



Ending Youth Homelessness on the Cape & Islands

A snapshot of community need & recommendations

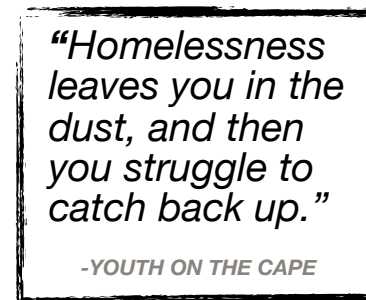
Overview: The Massachusetts State Plan to End Youth Homelessness describes a vision to “build a system in which every community in the Commonwealth has coordinated, developmentally appropriate, and trauma-informed resources that are effective, regionally accessible, and reliably funded.” To actualize this, the State Plan acknowledges that both the State and each region must first understand the demographics and experiences of those youth and young adults (YYAs) and the resources that are designed to serve them. In 2019, the Cape & Islands engaged in a community needs assessment to provide credible data and a deeper understanding of the YYAs experiencing homelessness and the resources available to serve them.

Findings: On a single night in 2018 **1,080** unaccompanied YYAs were identified as experiencing homelessness in Massachusetts, and **27** were from the Cape & Islands.¹ In that same year **3,789** unaccompanied YYA experiencing homelessness were identified by programs in MA², and **88 were on the Cape & Islands.**³ These YYA find themselves without a stable place to live either because home isn’t safe, home isn’t supportive, or home doesn’t exist.

Particular subpopulations are at higher risk for homelessness



According to the 2018 statewide Youth Count **24%** of all YYAs experiencing homelessness identify as **LGBTQ+** compared to 11% on the Cape & Islands. There is a need for providers to improve their data collection on sexual orientation and gender identity in order for the region to better understand the scope of this population and resources needed to serve them.



Black YYAs are over 4x more likely to experience homelessness both statewide⁴ and on the Cape & Islands³ as compared to the overall population of YYAs.⁵ **Latinx YYAs are 5.5x more likely to experience homelessness** on the Cape & Islands³ and twice as likely statewide.⁵



The statewide average age at which YYAs report leaving the home of their parent or guardian for the first time was 16.7.⁶ Though there remains a significant gap in identifying homelessness among minors, according to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, in 2018 there were 514 unaccompanied minors experiencing homelessness statewide, 10 of these youth were identified on the Cape & Islands.⁷

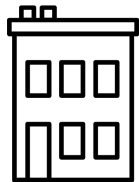


In 2018, **60%** of all identified YYAs experiencing homelessness in MA were **pregnant and/or parenting** compared to **67%** on the Cape & Islands.^{3,4} 100% of these were in emergency shelter.

1) 2018 HUD PIT Count; 2) FY18 Statewide HMIS + FY18 provider data; 3) FY18 Barnstable HMIS; 4) FY18 Statewide HMIS; 5) 2018 US Census data for 15-25 year olds; 6) 2018 MA Statewide Youth Count; 7) MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Ed 2017-2018

Where Additional Resources are Needed

Housing



There are currently no housing units or emergency shelter options specifically for YYA on the Cape and Islands, and more permanent affordable housing options are needed throughout the region. Housing YYA currently experiencing homelessness is an attainable goal if the region targets resources for those with the highest need, while simultaneously working to address the more systemic challenges, including the shortage of affordable housing. The Cape and the Islands also must assess if programs provide access to housing resources at equitable rates and achieve equitable outcomes for YYA across races & ethnicities.

Early identification and system coordination



There is a need for improved identification and support of minors experiencing homelessness & housing instability. Such support must include stronger partnerships among service providers, the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe, DCF, DYS, DTA, LGBTQ organizations, schools, and healthcare providers. Materials and staff support must be available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

Transportation



YYAs & providers report that a lack of accessible & reliable transportation options affects access to many resources, while also limiting education and employment opportunities.

Employment Opportunities



Most YYA need improved employment connections and support in order to obtain and maintain housing.

Authentic Youth Voice in Decision Making



Direct youth involvement is essential in the development and implementation of all resources and actions noted above. YYA who have experienced homelessness on the Cape & Islands expressed a desire to have a voice in regional planning efforts.

Who Are Unaccompanied Youth & Young Adults Experiencing Homelessness?

“A person 24 years of age or younger who is not in the physical custody of a parent or legal guardian, and who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. “Fixed” refers to a residence that is stationary, permanent and not subject to change. “Regular” means a dwelling at which a person resides on a regular basis (i.e. nightly). “Adequate” means that the dwelling provides safe shelter, meeting both physical and psychological needs of the youth. All three components of this definition- age, connection to a parent or guardian, and housing status- must be met in order for a person to be considered an unaccompanied homeless youth.”

-DEFINITION ESTABLISHED IN 2013 BY THE MA SPECIAL COMMISSION ON UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH

“If a person becomes homeless, we have failed. From a wellbeing...and from a fiscal standpoint, the earlier we can become involved, the more effective it will be.”

-Homeless Service Provider in MA