served 18 unaccompanied youth (under the age of 20 years) and eight families with head of household 24 years old or younger. This project would provide rental or leasing assistance and Housing Based Case Management supports in scattered site housing to support this population and other homeless youth. Our survey and work with the YAB indicates that youth have an interest in sharing housing with other youth as long as they have supports that teach them the skills they need to live with a roommate.

There is also a need to support single-family housing for youth parents and their families. In addition, while there is a significant need for one bedroom and efficiency apartments in the area, affordable multiple bedroom housing is more easily identified and available. PSH programs with Housing Based Case Management in scattered site housing that is made available to Literally Homeless and At-Risk Youth, especially in the rural areas where there are not group setting or project-based housing options, are key to making a preventative impact on youth homelessness and community homelessness overall.

The Rural Permanent Supportive Housing and Support Services project is prioritized as one of the first projects slated for development. HUD eligible populations to be targeted include literally homeless, imminent risk, at-risk, and fleeing domestic violence. Those that are defined as literally homeless will be prioritized within the Rural PSH and Support Service project. This project aligns with the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan's goals, specifically within the area of Stable Housing Solutions, while addressing the social and emotional well being of the youth served, including their education and employment needs, and supporting permanent connections.

## **HUD Long Term Rapid Rehousing**

Youth and young adults experiencing homelessness in the GGTACOC region lack access to and the choice of age and developmentally appropriate housing. Youth input has highlighted the interest in "dorm-style" shared living accommodations, an option that is not available in the current COC Housing Inventory. This project creates youth-focused housing options that are set-aside specifically for this population, a key focus of the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan. Housing is the foundation upon which all other community efforts (education, employment, social/emotional well-being, and more) are built.

This project would have two components. The first component consists of providing medium term Rapid Rehousing rental assistance for 12 months or until the program participant is 25 years old (whichever is longer). It would be a five to 10 bed shared living transitional housing program and would target young adults ages 18 to 24. Shared living provides a social and mutually supportive living environment where young adults can work on long-term goals/planning and begin developing the skills needed to be good tenants and

neighbors. Rapid Rehousing assistance provides supports that can help young adults transition into traditional rental housing, as well as follow and support them as short or as long as necessary.

The second component of this project consists of a longer-term model by incorporating Permanent Supportive Housing. This might best serve some youth who are ready to leave the transitional housing program and/or for those who are not interested in the shared living setting. This design links directly to the objective of developing youth-specific options for permanent housing. If and when a young person is approaching age 25, a seamless transition will occur between adult and youth providers in order for the young person to continue to be served. Permanent Supportive Housing rental assistance and supports are intended to last at least 24 months, and therefore cannot be easily scaled back or transitioned out.

This type of housing intervention would be initiated as a scattered site model of available units, both SRO, efficiency, and individual apartments. All housing placements into HUD Long Term Rapid Rehousing will be managed through the Coordinated Entry System for Youth (CES-Y). An innovative idea that is likely to be explored using this housing intervention includes the use of a sub-leasing type of support through a lead agency in the event that landlords are reluctant to work with young people. Leasing assistance and housing based case management would be provided through this program.

The marriage of these two components within this project allows the assistance to be “right-sized” and adjusted as the needs of the young adult evolve. For some, this may mean gradually phasing out assistance as they become able to sustain the rental housing on their own. For others, this may mean transitioning to a more traditional long-term subsidy program (i.e. Housing Choice Voucher).

Youth input is key to the development of the project, especially with regards to the policies and procedures governing the transitional housing program. Additionally, staffing of the transitional housing program should be primarily, if not exclusively, youth meeting the YAB membership definition (<26 years old, previous experience of homelessness or housing instability). Youth will be included in the interviewing and selection of all residential supports and case management staff. Regular input from current and former project participants will also be incorporated into program review and evaluation.

Key project development milestones include: identifying lead agency/agencies for project components; identifying and securing transitional housing property; staffing and training transitional housing program support and peer staff; and identifying and housing young adults. Content experts and key stakeholders to be engaged in the development and implementation of this project include: YAB for oversight and input on program development and implementation; Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency for operation/management of the Rapid Rehousing program and housing based case management supports; Third Level for operation of the Youth Transitional Housing Program; Goodwill for the operation of a shared living project and housing based case management supports; and the STEP program for identification and engagement of project eligible youth.

The HUD Long-Term Rapid Rehousing project is prioritized as one of the first projects slated for development. HUD eligible populations to be targeted include literally homeless and those fleeing domestic violence. However a waiver is requested in order to also target and serve those at imminent risk or at-risk. This project aligns with the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan's goals, specifically within the area of Stable Housing Solutions, while addressing the social and emotional well being of the youth served, including their education and employment needs, and supporting permanent connections.

## **Project Tracker**

Following is the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan's Project Tracker. It outlines each project and provides specific details. These details reflect the community's needs, based on the expertise, current perspective and best information available at this time. It is fully expected that as these projects begin to take more shape and other unanticipated fluctuations occur, the details outlined in the Project Tracker may need to change or be altered in some way. The Northwest looks to HUD as a partner that will be willing to pivot alongside Northwest Michigan when such fluctuations arise.

**Northwest Michigan Youth Plan Project Tracker** (as of 10/27/17)

Project Title	# of units/beds/ slots/caseload	Total Budget Amount	Primary Funding	Secondary Funding	Project Year 1 HUD Ask	Project Year 2 HUD Ask	TOTAL PROJECT COSTS
Coordinated Entry activities (CES-Y)	N/A	\$168,500	HUD-Coordinated Entry		\$86,500	\$82,000	\$168,500
Planning Grant-YEAR 2 (Coordination + YAB + Implementation Consultant)	N/A	\$27,500	HUD-Planning	leverages MSHDA & Rotary Planning Funds	\$27,500	\$0	\$27,500
Planning Grant-YEAR 3 (Coordination + YAB)	N/A	\$10,000	HUD-Planning	leverages MSHDA & Rotary Planning Funds	\$10,000	\$0	\$10,000
Planning Grant-YEAR 4 (Coordination + YAB)	N/A	\$10,000	HUD-Planning	leverages MSHDA & Rotary Planning Funds	\$10,000	\$0	\$10,000
HMIS	N/A	\$20,000	HUD-HMIS	leverages HUD/ESG funds to create FT position	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$20,000
RHY-TLP Proposal	N/A	\$865,448	RHY	\$216,362/year	\$0	\$0	
Temporary Host Homes	15 ST beds	\$27,000	ESG RR		\$0	\$0	\$0
Outreach (includes Education-Based, Drop-in Centers & Street Outreach)	N/A	\$320,000	HUD--Coordinated Entry	Current HUD/ESG	\$160,000	\$160,000	\$320,000
Community Built Shared Homes + rental assistance/supports	12 PSH beds	\$1,150,000	Community	HUD--waiver	\$60,000	\$90,000	\$150,000
Youth Rooming House + rental assistance/supports	12 PSH Beds	\$1,174,714	Community	HUD--waiver	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$240,000
Rural PSH and Support Services	12 PSH beds	\$240,000	HUD -- waiver		\$120,000	\$120,000	\$240,000
HUD Long Term Rapid Rehousing	7 slots / .5 case manager	\$196,048	HUD--waiver		\$98,024	\$98,024	\$196,048
Open Table			Community/private		\$0	\$0	\$0
Matched Savings Program and Financial Counseling			Community/private		\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$4,209,210</b>			<b>\$702,024</b>	<b>\$680,024</b>	<b>\$1,382,048</b>

## **New Approaches**

During project development, additional strategies were identified that either scaled up or allowed for a new approach for using existing resources to better serve youth. As an YHDP site, the GGTACOC seized the opportunity to strategize on how to work better at using the resources currently available that address the needs of youth experiencing homelessness or at risk for doing so. Below is a description of such resources that the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan will incorporate along with the proposed projects.

### **Emergency Solutions Grant – Rapid Rehousing**

The GGTACOC receives Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)-Rapid Rehousing (RR) federal funding through the Michigan State Housing and Development Authority (MSHDA). Currently the time limit for rental assistance and Case Management is limited to six months without prior approval on a case-by-case basis by MSHDA. Through the YHDP planning process ESG-RR was identified as a possibility for leveraging HUD funding by using the ESG RR dollars to pay rental assistance and Case Management for youth in short-term host homes as Single Room Occupancies. This strategy would allow for short-term housing for youth while determining the best long-term housing and Case Management solutions. The GGTACOC will work to expand MSHDA's ESG policies in order to leverage HUD program dollars.

### **Pete's Place Youth Shelter Re-Design**

Pete's Place is the only youth shelter serving those under 18 in the five county region of the GGTACOC. There are currently nine beds and is seldom used to capacity. Third Level, the operator of Pete's Place has turned to the YAB to help redefine and redesign the operations and services offered at Pete's Place. Discussions will include changes to the rules and a look at the most appropriate use of the current shelter beds to ensure that it is best serving our youth.

### **Legal Services Training**

Legal Services of Northern Michigan (LSNM) will provide legal information and issue spotting training to front line agency staff providing direct assistance to homeless youth in the five-county GGTACOC region. These trainings will provide front line staff with housing tenants rights information to pass onto youth in need, along with information on how to access free legal assistance. They can be instrumental in developing a screening tool for civil legal issues and are open to serving as a dedicated legal resource for the YHDP. Additionally, LSNM serves as a key resource directly for youth who encounter legal issues surrounding housing, such as unfair housing practices.

### **SEEDS Youth Conservation Corps**

The Youth Conservation Corps is a current program of the local non-profit, SEEDS. It offers paid terms of service and educational scholarship awards, for local youth to engage in

service-learning projects throughout the community. Team Leaders staff the Corps and provide compassionate leadership that fosters a strong sense of worth.

### Step UP Movement

The Step UP Movement is a new mentoring program for youth ages 17 to 25 years. Unique to this mentoring program is that it is entirely virtual. It takes place online and available to the youth 24 hours a day and seven days a week, allowing to overcome the barrier of rural locations and transportation issues often present in traditional mentor models. Goals are designed by the youth with mentor guidance and support.

*Below: One of the small town communities in Northwest Michigan*



### Leveraging Support

The Northwest Michigan Youth Plan could not be supported solely by the funding awarded through the YHDP grant. The YHDP leadership team have intentionally shored up additional support and established plans for ensuring sustainability moving forward. The need to leverage local, state, and federal resources, in addition to key partner contributions, so as to move forward with developing the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan was necessary. In the first six months, the Northwest YHDP project has successfully garnered the following:

2016-17 HUD Planning Grant	19,000
MSHDA Housing Development Fund Grant	19,500
MSHDA Coordinated Entry Grant	5,000
Rotary Charities SEED Grant	10,000
Rotary Club of Traverse City	800
Goodwill of Northern Michigan	1,000
<b>TOTAL leveraged to date:</b>	<b>\$55,300</b>

This does not include the tremendous number of hours and work towards the development of the Plan by key partners such as Northwest Michigan Supportive Housing, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Traverse City Area Public Schools and the STEP program, Youth Advisory Board, Traverse Area District Library, the GGTACOC Coordinator, Third Level, Goodwill of Northern Michigan, Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency, Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Head Start and other dedicated community members.

This leveraged funding has allowed key partners of the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan to pursue additional funding to support the work of the YHDP, such as the Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families – Family and Youth Services Bureau grant for Transitional Living Program.

In the coming months, the braiding of these different funding streams and partner activities will enrich the work of the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan and position the GGTACOC for serving youth in the community more effectively.



# SECTION 5: MEASURING PROGRESS

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To end youth homelessness, the community must understand the scope of the problem, the characteristics of those who are or at risk of experiencing homelessness, and understand what is working in the community and what is not. Solid data enables a community to work confidently towards their goals as they measure outputs, outcomes, and impacts. A combination of quantitative and qualitative data will be used to measure progress through the following approach described below.

## Listening to Youth and Young Adults

Through the YAB and its leadership, robust strategies to updated feedback and input from the broader youth community will be developed regarding changes in service availability, access to housing options and their perception of progress for ensuring housing stability for youth and young adults. This includes YAB representation on the Northwest Continuum of Care and participation in reviewing YHDP funded projects.

## USICH Criteria and Benchmarks

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) has developed Criteria and Benchmarks for Achieving the Goal of Ending Youth Homelessness that serve as a guide in developing local measurements of success. The Northwest Michigan Youth Plan includes projects and guiding principles that enhance the GGTACOC's ability to meet the USICH Criteria and Benchmarks and will be continually measured against them.

## Positive Youth Development, Trauma-Informed Care, and Family Engagement

The Northwest embraces Positive Youth Development (PYD) and Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) and will use these approaches when providing services to youth and young adults. Family Engagement best practices will be interwoven throughout the entire youth homeless response system. These principles are threaded throughout the Plan and project descriptions.

Below is a table highlighting these intentional practices, illustrating how the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan explicitly incorporates Positive Youth Development, Trauma Informed Care, and Family Engagement.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT (PYD)</b> <i>Engage youth from a strengths-based approach in decision-making and planning.</i> <i>Encourage skill development, a sense of belonging, and leadership strengths.</i> <i>Promote positive outcomes for young people.</i> <i>Incorporate the 6 C's: competence, confidence, character, caring, connection, and contribution</i></p>
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As a system we will promote PYD in the following ways:

- Development and continued support for a strong, vibrant YAB and its leadership.
- Re-structuring of the GGTACOC governance to embed youth leadership and voice.
- Ensuring all YHDP projects foster PYD principles using the project evaluation tool and ongoing evaluation throughout project development and implementation phases.
- Embracing a Housing First model that allows for support services to be voluntary and never as a pre-requisite for housing choices.
- Ensuring youth choice throughout the entire housing system: youth are never “placed” in a home.
- Eliminating time limits on housing choices and/or services, and ensure staff is trained in PYD.
- Re-framing unsuccessful housing outcomes: housing options might fail youth, but youth do not fail housing options.

### **TRAUMA INFORMED CARE (TIC)**

*Recognize youth at-risk/experiencing homelessness often have suffered trauma.  
Services are designed to prevent re-traumatization by creating opportunities for safe, trusting relationship building within safe spaces.  
Emphasizes physical, psychological, neurological, social and emotional safety for youth.*

As a system we will promote TIC in the following ways:

- Holding focus groups with youth about TIC and how best to apply TIC principles from the perspective of youth.
- Surveying local providers to ascertain current level of TIC competency.
- Hold TIC trainings for local providers to shore up staff competency as a starting point. The Northwest acknowledges that much more than just staff training is needed. Subsequently follow-up strategies will be developed to make certain that TIC flows through all levels of an organization partnering with YHDP.
- Require TIC partnership agreements for all YHDP partners to ensure they are informed and providing services aligned with TIC principles and practices.
- Involvement and leadership amongst local and statewide TIC initiatives.
- Ensuring all YHDP projects foster TIC principles using the project evaluation tool and ongoing evaluation throughout project development and implementation phases.
- Recognize and be vigilant regarding the prevalence of trauma. Ensure staff is trained to be culturally competent and equipped to provide services utilizing TIC principles with an emphasis on meeting youth where they are.

### **FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

*Develop, maintain, and/or strengthen family connections whenever safe and appropriate.  
Culturally competent services use a strengths-based approach to partner with youth and families.  
Provides aftercare support for youth and families and connections to community supports and services.*

As a system we will promote Family Engagement in the following ways:

- Reunifying youth experiencing homelessness with their families whenever possible and when it is the youth’s choice.
- Providing follow-up care for reunified families at 30, 60, 90 and 180 days.
- Ensuring that services for families and/or youth can be provided for or reactivated at any point during follow-up care following reunification.
- Connecting families and/or youth to needed supports such as rental and utility assistance, domestic violence intervention, help with finding safe, appropriate childcare, and more.
- Ensure youth get what they need to be safe and avoid homelessness when reunification is not successful, which may include working with child welfare agencies, transitional living program services, or other community partners.

- Offering parenting workshops such as *Systemic Training for Effective Parenting of Teens* widely throughout the community; our community needs to be better prepared to parent adolescents and to support parents and teens at this challenging phase in the family life cycle.
- Engaging caring adults and the community at large via community outreach efforts to help with re-engaging youth in services that address housing instability.

### **Families and Prevention Efforts**

Prevention efforts and the right supports for families and youth are critical components to keeping youth out of homelessness and possible involvement with the child welfare system. Family Engagement strategies start with these prevention efforts. In addition to the strategies listed above, Northwest YHDP partners provide outreach to families at-risk before a crisis occurs as an earnest effort to avoid child welfare placements. Third Level youth counselors work with any youth or family in such a situation. Their services and programs are designed to improve family functioning and help to stabilize families, not only when a crisis occurs but to prevent one from even happening. Additionally, the Early Head Start and Head Start programs administered by NMCAA employ family service workers for families, which includes those pregnant and parenting youth that may be at-risk for homelessness. This prevention strategy helps to engage those families at-risk with services aimed to avoid crisis and potential child welfare involvement and/or placement.

### **Michigan’s Trauma Informed Care Initiative and Local Efforts**

In Northwest Michigan momentum around TIC in particular is growing and the YHDP team is actively involved in shoring up its competency around this topic. In addition to the table above, below is a more detailed description of local efforts and YHDP plans for ensuring that TIC is truly integrated in all of the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan’s activities and projects.

One of the USICH principles for ending youth homelessness is ensuring trauma informed care (TIC) integration. The Michigan Health Endowment Fund has provided the financial support to create a statewide initiative to respond to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). First noted in the landmark 1998 study of 17,000 people, ACEs have been linked to risky health behaviors, chronic health conditions, and early death. The Greater Grand Traverse area, the same five counties that make up the Northwest YHDP, is the first area in the State of Michigan to seize the momentum created by this grant. Community members are ready to begin training others, including social workers, teachers, community health workers, and parents to more fully understand the behaviors that are triggered by ACEs.

While homelessness is not one of the 10 ACEs factors listed in the original study’s questionnaire, perhaps it should be. The traumas noted – abuse and neglect, witnessing domestic violence, substance abuse, mental illness – that impact the brains of growing children are all factors in whether a child becomes homeless or not.<sup>3</sup> There is room for the Northwest YHDP to bring the issue of youth homelessness to this discussion in order to help

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nn4youth.org/wp-content/uploads/Homeless-Youth-in-America-Who-Are-They.pdf>

inform the community-wide responses to both issues. Conversely, the community's efforts to educate and train professionals in social work and human services can help bring trauma-informed practice to working with youth who are homeless and unstably housed.

Current local efforts include exploring agency specific trainings on trauma informed care that may be shared amongst partners, as well as leveraging expertise from Child and Family Services Children's Trauma Assessment Center. Child and Family Services/Third Level (CFS/TL) places a great deal of importance on trauma informed training and skills, especially when working with runaway, homeless, and at-risk youth. Within the agency, there are a number of training opportunities. One such opportunity is the Trauma Informed Care for Runaway and Homeless Youth training, with emphasis on clients in the youth shelter, Pete's Place. With this training, staff not only learn what trauma is, but also what common traumatic events may include, ACEs, risks associated with traumatic events, and common responses to trauma. Trauma-informed care is stressed as a strengths-based service delivery approach and staff is given the training to not only recognize such behavior, but to facilitate and foster resilience. At Pete's Place specifically, staff are invested in making sure the facility is a safe place for youth and a place where youth can positively cope with whatever it is they may be dealing with.

This year, CFS/TL staff had the opportunity to attend an all-day training hosted by the Behavioral Health and Trauma Assessment Center staff. Topics included Basic Trauma Education, PMTP Parenting Program and Reactive Attachment Disorder. This allowed staff and interested community members to gain an understanding of how complex trauma impacts children and adolescents, to learn how the PMTP Parenting Program can benefit families within the system, and lastly to learn how attachment disorders affect a child's behaviors and ability to bond with caregivers.

The Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) require trauma informed care training for all staff of Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) grantees. As such, CFS/TL participate in such training. FYSB Works with the Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Center to provide these training, as well as others. Through the use of e-learning, webinars, TA clinics and conference sessions, TIC among many others are available to staff. CFS/TL have requested that these TIC trainings be made available to Northwest YHDP partners to further enrich the level of competency on TIC for those invested in the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan.

The Children's Trauma Assessment Center of CFS/TL provides comprehensive trans-disciplinary trauma assessments to children and adolescents in Northwest Michigan. The trauma assessment model is based on a model developed by the Children's Trauma Assessment Center at Western Michigan University. The Trauma Assessment Program Manager has presented to the Northwest YHDP team and is willing to provide training and technical assistance in the future.

During the Northwest's YHDP planning process, several ways to gain further traction on understanding how youth providers can become more trauma-informed were identified. An

action plan to develop local youth-informed trauma informed practices and strategies is further described below:

### ***Focus Groups***

Start with asking the youth about how they want to be engaged. There was great success in understanding the type of housing and services youth were interested in as a result of the preliminary youth needs assessment. Returning to this Positive Youth Development model will be the first step; engage young people in having a voice in describing how they want to be engaged in services. Focus group questions are being drafted with the assistance of a seasoned youth provider and the YAB will provide guidance and direction in planning and carrying out the focus groups.

### ***Provider Training***

The Northwest YHDP team would like to better understand the current awareness and integration or lack thereof regarding TIC amongst providers. A survey has been drafted for local providers, to gauge their current understanding of TIC and to collect information about the training and resources needed.

GGTACOC meeting times will be used to provide system-wide training for providers, starting with the *“9 Evidence Based Guiding Principles to Help Youth Overcome Homelessness”*<sup>4</sup>. Trainings will also incorporate YAB mentor/peer mentors plus support service front line staff in role-playing training.

Additionally, providers that partner with the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan will be asked to commit to a Partnership Agreement highlighting their commitment and engagement in TIC practices (see Appendix K).

## **Measuring Up to the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan**

The goals and objectives of the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan have been created with great care through discussions with youth, the greater community, and non-traditional organizational groups. The guiding principles outlined in the Plan will drive the development of projects and will be key to measuring success. The GGTACOC will continuously look to the Plan so as to measure project success against developed goals, objectives, and guiding principles.

Northwest Michigan’s work to end youth homelessness is part of larger state and regional efforts. In order to understand where the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan fits into the bigger picture and to make sure that resources are leveraged to both create housing stock and to serve youth through both prevention and permanent housing options, other related Plans were reviewed. See Appendix J for a matrix representing other existing efforts and

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[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1VH1\\_DIAC19F70HKYImA3482oivlIGtGKMfu7R\\_y89dc/edit#slide=id.p](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1VH1_DIAC19F70HKYImA3482oivlIGtGKMfu7R_y89dc/edit#slide=id.p)

initiative in the State of Michigan. As part of the Continuous Quality Improvement plan, this matrix will be updated annually.

## **Project Development and Performance**

All projects identified in the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan, whether funded by HUD or not, were developed through significant community engagement and vetted through the YAB. This process of providing opportunities for community involvement and project review will continue through GGTACOC membership and community outreach. Care will be taken to invite community partners who are able to evaluate outcomes related to increase in supports and services within their realm of expertise.

Each project will have their own outcome measures by which will determine their “success”. However, specific to the overall YHDP demonstration project, the Northwest will develop systems performance measures to define success as:

1. Increased local leadership capacity to address homeless youth issues
2. Increased understanding of the factors that lead to youth homelessness in the area
3. Increased collaborative partners in all five counties to include individuals and organizations that have not traditionally recognized and partnered with homeless and/or at-risk youth providers
4. Empowered community organizations and youth (through YAB) to develop innovative programs based on best practices and creative solutions
5. Increased capacity to collect and monitor data on the homeless youth population, and evaluation of the effectiveness for our current and new programs
6. A comprehensive and diversified funding stream to support the homeless youth population, and
7. Development of a Housing First model, coordinated entry for youth, assessment and prioritization for youth.

## **Data Sources**

The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is the information system designated by GGTACOC to comply with the requirements of HUD’s COC Program interim rule. It is a locally administered data system used to record and analyze client, service and housing data for individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Aggregate HMIS data can be used to understand the size, characteristics, and needs of the homeless population at multiple levels: project, system, local, state, and national.

All agencies in GGTACOC with state or federal homelessness related funding use HMIS to record client data. Although there are program and age specific differences in the details that are gathered (more information is gathered for those under 18 than those 18 and over) in HMIS, there is a significant data pool from which to compile aggregate data.

In order to identify the scope of the problem in our community we reached out to the school McKinney-Vento and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Foster Care

programs. We developed a list of primary data fields that could be shared. These non-HMIS agencies then dove into their paper files to identify youth who experienced or were at risk of homelessness and completed as many of the primary data fields as possible. Using partial names and birth dates we removed all duplicate records until we could develop a combined pivot table that would allow for a variety of data analyses. This process informed an initial look into the pathways a youth experiences among different providers over time, and their outcome destinations from current services. Looking at this data also helped us to generate questions and scenarios that are not addressed in the current system.

## Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

The following Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Plan will serve as the foundation for the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan's commitment to continuously refine goals and objectives, improve upon our strategies and pivot where needed; the implementation of the community coordinated plan. Over the next six months concrete benchmarks and timelines will be developed and finalized. The foundational objectives that will guide the process will include:

- Develop and participate in the A Way Home Again community dashboard to better understand how the homeless system is serving youth in the Northwest Michigan. This will test how current strategies align with the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan goals, and prioritize those strategies that contribute to the end goal of ending homelessness.
- Increase the HMIS participation of providers, primarily through the new projects to ensure the collection of service utilization, service results and performance outcomes on youth served through the proposed projects. Additionally, review data to inform improvements on the coordinated entry system.
- Develop and implement data coordination with systems where HMIS data entry is not an option to support a more comprehensive review of what is happening in the community as we implement the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan. For example, pursuing strategies to coordinate HMIS and school data to improve the identification of youth at imminent risk of homelessness.
- Community engagement strategies will be identified to create a routine opportunity to inform the community on implementation milestones and new/changing opportunities as well as to continue engagement as an advocacy and resource-finding tool.
- Leverage the new governance structure so as to prioritize monitoring of the newly funded projects and ensure quality of services and effectiveness at the program level.
- Increase youth leadership representation at the local workgroup level in order to influence and inform regular agenda items related to identifying new unmet needs; youth's perception on the local workgroup's effort to implement identified strategies and identify new opportunities to advance the goals of the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan.
- Fully participate in the YHDP Community and HUD's evaluation process to learn and exchange opportunities, be challenged and continuously explore how to improve the

design and implementation of the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan.

- Review and update as necessary The Bigger Picture matrix, representing other existing efforts and initiatives in the State of Michigan to ensure the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan stays informed, coordinated, and aligned with other state plans.

## Looking Forward

The momentum built thus far in developing the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan is nothing short of exciting. Truly impacting and ending youth homelessness is within reach. The Northwest YHDP team looks forward to working in partnership with HUD to improve and finalize the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan so youth homelessness is eradicated.

The proposed projects aim to do just that. The Northwest Michigan Youth Plan proposes these innovative solutions and partnerships as a result of due diligence, commitment to best practices and solid partnerships. The YHDP has provided Northwest Michigan with the opportunity to bring new energy and resources to the issue of youth homelessness, injecting enthusiasm and supporting community passion by engaging new partners and elevating youth voices.

Looking forward, youth and YAB leadership will be empowered and supported every step of the way. Nurturing the growth of YAB leadership, not just within the realm of YHDP activities, but throughout the community as a whole will continue to be a cornerstone of the Northwest Michigan Youth Plan and constantly keep at the forefront for all – **NOTHING ABOUT YOUTH, WITHOUT YOUTH.**