

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS ON CAPE COD, MARTHA'S VINEYARD, AND NANTUCKET:

A Community Needs Assessment

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Youth and Young Adults Experiencing Homelessness on Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket: A Community Needs Assessment

Matthew Aronson Consulting

This report was submitted to the Barnstable County Department of Human Services

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Disclaimer

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Young people are stronger than you think. And they deserve better.”

YYA Interviewee

Youth and Young Adults (YYA) experience homelessness in every community across Cape Cod, Martha’s Vineyard, and Nantucket (“the Cape and Islands”).¹ On any given night at least 30 YYA live on the street, in shelters, and places not meant for human habitation according to conservative estimates (HUD, 2018). More than two thousand may experience some kind of homelessness over the course of a year (Morton, 2017; Census, 2017). They find themselves without a stable place to live because home isn’t safe, isn’t supportive, or doesn’t exist.

Assessing Our Need

Between February and June 2019 the Barnstable County Department of Human Services, with Matthew Aronson Consulting, used quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the system and individual needs of YYA experiencing homelessness in the five sub-regions.¹ Community members, service partners, and YYA provided input via interviews, focus groups, and surveys that were focused on homelessness prevention and on intervention for those currently experiencing homelessness. We investigated the experiences of YYA under 18, and between 18 and 24 (both parenting and unaccompanied) and considered the issues of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity to understand YYA needs related to stable housing, education, employment, health and wellbeing, and permanent connections.

Key Findings

1. As many as 2,400 YYA may experience some form of homelessness over the course of a year, but the number with high needs may be much smaller (Morton, 2017; Census, 2017).

The Cape and Islands’ annual Point-in-Time (PIT) count identified 27 YYA in 2018 (HUD, 2018). For the year 2018 HMIS service-based count (cumulative) included 100 YYA sleeping in unstable

¹ “Cape and Islands” refers to the Massachusetts counties of Barnstable, Dukes, and Nantucket.

There are **5 sub-regions**: Barnstable County has 3 sub-regions (**Upper Cape, Mid-Cape, and Outer Cape**), Dukes County is commonly referred to as **Martha’s Vineyard**, and Nantucket County is referred to as **Nantucket**.

living situations, institutions, emergency shelter, the street, other places not meant for human habitation, and permanent housing (HMIS, 2018). A further 133 accessed services only during 2018. Using national rules of thumb to estimate rates of YYA homelessness suggests that as many as 2,400 YYA may experience some form of homelessness annually in the region.

2. Homelessness affects vulnerable and minority populations disproportionately.

On the Cape and Islands Black, Latinx, and LGBTQ YYA experience homelessness at disproportionate rates compared to their representation in the general population (HUD, 2018; Mass.gov, 2018; HMIS, 2018; Census, 2017). Awareness of these disparities among the Cape and Islands' provider community and general population appears low.

3. The lack of year-round affordable housing puts pressure on housing stability for YYA.

Average housing costs on the Cape and Islands exceed 37% of median income and fair market rents are more than twice what a person making an average wage can afford (NLIHC, 2019). Large seasonal rent hikes and month-to-month lease arrangements lead to a housing "shuffle" that often requires families to move multiple times per year and leaves many independent YYA without a stable and safe place to live. Constant movement also makes it challenging to collect data, identify YYA at risk, establish eligibility for programs, and deliver services.

4. There are several service-related gaps that may leave YYA with unmet needs.

This assessment identifies important gaps in services accessible to YYA experiencing homelessness. Service gaps include the following:

- a. Lack of timely and effective risk assessment for YYA homelessness.
- b. Cliff Effect upon exiting "The System" (High School, DYS, or DCF).
- c. Lack of timely access to mental health services for YYA.
- d. Lack of YYA-focused substance use treatment and recovery services.
- e. A deficit in training and understanding among adults serving YYA experiencing homelessness.

5. Small social networks, stigma, and a lack of awareness suppress identification, prevention, and intervention.

Teachers, neighbors, social service professionals, and even family members struggle to identify or appropriately engage YYA who may need support. Small tight-knit communities enable powerful kin-like support mechanisms but can also be powerful isolating forces associated with stigma and shame. While the former should make identification and prevention easier than for larger communities, the latter reduces the overall likelihood that a YYA will self-identify as experiencing housing instability and that the community will create safe and supportive spaces to discuss housing instability. Common misconceptions and biases can dissuade community members from engaging in productive solutions and may lead to detrimental policies. The community does not have a systematic approach to prevention and identification that might otherwise offset these deficiencies.

6. YYA voices are largely absent from decision making.

There is currently no framework for YYA with lived experience of homelessness to participate in shaping the homelessness prevention and response system. Their expertise in the way the system works is missing from policy discussions. This slows the identification of effective solutions, limits solution buy-in from YYA stakeholders, and may prevent policy change that might help traditional providers value and integrate YYA agency into their programs. While there are instances of YYA partnership at the program and organization level, there is little capacity, experience, training, support, or coordination to sustain meaningful system-level YYA engagement.

7. Regional differences and similarities matter.

Each of the five sub-regions of the Cape and Islands has its own identity, governance structure, resources, and challenges that impact the cause and experience of homelessness for YYA. The Islands contend with additional challenges related to “on-Island” vs. “off-Island” culture, immigration, and transportation. But all parts of the Cape and Islands share similarities related to disruptive seasonal housing and employment shifts, transportation challenges, significant overrepresentation of Black and Latinx YYA among those experiencing homelessness, and tension with “off-Cape” and “off-Island” organizations and state-run agencies.

8. *The Cape and Islands do not have a system designed to prevent and end YYA homelessness.*

There are no organizations solely dedicated to YYA homelessness, no beds dedicated to homeless YYA, nor is there an entity responsible for the coordination of YYA services. The lack of dedicated resources and coordination leads to gaps in service delivery, limits data analysis and system planning, and prevents the adoption of best and promising new practices.

Next Steps

This report recommends two next steps to further the work of preventing and ending YYA homelessness on the Cape and Islands:

1. *Create a YYA Workgroup within the Cape and Islands Regional Network on Homelessness.*

The Cape and Islands Regional Network on Homelessness, a deliberative body created to address homelessness, could create a new workgroup to address the community's response to end YYA homelessness. With YYA participation, the workgroup could develop recommendations and an implementation plan. It should also consider establishing a regional structure to coordinate YYA resources, organizations, and service providers across the Cape and Islands.

Issues for prioritized consideration should include the following:

- a. Explore opportunities for YYA-specific housing options.
- b. Establish consistent data capture and storage procedures among all YYA homelessness service providers (e.g. use of HMIS).²
- c. Estimate unmet need for YYA homelessness services, including further analysis of sub-populations of YYA not addressed in this report (e.g. Wampanoag YYA, YYA experiencing commercial and sexual exploitation, and YYA leaving the DCF and DYS systems).
- d. Include non-traditional service providers and community supports to address YYA homelessness (e.g. faith-based groups, town libraries, school districts, Cape Cod Community College).
- e. Educate the Cape and Islands community on the factors contributing to YYA homelessness and the services that these persons need.

² HMIS: **Homeless Management Information System**: A computerized data collection tool designed to capture client-level information over time on the characteristics and service needs of men, women, and children experiencing homelessness.

2. Include YYA at risk of, and experiencing, homelessness in all assessment, planning, and implementation processes.

YYA experience the homelessness system differently than do adults. Without YYA engagement in community planning, community leaders may not make the best decisions, implement the most effective programs with the right rules and procedures, or garner the buy-in and support from the young people that they serve. YYA with experience of homelessness need to be included in the process regularly and as early as possible.

“So many people are concerned about housing here. Most of us are overwhelmed and think that there's nothing you can do about it. We need a victory. We need to show that this is addressable. If we could have even one small victory around housing, affordable housing, I think that would snowball.” *Focus group participant*

INTRODUCTION

Overview

This report assesses the needs of youth and young adults (YYA) experiencing homelessness and evaluates the system that is supposed to support their successful transition to safe and stable independence. It is the first step in a new initiative to develop a coordinated community response across Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket (the Cape and Islands) and is part of a statewide effort to prevent and end YYA homelessness in Massachusetts. Barnstable County, through its Department of Human Services, is leading this effort and has worked closely with Matthew Aronson Consulting and the Massachusetts Commission on Unaccompanied Youth Homelessness to design and implement a process that identified the best available data and incorporated community voice, including the voices of YYA.

Quantitative and qualitative data gathered between February and June of 2019 are used to highlight eight key findings that will be important to the design and implementation of a coordinated community response.

Definition of “Youth and Young Adult Homelessness”

This assessment uses the following definition of YYA homelessness established by The Massachusetts Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth:

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. (Mass.gov, 2013)

“Youth homelessness is visible but still invisible. There's washrooms and showers downtown at the boat basin where people can go shower, and then they work two or three jobs. But where they crash (sleep) is unknown to a lot of people” *Focus group attendee*

“Youth homelessness is unseen – people don't think it exists.” *Interviewee*

“I think that if you provide the data and the vision, we can find a way to support and contribute to the process of fixing this.” *Interviewee*

Methodology

The Barnstable County Department of Human Services commissioned a needs assessment to summarize and report upon the best available data concerning the prevalence and characteristics of YYA experiencing homelessness on the Cape and Islands. The three counties that make up the Cape and Islands – Barnstable, Dukes, and Nantucket - is designated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as the Cape and Islands Continuum of Care (CoC). Methods included primary data collection and secondary data review. This document reports the findings from quantitative and qualitative data and information gathered. Matthew Aronson Consulting conducted the assessment and produced this report in close partnership with staff from the Barnstable County Department of Human Services.

Quantitative Analysis

Local YYA homelessness data were used whenever possible. When these data were not available other local, state, and national data, both regarding YYA homelessness and YYA in general, were used to provide reasonable estimates.

Three data sets feature most prominently throughout this assessment:

1. Cape and Islands CoC HMIS³ data for Calendar Year (CY) 2018
2. Cape and Islands CoC PIT⁴ data for CY 2018

³ **HMIS:** Homeless Management Information System: A computerized data collection tool designed to capture client-level information over time on the characteristics and service needs of men, women, and children experiencing homelessness.

⁴ **Point-in-Time (PIT)** counts are conducted annually on a single night during the last week of January and serve as a longitudinally-tracked baseline estimate for the number of people sleeping on the streets, in places not meant for human habitation, emergency shelters, and transitional housing programs. Chapin Hall has produced a useful

3. MA statewide youth count data for the Cape and Islands from 2018.

In addition, the analysis includes data from several local and state agencies and from the national Voices of Youth Count report entitled “Missed Opportunities.” A full reference list is included in the References section of this document.

Qualitative Analysis

Focus Groups. The team conducted 4 focus groups with a total of 31 participants between April and June 2019. Facilitators used a two-method approach. The first method included individual work on sticky notes to identify YYA needs, strengths, and barriers, and systems, places, and people with which YYA interact, followed by facilitated group reflection on flip chart paper to fill in the gaps. The second method included an open discussion to identify the ways in which participants and their organizations interact with YYA homelessness, the way they interact with the homelessness and services systems, and the biggest challenges and most important solutions that they would prioritize for the CoC. Sessions lasted between 1 and 1.5 hours including a brief introduction and conclusion (see appendices B and F).

Interviews. The team conducted 16 interviews between February and June 2019, including 12 30-minute phone calls and 4 in-person hour-long conversations. For the phone calls, 13 community leaders who run or have run organizations, agencies, or efforts related to YYA, homelessness, or general systems change were identified (one of the interviews was in-person).

The interviews focused on the following four areas (see appendix E):

1. Understanding the person’s role related to YYA homelessness
2. Learning from their experience with similar system change efforts
3. Identifying system partners and insight into community relationships
4. Learning their top priorities regarding challenges and solutions for an end to YYA homelessness.

toolkit that provides more information on the count and why it is generally considered by the field to be a minimum count, specifically for youth and young adults: <http://voicesofyouthcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Voices-of-Youth-Count-Toolkit-2018-FINAL.pdf>

Community partners helped the team identify 3 YYA for one-on-one interviews—one from the Upper Cape, one from the Mid Cape, and one from Martha’s Vineyard. The agenda for these interviews closely mirrored the focus group agendas, with slight modifications to adapt to a one on one conversation with a young person with lived experience. For example, in addition to the questions asked during the focus group mapping exercise, two of the YYA interviewees were asked to offer both their expertise and what they thought older adults might think in contrast. The same two interviewees were also asked about what YYA partnership might look like on the Cape and Islands, and one interviewee created a map of the YYA homelessness system. One YYA interviewee with experience with the mental health system participated together with an older family member (who offered critical perspective) and followed a more open conversation-style to best meet their needs.

Surveys. A 29-question questionnaire (see appendix D) was developed and widely distributed. It was designed to fill gaps in understanding of the YYA homelessness system, provide an opportunity for system partners to prioritize a set of needs and solutions, and estimate their interest in future participation. Twenty-five community stakeholders from all five communities opened and completed at least half of the survey questions. Fifteen stakeholders completed the survey. The survey was open for two weeks and covered the following topics: respondent organization details, LGBTQ data collection and services, YYA needs and risk factors, systems strengths and weaknesses, YYA partnership and “moving forward together”.

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KEY FINDINGS

This assessment identifies eight key findings that are critical to building a coordinated community response to prevent and end YYA homelessness.

1. As many as 2,400 YYA may experience homelessness over the course of a year, but the number with high needs may be much smaller (approx. 430)

During the January 2018 HUD PIT count the Cape and Islands CoC identified 27 YYA in emergency shelters (HUD, 2018). When the children of YYA parents were included the number rose to 54 individuals, this number is the minimum baseline for prevalence of YYA homelessness. However, PIT counting methods only capture a portion of the total number of YYA experiencing homelessness. PIT data do not include YYA fleeing dangerous living arrangements, those sleeping night-to-night in different homes and apartments (e.g. couch-surfing), those regularly sleeping in spaces too small or inappropriately configured to meet basic needs (e.g. doubled-up), and those who do not want to be, or cannot be, identified by volunteers during the night of the count. Importantly for the Cape and Islands, the PIT count (occurring in January) does not account for the seasonality of housing availability and affordability that changes so significantly between the off-season winter and on-season summer months.

In 2018 the Cape and Islands HMIS, which captures cumulative data, included 233 YYA in households headed by YYA and an additional 142 children in YYA-headed households, for a total of 375 persons (HMIS, 2018). One hundred of those YYA accessed housing and 133 accessed services only. 174 YYA who interacted with the system came from unstable living situations, institutions, emergency shelter, the street, or other places not meant for human habitation. 66 were living in some form of permanent housing, including homelessness-dedicated permanent supportive housing. For 83 YYA, HMIS is lacking data because the YYA refused to respond, the YYA didn't know how to respond, or the field was left blank.⁵

⁵ "Unstable living situations" are defined as those least likely to offer housing security, placing YYAs at greatest risk of experiencing homelessness. The estimate of 91 includes data from the following HMIS fields: Emergency Shelter; Hospital; Hotel/motel no voucher; Interim Housing; Jail; Unsheltered; Psych Hospital; Friend; Detox; and, TH. The estimate of 66 includes data from the following HMIS fields: Owned no subsidy; Owned with subsidy; PSH; Rental no subsidy; Rental with subsidy; and Family. The estimate of 83 includes all remaining YYA recorded as "N/A."

Both PIT and HMIS counts only capture YYA who interact with homelessness resources and are therefore constrained by the current system's limitations. For example, homelessness systems are generally designed to target older individuals, and so the PIT and HMIS numbers may be biased towards older YYA. The Cape and Islands HMIS for 2018 includes 7 unaccompanied YYA under 18, yet Cape and Islands school districts found that 30 of 418 students experiencing homelessness did not have a parent or guardian (McKinney-Vento data for the 2017-2018 school year). Note that the method for identifying homeless students likely contributes to under counting as students are asked to self-report to a homelessness liaison or counselor.

An estimate of the total number of YYA annually experiencing homelessness on the Cape and Islands is possible using national rules of thumb. "Nationally, 10% of YYA age 18-24 and 3.3% of YYA under 18 experience homelessness over the course of a year, including YYA who couch-surf while lacking a safe and stable alternative living arrangement" (Morton, 2017). Thus, the upward limit of YYA experiencing homelessness on the Cape and Islands over the course of a year could be as high as 2,400. This figure includes YYA who may only need services to prevent or end the experience of homelessness, YYA who may need independent housing plus services, or YYA needing independent housing only.

National studies suggest that the majority of YYA who experience homelessness do so briefly. Research also shows that YYA are more likely to experience episodic homelessness than chronic homelessness (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2012). YYA are more likely to couch-surf and double up than they are to be on the streets or in a shelter, and they frequently bounce between different living situations, and experience housing instability and stabilization in a non-linear fashion (Morton, 2017; Samuels, 2019). According to one Barnstable County survey respondent, "couch-surfing is a bigger challenge than we seem to be able to gather data about." While not nearly as visible as street homelessness, these experiences have significant long-term consequences on education, employment, health, and well-being. Each additional day experiencing homelessness may increase a young person's chance of future homelessness by 2% (Morton, 2018).

The number of YYA experiencing homelessness presently being counted (27 from the PIT count) or receiving services annually (233 via the HMIS cumulative count) on the Cape and Islands may

represent those with the highest and most glaring needs. However, it is likely that these YYA are an as-yet unknown percentage of the total number experiencing unstable housing and homelessness. Therefore point-in-time counting, cumulative annual counts of YYA receiving services, and rough estimates are not sufficient to estimate the true number of YYA experiencing unstable housing or homelessness and needing services. The community should consider a further assessment of unmet need⁶ for services for YYA who are unstably housed YYA.

Preparation of the Cape and Islands' system of services to fully identify and serve unstably housed YYA will require additional work. System participants and planners may wish to begin by focusing upon and improving services for the YYA who have already been identified.

2. Homelessness affects vulnerable and minority populations disproportionately

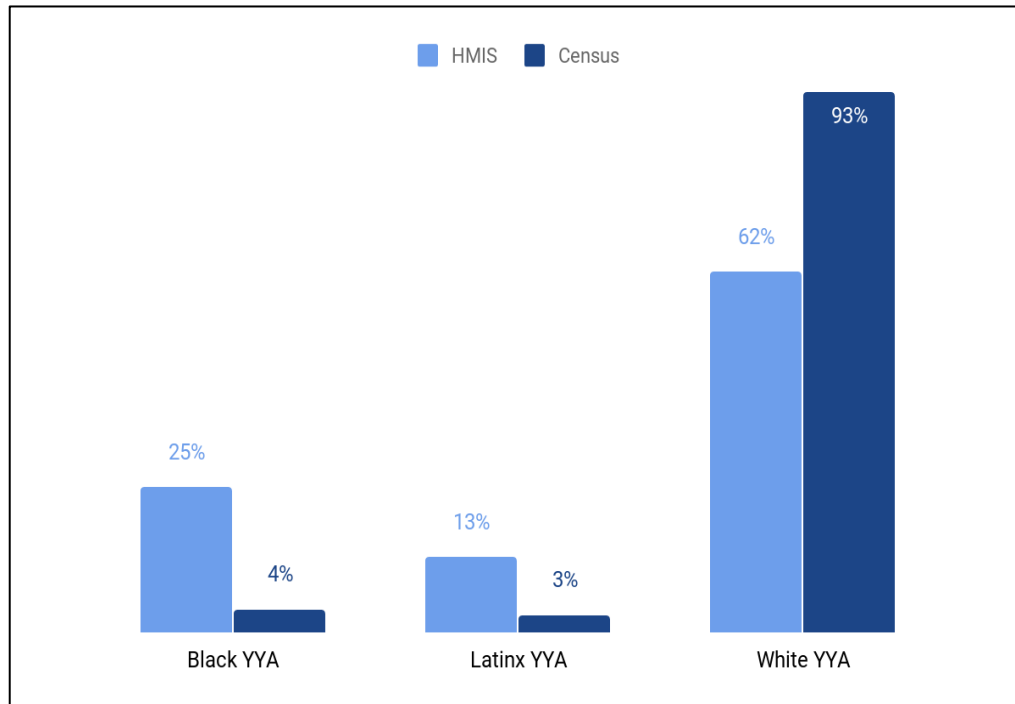
The subject of disproportionality as an important consideration for preventing and ending YYA homelessness received little attention during the focus groups. Similarly, few survey respondents identified minorities (1/25) or LGBTQ YYA (3/25) as “risk groups” for homelessness, and only one interviewee brought up issues of racial or LGBTQ equity. However, the quantitative data allow identification of important disparities in the number of YYA from vulnerable and minority populations experiencing homelessness.

Figure 1 shows that the proportion of Black and Latinx YYA among all YYA experiencing homelessness (25% and 13% respectively) is in great disproportion to the percentage of Black and Latinx persons among the general population of the Cape and Islands (4% and 3% respectively). The reverse is true for White YYA experiencing homelessness (62% of all YYA experiencing homelessness) compared to the percentage of White persons among the general Cape and Islands population (93%).

⁶ Assessment of unmet need is defined as inquiry into under-utilization of services and resources by a group, relative to its level of need. Aragon, Chalkly, and Goddard (2017) describe “supply factors” where availability is the primary challenge, and “demand factors” where stakeholders do not access service despite availability. Demand factors may be related to additional factors concerning service provision or the way individuals seek out services.

Figure 1. Cape & Islands YYA Race and Ethnicity vs. General Population (All Ages), 2018

Comparing race and ethnicity of YYA persons experiencing homelessness in HMIS (233 persons in 2018) with Cape and Islands population demographics (Census, 2017)



Variables which may explain some of the observed racial and ethnic disparity include poverty, the MA family shelter placement process, and differential access to services due to race. However, the needs assessment did not identify data that would allow us to understand the specific reasons why YYA on the Cape and Islands left home which might shed light on these disparities.

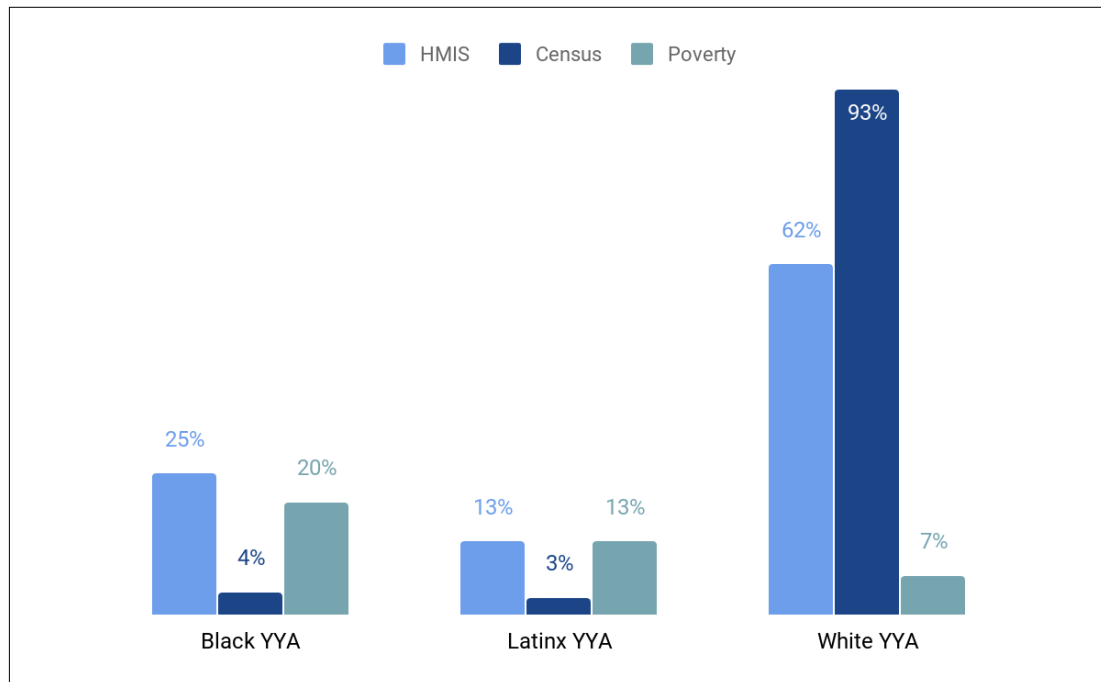
Figure 2 includes poverty rates (all ages) for Black, Latinx, and White residents of the Cape and Islands. Rates of homelessness and poverty are generally in close alignment for Black and Latinx residents. While 25% of Black and 13% of Latinx persons live in poverty only 7% of White persons do so. The data suggest an important association between race, ethnicity, poverty, and homelessness for Black and Latinx YYA; the Cape and Islands should consider solutions targeting low-income minority YYA to prevent and end YYA homelessness.

It is important to recognize that most persons who experience poverty do not also experience homelessness, and that YYA experiencing homelessness may not come from poor households.

National data sets that have been able to control for additional variables, including income, found that Black and Latinx YYA were still at higher risk for experiencing homelessness with these variables removed (Morton, 2017).

Figure 2. C&I YYA Race and Ethnicity vs. General Population (All Ages), with Poverty, 2018

Comparing race and ethnicity of YYA persons experiencing homelessness in HMIS (375 persons in 2018) with Cape and Islands population demographics and poverty (Census, 2017)



Racial disparities appear even more pronounced among homeless YYA who have children. In contrast to the Cape and Islands Black and Latinx populations (4% and 3% respectively), 34% of pregnant or parenting YYA experiencing homelessness identify as Black and 17% identify as Latinx (HMIS, 2018). While this disparity among pregnant or parenting YYA is not fully understood, the process by which the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) assigns shelter through their Emergency Assistance (EA) program may have an impact. The EA placement system is state-wide, and the Cape and Islands HMIS includes pregnant or parenting YYA from other communities in Massachusetts that have been assigned to family shelters that happen to be on Cape Cod.

Removing the family shelter data from our calculations above reduces the percentages of Black and Latinx YYA experiencing homelessness in the HMIS data from 25% and 13% to 19% and

9% respectively. This is a significant difference that requires further investigation, even though the racial disparities remain significant for non-parenting YYA. The impact of the family shelter system's assignment process on complimentary local resources, particularly as it affects community demographics, is a subject of particular interest.

This needs assessment does not address the impact of structural racism on disparities in the experience of homelessness among minority YYA on the Cape and Islands. Nation-wide efforts led by A Way Home America⁷ and SPARC⁸ are helping communities to track differences in rates of homelessness and access to resources. These organizations also work to identify community policies and practices that might increase the likelihood that minority YYA will experience homelessness and the severity of those experiences when compared to their white peers.

This assessment did not specifically engage Wampanoag tribal members. Therefore, there is limited information concerning homelessness among the groups of Wampanoag indigenous people living on the Cape and Islands. There are currently 2,600 enrolled members of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe located in the Upper Cape and parts of the South Shore,⁹ and 1,364 enrolled members of the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head, 316 of whom live on Martha's Vineyard.¹⁰ Tribal governments have their own housing departments, largely funded by HUD, with unique jurisdictional, funding, and resource eligibility restrictions.

Data on gender and sexual orientation of Cape and Islands homeless YYA are also limited. The Cape and Islands HMIS does not capture these data and the number of YYA participating in the State Count is too small to make reliable estimates. However, communities across the country consistently find that 20% to 40% of YYA experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ. This is consistent with communities in Massachusetts that have reliable homelessness data for LGBTQ YYA. Research consistently finds that LGBTQ YYA are at higher risk of experiencing

⁷ A Way Home America is the national movement to prevent and end YYA homelessness in America, their goals explicitly recognize the importance of racial equity, as well as equity for LGBTQ YYA, in preventing and ending YYA homelessness. For more information, see <https://awayhomeamerica.org/>

⁸ SPARC, or, Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities, is an effort led by the Center for Social Innovation, a leading TA provider for HUD homelessness programs. Their mission is to work with "partners and communities to understand and respond to racial inequities and to jump start implementation of racial equity strategies in homeless services, programs, policies, and systems." For more information, see <https://c4innovates.com/training-technical-assistance/sparc/>

⁹ For more information, see the tribes government website: <https://mashpeewampanoagtribe-nsn.gov/>

¹⁰ For more information, see the tribe's government websites: <https://www.wampanoagtribe.org/>

homelessness, their reasons for leaving home are significantly different, on average, from their cisgender-straight¹¹ peers, and they experience homelessness more severely, with higher rates of sexual exploitation, violence, and suicidality (MA Coalition, 2019).

It is also important to note that most of the participants engaged during this needs assessment were White, over age 30, and used cisgender pronouns. It is possible that engaging community members who better represent the diversity of the population being served, including YYA, minorities, members of the LGBTQ community, and those with lived experience of homelessness, may inform the development culturally competent programs and policies.

3. The lack of year-round affordable housing puts pressure on housing stability for YYA

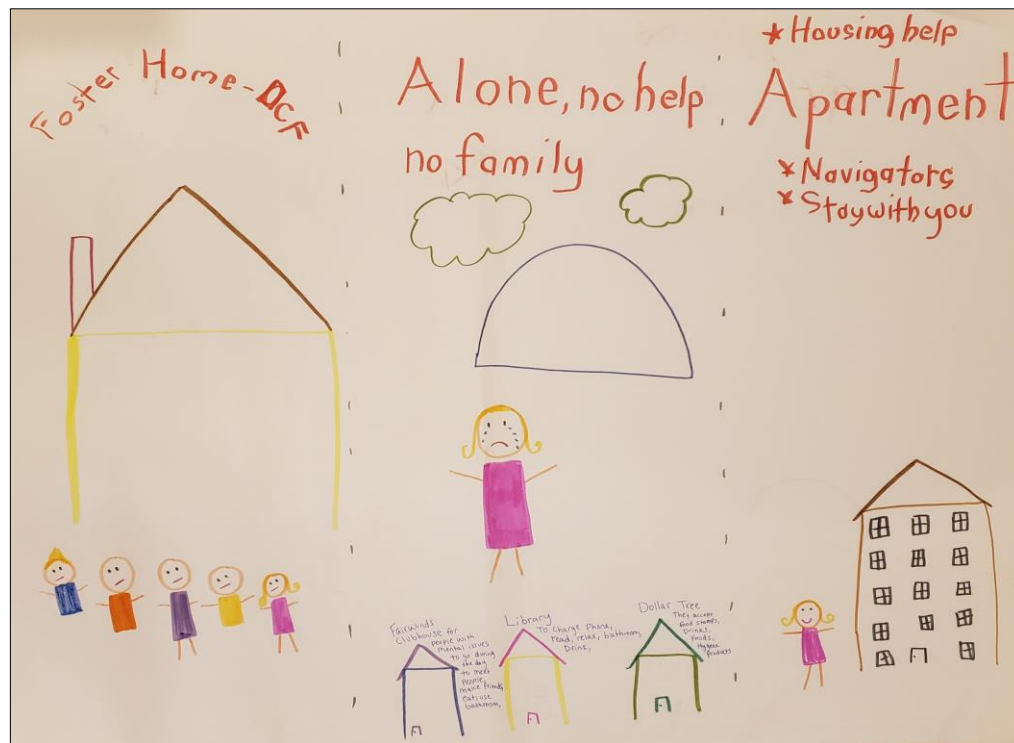
Lack of affordable housing was the most commonly identified factor contributing to YYA homelessness in the provider survey, and it featured prominently as the biggest identified challenge to ending homelessness in each focus group and interview. The issue can be grouped into three categories: 1) seasonal variability related to summer tourism; 2) generally high housing costs; and 3) lack of housing stock and available development capacity. These challenges are mutually reinforcing and together put significant pressure on families and YYA who live on the Cape and Islands year-round. As one interviewee put it, ““these things really compound themselves - a recipe for disaster.”

The Cape and Islands experience a unique seasonal housing “shuffle” that results from the large influx of tourists that visit the region each summer. Its effects vary by community, but stakeholders report a significant impact on all parts of Cape Cod, Martha’s Vineyard, and Nantucket. For context, the Nantucket Data Platform estimated an “anchor” island population of 17,200 residents in 2017,¹² but a seasonal high of over 45,000 total people. With a scarcity of units and land, zoning that favors single family homes and low density (Quinn 2018), and the high prices that summer vacationers are willing to pay for short term rentals, there is a strong incentive for homeowners to reserve the summer months for tourists, charge summer rents that

¹¹ The term cisgender denotes or relates to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex.

¹² The ACS population estimate for 2017 is less than 11,000, an almost 40% undercount that may have a significant effect on state and national resources allocated by official population data.

are several times higher than winter rents, and limit year-round residents to 6-9 month leases. As a consequence, many families and YYA are required to move several times a year from late spring to early fall and couch-surf, double-up, or live in a car, tent, or shelter for the summer.



System Map created by a YYA interviewee

Even without considering the substantial seasonal price increases, average rent is often far out of reach. Fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Barnstable County is \$1,524, and yet renters earning an estimated average wage of \$11.86 per hour can only afford a unit up to \$617 per month (NLIHC, 2019). Even a two-income household earning the estimated average wage cannot afford the fair market rent. This also fails to consider the significant price increases that occur during the summer high season. According to the most recent report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Barnstable County “had the lowest average weekly wage among the large counties in the Commonwealth” (BLS, 2019). The figures for Dukes County are \$1,531, \$17.48, and \$909 respectively (NLIHC, 2019). Nantucket has the highest fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment (\$1,572 per month) in the region (HUD, 2019).

According to an analysis by Glynn, Byrne, and Culhane (2018), the Cape and Islands CoC has a unique combination of unaffordable housing costs, homelessness, and rate of extreme poverty.

Their study's most important finding is that there is a significant spike in homelessness when housing costs exceed the threshold of 32% of median income. Housing costs on the Cape and Islands exceed 37% of median income.

"Housing is the number one issue facing the Cape. We have a housing crisis that is more acute because 40% of housing is seasonal that use it 2-3 months a year."

Interviewee

"Often people move 3 or 4 times in one year; I'm part of that group. Sometimes you're moving from rental to rental, and sometimes you're staying from October through April. We've got working professionals doing this too. Not just low-income people". *Focus group participant*

"This problem begins and ends with housing, and everything that you're talking about...none of this works [without] housing." *Focus group participant*

Focus groups, interview participants, and survey respondents had the following suggestions to better serve YYA experiencing homelessness:

- i. Establishment of "Crisis Housing" options for YYA in each region.
- ii. More housing with an expanded array of options for YYA, including transitional housing as well as more independent options, and including non-recovery focused housing.
- iii. Shared housing options – removing barriers for peers and chosen family to live together.
- iv. Support for intergenerational cohousing.
- v. Zoning that permits creation of by-right in-law apartments (accessory dwelling units).

4. There are several service-related gaps that may leave YYA with unmet needs.

This assessment identified several important gaps in services for YYA experiencing homelessness:

a. Lack of Timely and Effective Risk Assessment. On average young people in Massachusetts first experience homelessness at 17 years of age (Mass.gov, 2018) yet it appears that the system fails to identify homelessness until young people are in their early 20s. Only 4% of Cape and Islands YYA interacting with the formal homelessness system are under the age of 18 (HMIS,

2018). Since Cape and Islands school districts rely on students to identify themselves as homeless the schools are likely undercounting “unaccompanied homeless youth”. Barnstable County school districts identified fewer than 10 such students during the 2017-2018 school year¹³.

The needs of the 380 Cape and Islands YYA engaged with the child welfare system at the end of 2018 are not well understood.¹⁴ Local stakeholders consistently identified child welfare involvement as a risk factor and national studies confirm that they are at especially high risk of experiencing homelessness (Morton, 2017). Focus groups, interview participants, and survey respondents suggested that the Cape and Islands need targeted risk assessment and assistance to YYA and their families via the schools and the MA Department of Children and Families (DCF).

In addition, data are missing on commercial and sexual exploitation of YYA on the Cape and Islands. According to one national estimate, 15% of YYA experiencing homelessness had been trafficked for sex and 32% had been involved in the sex trade in some way (Wolfe, 2017). Cape and Islands-specific information on the prevalence of this problem among YYA is lacking at this time.

b. Cliff Effect Upon Exiting “The System” (High School, DYS, or DCF). Assessment participants reported that YYA experience a gap in services, activities, and financial support once they leave high school, the Department of Youth Services (DYS), or DCF foster care programs. Schools tend to be well resourced, but there is a cliff effect¹⁵ once students leave high school, which can disrupt the development of new skills and professional relationships and remove a well-understood context for positive social relationships.

Upon leaving the foster care system YYA suddenly become solely responsible for their personal and financial well-being. Quarterly reports produced by DCF confirm that the permanency plan

¹³ The U.S. Department of Education EData reporting standards for local school districts defines the term “unaccompanied homeless youth” as “homeless” and “not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.” Their definition of homelessness, and the definitions used by other federal agencies, can be found here: https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Federal-Definitions-of-Youth-Homelessness.pdf

¹⁴ MA EOHHS provided the authors with the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families Quarterly Profile-FY2019, Q2 which provides data through 12/31/18.

¹⁵ A “cliff effect” refers to the sudden and complete ineligibility for supportive services.

associated with most YYA over 18 is an “Alternative Planned Permanent Living Arrangement.”¹⁶ For many YYA, including 23% of those “out of placement,” their permanency plan is “unspecified.” YYA engaged with DYS may similarly be discharged into unstable housing and without support to deal with the collateral consequences associated with their justice involvement. Focus groups, interview participants, and survey respondents had the following suggestions to better serve YYA experiencing homelessness leaving the system:

- i. Provide job training and expanded post-high school education opportunities in all regions.
- ii. Provide support in the development of independent living skills, including preparing to live off-Cape and off-Island.
- iii. Provide flexible bridge funding and support for personal and public transportation costs.

c. *Lack of Timely Access to Mental Health Services for YYA.* Mental health services were highlighted as a need in all three YYA interviews and in most of the focus groups. Over half of the YYA in HMIS for whom there is information about a disabling condition included mental health issues, and almost 70% of YYA nationally indicate mental health as a struggle (HMIS, 2018; Morton, 2017). Staffing capacity, lack of service options, and long wait lists for behavioral health services make accessing care difficult for YYA. Focus groups, interview participants, and survey respondents had the following suggestions to better serve YYA experiencing homelessness who need mental health services:

- i. Expansion of eligibility criteria for DMH case management for mental health.
- ii. More clinicians trained and experienced in the mental health treatment of YYA (including bilingual capabilities).

d. *Lack of YYA-Focused Substance Use Treatment and Recovery Services.* Data indicate that between 8% and 10% of Cape and Islands YYA in HMIS report substance use as a disabling condition (HMIS, 2018) and 51 Cape and Island YYA self-identified as “homeless” in the state’s treatment system (BSAS, 2018). Some stakeholders suggested that self-identification methods

¹⁶ The Children’s League has identified that, “when a child receives APPLA as a service plan goal, the goal of finding a permanent placement is abandoned.” <http://www.childrensleague.org/2017-2018-priority-legislation/>. DCF maintains responsibility for the young person, and an assigned social worker must continue “to seek a permanent connection with a competent adult,” and help the young person maintain, “a stable living environment” and work on “life skills training.” <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2016/07/qk/permanency-planning-policy.pdf>

for this population may lead to significant undercounting and older adult focus group participants identified substance use as a barrier to success for YYA more frequently than any other barrier. In contrast, YYA interviewed during the assessment process explained that many YYA do not need substance use disorder treatment or protective settings. “It upsets me when they try to push me off to a shelter, or try and put me in a sober house, or in a program where most people are in recovery” one interviewee explained. Perceptions of risk among unstably housed YYA require further inquiry.

e. A Deficit in Training and Understanding Among Adults Serving Homeless YYA.

YYA interviewees identified significant disparities between their actual experience and how adults perceive their experience. Interviews and focus groups with adults also suggest training deficits in key concepts related to YYA homelessness. Training content should include YYA homelessness 101, trauma informed care, positive youth development principles, harm reduction, and authentic YYA-partnership. Future training should include teachers, police, youth center personnel, librarians, DCF parents, shelter staff, housing programs staff, and homelessness system leaders. Focus group and interview participants had the following suggestions to better serve YYA experiencing homelessness:

- i. Use of navigators with lived experience to help YYA access services and community resources.
- ii. A one-stop online place or app for YYA and families to access housing and resources.
- iii. A YYA-specific safe space with access to services; perhaps a closed-off separate space.
- iv. Mentors with lived experience of overcoming homelessness.

5. Small social networks, stigma, and a lack of awareness suppress action

Community stakeholders frequently described the small size of Cape and Island communities as both a strength and a weakness. A strength is that they can approximate a family-like support system that engenders loyalty and responsibility for one's neighbors. One interviewee remarked that there is a “sense of knowing everybody and caring about everybody” and several mentioned that “the towns take care of their own.” Another stated that “the greatest strength this community has is its identity - there is a strong identity of being a Cape Codder - and when we

experience something traumatic, we come out in force to meet the needs of [our] own.” A small community also makes it possible for service providers to track families over generations and build strong personal relationships with both the formal and informal supports that YYA might need.

However, according to several participants living in a small community can sometimes feel like living “under a microscope” where “everyone knows your business.” One person put it like this: “we’re this loving community, but we’re also small enough to know all the mistakes you’ve made in your whole entire life. And so if your name is in the paper, or they know (what your parents have done), it’s hard for somebody to want to rent a place to you or want to hire you.” Participants also noted a hyper-competitive atmosphere, with high expectations for YYA to succeed in school, sports, and business.

“[This is] one of the most intensely parochial and competitive places that I have ever lived in.” *Focus group attendee*

YYA who experience homelessness or other traumas may react to this dynamic by hiding their need for support rather than reaching out. Many service providers identified self-imposed isolation, feeling alone, and embarrassment as significant barriers for YYA. One of the young people interviewed described a “wall” that YYA put up in public which masks their true feelings.

“There is a balance between having an attitude, being tough, but also breaking down based on the emotional baggage and weight that we carry.”

YYA Interviewee

“No child that leaves school on their own and then fails is going to walk back in to get help. It’s an unrealistic expectation.” *Focus group attendee*

An atmosphere of stigma and shame may allow some to moralize that homelessness is deserved, which further reinforces the instinct of families and YYA in crisis to remain quiet about their struggles.

“[There] seems to be a real negative view of homeless people - sure, there are some that are pains in the butt, but that is true of folks who are not homeless too”.

Interviewee

“I hear a lot of people say, someone [is] a trust fund homeless person... they'll judge any homeless person on this island. They'll say, the best thing they could do for this person is give them a ticket on the ferry.” *Focus group attendee*

Such misconceptions and biases, which are common around the county, are stigmatizing. They make it difficult to accurately identify the number of YYA experiencing housing crises, particularly in systems like schools that rely on self-identification, and may dissuade community members from engaging in conversations about ending YYA homelessness.

Community members identified two additional related factors that appear to contribute to a lack of awareness of YYA homelessness. The first is the demographics of the Cape and Islands, which skews public policymaking towards an already elderly and aging population. If YYAs are seen and heard less frequently than older persons, especially during town meetings and local elections, then the community may underestimate the challenges that YYA face (homeless or not). The second is the Cape and Islands' reputation for being home to wealthy residents and vacationers. If you happen to be in an area where homelessness is less visible, or only experience your community from the vantage point of a large home, private club, or tourist downtown, you might not believe that YYA homelessness is a real challenge.

“The Cape and Islands population skews older and a lot of emphasis is placed on the 45+ age group and frail elders' group. I think one of the impacts of that shift is that the needs of youth get left out very often - the safety nets are designed to catch the older folks.” *Interviewee*

“People don't realize that Cape Cod has students and families who don't have housing. They are shocked. They know Hyannis for the Kennedys; they don't know Hyannis for homelessness.” *Interviewee*

Communities need to first be aware of the issue of YYA homelessness before they will support efforts to prevent and end it. YYA and their families will continue to hide their challenges with housing instability and its underlying causes until there is a safe and supportive environment for

discussing them, and system leaders will struggle to articulate the prevalence and characteristics of the problem and to design effective solutions until they can successfully identify YYA and their families **before** and during homelessness.

“If each of the 15 towns on Cape Cod could come up with the funds to take care of three people in one three-bedroom house, that’s 45 people being helped. It is not an ability problem, it’s a willingness problem.” *Interviewee*

“What would it look like if the state tried to come in and build a shelter people would go bananas! - *Focus group participant*

Focus groups, interview participants, and survey respondents had the following suggestions to bring education and awareness of the problem of YYA homelessness:

- i. Outreach to promote hope and optimism among homeless YYA, their families, and the provider community.
- ii. Investment in YYA (both housed and experiencing homelessness) to keep the community intact; what makes a community rich is the diversity of people and ages.
- iii. Raising community awareness for those people who are not full-time residents.
- iv. A mechanism to inform people of what chronic homelessness and true homelessness is.
- v. Raise public awareness of who's at risk and the ways to help them.

6. YYA voice is largely absent from decision making

YYA experience the homelessness system differently than adult service providers and decision-makers think they do. YYA have unique expertise in how programs and processes actually work and critical insight into how their peers might react to new projects and policies. Without their engagement in community planning community leaders may not make the best decisions, implement the most effective programs, or garner the buy-in and support from the young people that they serve to be successful.

This sentiment was evident in the three interviews with YYA that were conducted. YYA revealed new locations for outreach and identification that the adult interviewees and focus group participants failed to uncover (e.g. the Falmouth Dollar Store). They identified the unique needs of their peers and contrasted these with the community responses they receive. YYA

interviewees wanted particular items of clothing and hygiene (underwear, socks, wet wipes), warm food vs. canned food, training for foster parents, caring from leaders, independence, training in self-advocacy, and an update to the food stamp administration policies. These needs stand in stark contrast to what they have been told or shown by adults that they need (discipline, respect, sobriety and recovery programs). The interviewees expressed surprise and appreciation that they were asked for their opinions and expertise and that it was valued (\$25).

“Adults feel like they are doing the right thing, but don’t walk in our shoes. They have low expectations, even if they have ‘hope for us.” *YYA Interviewee*

Currently there is no framework for YYA with lived experience of homelessness to participate in shaping the homelessness prevention and response system. Some community partners indicated that there may be local or program based YYA participation in policy making, including a provider on the Cape and on Martha’s Vineyard. Similarly, the Hyannis Youth and Community Center has instituted YYA partnership and leadership development into many of its programs, although none are focused on YYA with lived experience of homelessness. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 equal to tokenism and 5 equals to full authentic partnership, survey respondents gave themselves a 2 out of 5. One respondent suggested that older adults may have been included in homelessness work and that “the region has done well to include peers and those with lived experience in decision making, but there has not been a conscious effort to recruit YYA to be involved in the same way.”

Some community members identified potential challenges to consistent and authentic YYA partnership in efforts to end YYA homelessness. These challenges included difficulty with transportation, recruitment across diverse and often rural communities, training among organizations and staff to facilitate the work, and the need to fully resource such an effort, including paying YYA to participate. They also discussed difficulty with self-identification and specifically that YYA often do not identify as experiencing homelessness or respond well to technical definitions and labels.

The state has committed to supporting the Cape and Islands in their development of authentic partnership with YYA. In June 2019, members of Boston’s Youth Action Board traveled to

Hyannis and provided training for 9 service staff. They have also provided guides for engaging young people in decision making and starting a youth action board, as well as guidance on how to use state and federal funds for financially supporting a YYA engagement effort.

Focus groups, interview participants, and survey respondents had the following suggestions to bring about YYA participation:

- i. An advisory board of young adults representing each region.
- ii. YYA representation, input and participation on town committees and on all decision-making bodies seeking to plan and provide services to homeless YYA.
- iii. Using YYA-friendly language when discussing what they system considers homelessness, but YYA and older adults might not readily identify as homelessness.

“YYA are stronger than you think. And they deserve better. Put yourself in our shoes. You wouldn't want your daughter, your son, living in a random household, with random people. You'd want the best for them. So why would you sit around and allow this to happen?”

YYA Interviewee

7. Regional differences and similarities matter

There are important differences and similarities between the following areas identified during this assessment: Upper Cape, Mid Cape, Lower Cape, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket. Each area appears to have its own identity and structural nuances that make targeted solutions and local decision-making an important part of future efforts to prevent and end YYA homelessness. It is possible that additional subdivisions could reveal more differences.

“[It's] a matter of learning about each other's worlds” *Interviewee*

Differences

Some examples of the differences include the following:

a. Level of Isolation: The two islands experience the greatest isolation from neighboring communities and resources. The need to take a boat or plane to the mainland creates a physical separation that pervades island culture to the point where off-Island “can feel like a different

world". According to one focus group participant, "when they talk about going off-Island...you're just not prepared for the world outside." This isolation also means that there are fewer resources (e.g. supportive housing and services) and that building those resources on-Island is expensive. There may be a larger need for one-stop shop agencies on the islands that can perform multiple tasks and for off-Island organizations that provide services to island young people to invest in understanding the culture and its effects.

"Google Woods Hole...now look to your right. I'm on that island (Martha's Vineyard). I can't get to Springfield in three hours." *Focus group participant*

Cape Cod stakeholders also identified isolation as a challenge. While not requiring a boat or plane to get there from the rest of Massachusetts, the Cape is long and thin with limited public transportation options. To many people parts of the Lower and Outer Cape can feel almost as remote as Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard.

b. Available Resources: Resources are not evenly distributed among Cape and Island communities. Most stakeholders observed that the Mid Cape has the highest density of critical resources to match its relatively large population and level of need. The Hyannis Youth and Community Center, for example, is an important asset for positive social activities, outreach, leadership development, and multi-service delivery. The Mid Cape has the only community college, emergency shelter, and many of the critical justice and health resources. The Lower Cape has comparatively few resources, and community members explained that even when one town on the Lower Cape (e.g. Harwich) has a particular resource, it may still be far away from other Lower Cape communities. Stakeholders in the Upper Cape, despite its closer proximity to the rest of Massachusetts, had difficulty identifying services for mental health, substance use disorder, and other supportive resources beyond those found in Hyannis (in the Mid Cape). The Islands often lack state agency offices which may be more accessible on the Cape and might otherwise facilitate greater access to state-controlled programs and services.

"Right now, what I want is more clinicians here on Island...every single organization needs them and it's ridiculous that we can't get them. It really upsets me, because everyone wants [them] and everyone's offering more money than...average, and we just can't get them." *Focus group participant*

c. Politics: Community decision-making varies across regions and towns and requires significant local knowledge and experience to navigate. Each town has its own Town Council or Board of Selectmen, community priorities, and town services. The town meeting structures are different as are the power dynamics between community stakeholders. For example, the Mid Cape (particularly the Town of Barnstable) struggles with its reputation as the service-rich part of the region when making policy decisions concerning homelessness.

Similarities

Some examples of similarities include the following:

a. Available Resources: No area of the Cape and Islands has had dedicated resources solely to support YYA experiencing homelessness. Though the differences identified above are important to consider, most communities share a need for additional housing and services. For example, all five subregions struggle to recruit and retain quality staff in critical service areas like mental health counseling, and all need YYA-dedicated housing

b. Transportation: All Cape and Islands communities struggle with transportation, even though the degree and circumstances vary. Few towns will be able to support a truly comprehensive array of services and most will rely on resources located around the region. Each focus group discussed transportation as a barrier for YYA experiencing homelessness. They discussed a general lack of public and affordable options, and limited flexible funding to meet the unique transportation needs of their young people.

c. Seasonality: All Cape and Islands communities struggle with the seasonal impact of a tourism economy and the needs of year-round residents. Stakeholders from each subregion identified challenges related to affordable housing, employment, politics, and community services that make it difficult to align resources and opportunities with the needs of year-round residents

d. On-Cape and On-Island Culture: Stakeholders from each of the subregions identified culture as a unique barrier for their YYA and collaboration with organizations based in other parts of Massachusetts. For example, they commented on the need for “off-Cape” or “off-Island” service providers to better understand and accommodate their unique needs, and the need to support their YYA as they navigate unfamiliar “off-Island” or “off-Cape” experiences (e.g. college). There

may be important subregional cultural characteristics to consider, but there appear to be an important shared challenge that might require a shared region-wide response.

e. Non-traditional Stakeholder Engagement: Participants from the four focus groups and nearly all interviewees recognized the need to work with community stakeholders beyond the traditional health and human service system in efforts to prevent and end YYA homelessness. Many identified existing partnerships that the community can build upon such as the town of Barnstable's Community Impact Unit, middle and high school counselors and resource officers, the Cape Cod Foundation, the United Way, local businesses, town council members, and housing developers.

Libraries and librarians frequently interact with people experiencing homelessness and can be powerful allies in every community. Librarians participated in two of our focus groups and were identified as important stakeholders in all four of them. As one focus group participant explained, "I can't underestimate the value of the libraries in identifying this homeless YYA."

The faith community has a strong history of supporting homeless persons (e.g. Laundry Love, shelter services, food banks) and could be a strong partner in ending YYA homelessness.

Several representatives of religious organizations participated in the focus groups and attended our convenings. According to one interviewee "religious organizations are a strong, visible, and positive resource. They are very collaborative; they know the families personally (often) they better than the social services organizations."

8. The homelessness system is not designed to prevent and end YYA homelessness.

There are no organizations solely dedicated to YYA homelessness on the Cape and Islands. There are no beds dedicated for YYA experiencing homelessness nor one entity responsible for coordinating actions and making decisions regarding YYA homelessness. That leaves gaps in service delivery, limits data collection and analysis, limits system planning, and slows the adoption of best and promising new practices. As one survey respondent put it, there is "no formalized system that works well, with a lead agency and specific identified partners that play their critical role with the parent agency, [and there are] too many organizations, no coordination, and lots of turf protection which leaves the youth to suffer."

The Barnstable County Department of Human Services serves as the lead agency for the Continuum of Care (CoC) and convenes the Cape and Islands Regional Network on Homelessness, a broad-based public-private partnership committed to identifying and implementing solutions to prevent and end homelessness on the Cape and Islands. Barnstable County, on behalf of the Regional Network, recently secured state funding to begin building regional capacity to address the experiences of YYAs and connect YYA homelessness stakeholders across the region. These efforts began in 2019 and community partners are developing a shared understanding of their role in a system-wide approach, the resources that exist, how those resources are connected, and the role of the Regional Network on Homelessness. As yet there is no YYA homelessness committee or working group that has the capacity or authority to propose action, track progress, identify and disseminate system information, or hold the system accountable for outcomes.

"Who is doing youth homelessness on Cape Cod? Nobody." *Interviewee*

"Youth organizations live in a silo here on the Cape and live on the periphery." *Interviewee*

One of the consequences of this lack of coordination appears to be a lack of programs and decision-making that benefit the entire Cape and Islands region, rather than a specific program or geographic region. The Cape and Islands Regional Network on Homelessness is charged with coordinating all stakeholders, systems, and resources to prevent and end homelessness, including YYA homelessness. The Regional Network participates in several such efforts for other populations, many community members have experience with coordinating planning efforts, and there seems to be optimism regarding stakeholder's ability to tackle this issue together.

This becomes particularly important when considering the geographic and political landscape of the Cape and Islands. There are 22 towns and 3 counties with their own governance structures, services, and community identities. Stakeholders frequently commented that competing local interests limit solidarity around issues like homelessness, encourage an "us vs. them" mentality, and make coordination difficult. An abundance of non-profit organizations and competing needs of subpopulations may further dilute resources. While some participants recommended radical changes to town political processes, most agreed that cross-jurisdiction coalitions were necessary for real change.

The lack of a YYA homelessness service system is likely due to the limited resources dedicated to homeless YYA. Of the 47 programs and 727 beds dedicated to serving those experiencing homelessness on the Cape and Islands (40% of which are emergency shelter beds) there are no programs or beds solely dedicated to YYA experiencing homelessness. As noted, 100 YYA were served in adult-oriented housing programs in 2018, 89 of whom enrolled in emergency shelter (HMIS, 2018). Another 133 YYA received services only (not housing or shelter), mostly from stabilization, prevention, or diversion programs. These programs do not generally have the capacity to meet the unique developmental needs of YYA, even though they work hard to ensure their clients at least exit to stable living arrangements (HMIS, 2018).¹⁷

Ideally, YYA-dedicated programs are developed to meet YYA needs through the physical design of units and spaces, the methodologies and values embedded in programing and engagement strategies, the hiring and training of staff, and the supportive services with which programs connect or provide to their YYA guests. Communities can leverage a variety of federal homelessness and housing programs (e.g. CoC, Emergency Solutions Grant, Housing Choice Vouchers, Runaway and Homeless Youth), state funding (e.g. RAFT, Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth), and local philanthropic dollars, among other sources, to fund YYA-dedicated programs.

In 2018 (SFY 2019) the Barnstable County Department of Human Services received funding from the MA EOHHS to coordinate this assessment process and to fund five community-based organizations to work with YYA experiencing homelessness: the Housing Assistance Corporation, the Homeless Prevention Council, Champ Homes, Martha's Vineyard Community Services, and Nantucket Fairwinds. The grant funds from the EOHHS are flexible and can be used to support housing for YYA. This funding will be available in SFY 2020 as well. YYA on the Cape and Islands

¹⁷ Stable living arrangement captured in HMIS and interpreted as 'positive exits' include the following categories: Other; Owned no subsidy; Rental no subsidy; Rental with subsidy; and Family. Positive exits are high for YYA who only engage in supportive services-between 80 and 100%. HMIS includes positive exits for 72% of parenting YYA who used emergency shelters and for whom exit information was captured. Only 46% of unaccompanied YYA who used emergency shelter had positive exits. 1 unaccompanied YYA used TH and did not have a positive exit, while another unaccompanied YYA used RRH and had a positive exit. These data do not capture other qualities of the experience of YYA in adult oriented programs related to social emotional wellbeing, health, employment, education, or long-term stability. Higher positive exit rates for parenting YYA may be due to the MA right to shelter family system, and nearly 25% of YYA leaving emergency shelter do not have a recorded exit. Overall, 61% of YYA in HMIS do not have a recorded exit.

also have access to state resources. In CY 2018 38 YYA accessed Emergency Assistance shelters and motels through DHCD.¹⁸

Resources are similarly limited when it comes to non-housing resources. The survey, focus groups, and YYA grant partners identified very few dedicated YYA resources, including basic needs, out of school-time activities, mentoring programs, education and workforce development opportunities, health-related services, and transportation. When services and supports do exist, they are often targeted narrowly (e.g. youth under age 18, YYA with substance use challenges), concentrated in one area (e.g. Mid-Cape), or run by an organization new to YYA work.

YYA face a limited array of service options and organizations with which they can interact, which is not uncommon in small or rural communities. For example, a single agency may provide all the available local services but may not include a resource to meet a young person's particular needs. If a negative relationship develops, a young person may not be able or willing to access what they do need. Geographic limitations may make duplicative providers inefficient or unsustainable, however the lack of options for a YYA in these instances can prevent the resolution of their homelessness. Of the over 100 non-housing resources identified by partners during focus groups, only a small handful are YYA-specific or have special capacity to serve YYA.

It is possible that more investment in YYA homelessness services and prevention will provide greater incentive for stakeholders to collaborate. For example, the state recently required local YYA homelessness leadership to build partnerships and conduct a multi-sector comprehensive needs assessment as a condition of state funding allocated for youth homelessness. Similarly, HUD requires collaboration and multi-stakeholder decision making as a condition of participating in its CoC Program and Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program. Requirements for collaboration and regional planning built into both public and private investments may speed up collaboration and encourage the development of an effective governance and decision-making infrastructure for YYA homelessness on the Cape and Islands.

¹⁸ The Emergency Assistance program is a state program providing family shelter resources in compliance with the state's right to shelter law, Chapter 450 of the Acts of 1983. <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/find-emergency-family-shelter>



Survey results for a word or phrase that describes the YYA homelessness system on the Cape and Islands

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Next Steps

The eight findings in this report suggest the following next steps:

1. Create a YYA Workgroup within the Cape and Islands Regional Network on Homelessness.

A deliberative body to address issues of homelessness for all populations on the Cape and Islands already exists: The Cape and Islands Regional Network on Homelessness (Regional Network). The Regional Network Executive Committee could create a new workgroup to work on a coordinated community response to specifically prevent and end YYA homelessness.

The Regional Network is a collaborative effort of state, county, and local governments, social service providers, housing agencies, faith-based organizations, the business community and individuals working together to prevent and end homelessness. Through its broad-based public-private partnership, the Regional Network identifies and implements creative solutions to preventing and ending homelessness on Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket. Created in 2009 out of the former Leadership Council to End Homelessness, the Regional Network provides a forum for regional discussions and planning for better coordination of services aimed at reducing homelessness.

A YYA workgroup of the Regional Network and its affiliates, with YYA participation, could be tasked to develop recommendations and an implementation plan to address YYA homelessness. Their scope would include consideration of a regional structure to coordinate resources, organizations, and service providers across the Cape and Islands.

Issues for prioritized consideration should include the following:

- a. Explore opportunities for YYA-specific housing options.
- b. Establish consistent data capture and storage procedures among all YYA homelessness service providers (e.g. use of HMIS).
- c. Estimate unmet need for YYA homelessness services, including further analysis of sub-populations of YYA not addressed in this report (e.g. Wampanoag YYA, YYA experiencing commercial and sexual exploitation, and YYA leaving the DCF and DYS systems).
- d. Include non-traditional service providers and community supports to address YYA homelessness (e.g. faith-based groups, town libraries, school districts, Cape Cod Community College).

- e. Educate the Cape and Islands community on the factors contributing to YYA homelessness and the service that these persons need.

2. Include YYA at risk of, and experiencing, homelessness in all assessment, planning and implementation processes.

YYA experience the homelessness system differently than do adults. Without YYA engagement in community planning, community leaders may not make the best decisions, implement the most effective programs with the right rules and procedures, or garner the buy-in and support from the young people that they serve. YYA with experience of homelessness need to be included in the process regularly and as early as possible.

Identifying the correct staff person(s) to liaise with young people is extremely important. Staff must have the capacity to work in collaboration with YYA, facilitate conversations, and ensure that YYA feel safe, supported, and ready to participate in what may be an intimidating environment. In addition, YYA should be compensated for their time and expertise. Language is also critical to the engagement process. Talking points and materials must recognize that YYA do not always identify as experiencing homelessness even when they have important perspective and experience to contribute.

A strategy for continuing to engage YYA experiencing homelessness in planning and implementation processes will be necessary. The Massachusetts Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth has developed a helpful resource for this purpose (MSCUHY, 2018) as has TrueColorsUnited.org.

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Additional MA state agency reports were prepared specially for this project by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services and include administrative data from the Departments of Children and Families, Youth Services, Elementary and Secondary Education, and Public Health through its Bureau of Substance Addiction Services. The Barnstable County Sheriff’s Department also provided administrative data concerning the number of 18 to 24 currently engaged with the adult justice system.

SOURCE MATERIAL (Links to Externally Hosted Resources)

Source A. Focus Group Transcript Notes - Audio recordings available on request

[Hyannis Transcript from 3/13/19](#)

[Martha's Vineyard Transcript from 4/10/19](#)

[Nantucket Transcript from 4/11/19](#)

[Falmouth Transcript from 6/6/19](#)

Source B. YYA Interview Transcript Notes

[Martha's Vineyard Transcript 4/10/19](#)

[Falmouth Transcript 6/20/19](#)

[Hyannis Transcript 6/20/19](#)

Source C. Older Adult System Partner Interview Notes

[Notes Folder](#)

Source D. [Survey Analysis](#)

Source E. Data Analysis

[Prevalence and Characteristics](#)

[Summary Prevalence](#)

[Population and Poverty](#)

[Child Welfare Quarterly Analysis](#)

Source F. Convening Feedback Transcript from 7/25/19

APPENDIX A: PREVALENCE SNAPSHOT

Table 1. 2018 CoC Prevalence Data

The PIT is a point-in-time count conducted on a single day. The HMIS data is annual for CY 2018.

2018	PIT	%	HMIS	%	Notes
All YYA	27	100%	233	100%	Does not include children of parenting YYA. All persons counted during the PIT were in emergency shelter.
Unaccompanied YYA between 18 and 24	5	19%	117	50%	HMIS includes 9 in non-parenting couples. 53% of households are without children.
Unaccompanied YYA under 18	0	0%	7	3%	Both HMIS and PIT tend to skew older based on methodology and program target population
Parenting YYA between 18 and 24	22	81%	108	46%	HMIS includes 92 single and 16 two-parent households. 45% of households are families. 46% of parents are 18 to 24
Parenting YYA under 18	0	100%	1	0%	HMIS includes 1 single and no two-parent households. 45% of households are families. 0.4% of parents are under 18
Children of Parenting YYA	27	N/A	142	N/A	HMIS includes 129 children in single and 13 children in two-parent households

Table 2. Cape & Islands Schools McKinney-Vento Data for SY17-18

This is an annual count for students who identify at any point during the school year

Primary Nighttime Residence for Students Identified as Experiencing Homelessness (Barnstable, Dukes, and Nantucket Counties)	Total Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness (All rows include children and youth in families, except for "Unaccompanied Youth")
Shelters	65
Doubled-up	302
Unaccompanied Youth	30
Unsheltered (e.g., cars, parks, etc.)	6
Hotels/Motels	45
Total	418

Table 3. 2018 MA State Youth Count

This is a 2 to 3-week count led by a lead provider agency and coordinated with the state

	Detail	Persons	Notes
All YYA	HUD Definition	3	Does not include couch-surfing or doubled up when safe
All YYA	MA Definition	9	A very small number do to counting methodology and capacity
Couch Surfing	MA Definition	6	Absent from the PIT and unlikely to be part of school dataset because of age range.
Unsheltered	MA Definition	2	Uncounted during the PIT
Under 18	MA Definition	2	Uncounted during the PIT
LGBTQ	MA Definition	1	11% is low, but this is the only current documentation of LGBTQ YYA homelessness

APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP MAPPING HIGHLIGHTS

Each focus group included a mapping exercise designed to identify the uniqueness of YYA homelessness on the Cape and Islands. The results included on this page represent consolidated participant responses to the following three topics:

1. The **Needs** of YYA experiencing homelessness.
2. YYA **Strengths** that help them meet those needs.
3. The **Barriers** that prevent YYA from meeting those needs.

The number in the first column of each table represents the number of people who identified the corresponding need, strength, or barrier during the exercise. They do not necessarily represent the emphasis with which participants offered the insight.

It is important to note that these are what service providers and systems professionals think, and not what YYA think of themselves or their own experience.

Needs		Needs	
Number of persons stating the Need		Number of persons stating the Need	
13	Health	5	Inclusive activities with no judgment
12	Income	4	Resource support
11	Affordable safe housing	4	Shelter
11	Basic needs (e.g. food, water, shower, clothing)	3	Counseling - someone to listen
11	Companionship	3	Safety
10	Employment	2	Childcare
8	Life skills	2	Substance use
8	Guidance	2	Lack of services (DMH, DTA, etc.)
8	Education	1	Legal issues - criminal immigration
6	Empowerment		
6	Transportation		

Barriers		Strengths	
Number of persons stating the Internal Barrier		Number of persons stating the Internal Barrier	
9	Substance use	8	Resiliency
6	Behavior management	7	Flexibility/adaptability
6	Shame	6	Resourcefulness
6	Health	3	Hard working
5	Building trust	3	Employment skills
4	Life skills (no modeling)	3	Vitality
4	Credit history	3	Optimism
2	Education	1	Empathy–Willingness to help each other
1	Entitlement	1	Computer literacy
1	Family expectations		
1	Language barrier		
Number of persons stating the External Barrier		Number of persons stating the External Barrier	
13	Affordable housing	11	Small responsive community
8	Turbulent family dynamics	6	Positive relationships
7	High costs–No income	5	Proximity to services
7	Social opportunities	4	Health care access
7	Lack of transportation	4	Great school systems
5	Seasonal employment	3	Seasonal employment opportunities
4	Program eligibility	1	Trades apprenticeships
4	Small community	1	Online social supports
3	Substance use and culture	1	Police - Community Crisis Intervention Teams
3	No YYA-drop in centers	1	Beautiful environment
3	Limited outreach		
3	Job training and secondary education		
3	Lack of resources and programs		

2	Health resources		
1	Minor guardianship		
1	Access to information		
1	Constant toxic social media		
1	Lack of funding		
1	Childcare		
1	Domestic violence		
1	Family expectations		
1	Limited immigrant support		
1	Lack of public awareness and understanding		
1	No family support for LGBTQ YYA		
1	Not enough case management		

APPENDIX C: YOUTH MAPPING EXERCISE

Two of the three YYA interviews included a mapping exercise designed to identify the uniqueness of YYA homelessness on the Cape and Islands from a YYA perspective. The results included on this page represent their responses to the following three topics:

1. The **Needs** of YYA experiencing homelessness.
2. YYA **Strengths** that help them meet those needs.
3. The **Barriers** that prevent YYA from meeting those needs.

Interviewees were asked to provide their perspective **and** what they think older adults say in response to the topics

Needs	
YYA Think	Adults Think
Therapy and support coping	Authority
Mentoring and role models	The right group of friends
Housing, including helping their parents so that they can reunify	Discipline and maturity
Training and support for DCF parents	Boundaries
Tutoring and schools support, including from guidance counselors	Common sense
Freedom, self-efficacy, and training in self-advocacy	Education, including higher education
Place to sleep at night - our own place - independence	Adult shelter
Food - warm food!	Sober and recovery programs
Place to shower	Shared living
Support system	Crocheted hats and toothbrushes
Caring from leaders1	
Clothes - socks, underwear, sweats, pants, socks, shoes	
Toiletries - toilet paper, wet wipes (in place of shower)	
ID and credentials, including bank accounts to access	
Navigators - preferably with lived experience	
Strengths	
YYA Think	Adults Think
We are advocates, know ourselves and what we deserve	Strong

We have talents, including singing, dancing, and instrument skills	Independent (a plus and minus)
Confidence	Maturity
Motivation	IT experts
Positive coping mechanisms, including patience, because of life experience - maturity	Persuasive
Ambition and positivity - “you want better”	Drugs
Friends - “My source of happiness”	Surprised about all of the above
Independent	
Learned early and can learn quickly - had to when living on our own	
Stay strong - resilience and determination	
Tent skills!	
Cooking skills - outside	
Good at computers and phone - but not everybody (stereotype)	
Personal finance	
Survival	
No fear	
Good listeners	
Barriers	
Mental illness, including anxiety, depression, ADHD, etc.	Maturity
Long waiting lists for services	Common sense
Lack of motivation to succeed	Manipulative
Adults, including those in DCF—they feel like they are doing the right thing, but don’t walk in our shoes. They have low expectations, even if they have “hope for them”	Argumentative
YYA Think	Adults Think
Money to access basic needs and activities to participate in	Disrespectful
Awareness of what it takes to succeed as an adult	Income
Maturity	Age - immaturity
No one wants to help	Disrespectful
Adult requirements and biases	Irresponsible
Credit	Partying

No trust	Substance and alcohol use
Documentation and other credentials (e.g., bank account)	
Depressions, leading to a lack of hope and laziness	
Lack of housing	
Landlord restrictions that prevent shared housing	
Empty apartments!	
Waiting lists and bureaucracy	
No support of help with navigation	
Food stamp limits - an outdated accounting and eligibility system	
Lack of Income	
Disabilities	
Stigma (including those related to disabilities)	
Negativity	
Mental illness	

They also answered three additional questions about the YYA homelessness system:

4. Who YYA can go to?
5. Where they can go?
6. What they would change if they could snap their fingers?

The first two questions are grouped into one chart.

Who and Where
Most don't seek help – it's a "dark road"
Teachers
Friends
Extended family
Hyannis Rec Center - that's where this cohort goes
What adults should know
YYA are stronger than you think
They deserve better!

Put yourself in their shoes
Not their fault
Foster home and DCF
Tents (behind Walmart
Fairwinds clubhouse - for people with mental issues to go during the day to meet people, make friends, eat, and use the bathroom
Library - to charge your phone, read, relax, use the bathroom, and drink and gather water
Dollar Tree - they accept food stamps, buy drinks, food, and hygiene products
Snap Your Fingers
Money
Housing assistance - No waiting lists!
Actual Access!
Welfare reform
Shelter
Shared housing opportunities
Fix food benefits programs
Build more housing for young people, including those without substance use challenges

APPENDIX D: DATA HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

25 community stakeholders represented each subregion of the Cape and Islands completed at least half of the survey. 15 stakeholders completed the entire survey. These represent the data that can easily be quantified and served as a comparison for our other data sources

Biggest Challenges Facing YYA		Greatest Needs for YYA	
Physical health	9.8	Medical care services	11.8
Transportation	8.9	Transportation	11.1
Self-efficacy (belief in one's ability to succeed, accomplish goals and tasks, or successfully address challenges)	8.8	Mentorship programs	10.3
Limited social networks and positive adult relationships	8.6	Strong social networks	10.0
Family acceptance related to sexual orientation or gender identity	7.7	Income supports	9.0
Formal education	7.6	Higher education opportunities	8.6
Substance use	6.8	Workforce development and job skills training	7.7
Job skills	6.1	Mental health services	7.4
Mental health	5.9	Family reunification and conflict resolution services	7.3
Family conflict	5.9	Substance use treatment	7.2
Seasonal housing market changes	5.9	Educational supports	6.9
Little or no income	5.0	Employment opportunities	6.1
Limited affordable housing stock	4.1	Medium-term housing (6 months to 3 years)	5.9
		Short term shelter	5.6
		Permanent supportive housing	5.2
YYA Risk Groups		Factors Contributing to YYA Homelessness	
Foster care	7	Lack of affordable housing	12
Unstable Families	4	<i>Lack of stock</i>	9
<i>Substance use</i>	2	<i>Housing costs</i>	3
<i>Mental health</i>	1	<i>Seasonal housing market changes</i>	1
<i>Feel unsafe</i>	1	Substance use	5
LGBTQ	3	Poverty - Low income	3
Low Income - Poverty	2	Case Management	1
Minorities	1	Exploitation	1
Mental health issues	1	Lack of community awareness and commitment	1
School dropouts	1		
Exploited	1		
Substance use	1		

Program Collects Data on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity	8 out of 25			
Non-Straight YYA Served	Mean = 12%	Median = 10%	Lower = 0%	Upper = 30%
Non-Cis Gender YYA Served	Mean = 5%	Median = 1%	Lower = 0%	Upper = 30%

YYA Have Impacted Policy	
Yes	4
No	6
I don't know	3
YYA Have Been Included in Policy Making	
Yes	1
No	8
I don't know	4
YYA Organization Partnership	
Yes	3
No	9
I don't know	1
YYA Decision-Making Involvement	
Never	2
Rarely/Occasionally	5
Sometimes	5
Frequently	1
Authenticity of Current YYA Partnership	
1 (lowest rank)	3
2	2
3	4
4	0
5 (highest rank)	0
Average Score	2

APPENDIX E: THEMES FROM 7/25/19 CONVENING

On July 25, 2019, Barnstable County Department of Human Services hosted a convening of community stakeholders to present the executive summary and preliminary findings from our report and to receive feedback. The following is a summary of that feedback.

Gut Reaction from Participants

Participants appreciated the professionalism, the detail and breadth of the findings, and the opportunity to ask questions and comment. They were not surprised by the findings, describing them as accurate even though many were still shocked and alarmed by the scale of the problem. Some felt this is a great start, and that this needs to then lead to solutions.

Two participants were concerned that we didn't visit the Lower Cape, and one appreciated the inclusion of the Islands. A few mentioned the importance of YYA involvement. Participants appreciated the commentary on disparities. One lamented that DCF was involved from the beginning, one was concerned about the YYA not captured by the numbers, and some folks were happy to have it all documented.

Folks are positive about the momentum, our understanding, and the possibility for action.

What the Findings Get Right

Folks found the findings to be accurate and appropriately reflecting the crisis. They highlighted the conversation about demographic disparities and affordable housing, including the "Shuffle," the acknowledgment of the lack of a system, the importance of YYA inclusion, the complexity of the issue, including mental health issues, hidden pressure points and perceptions, the impact of small communities and stigmas, the "Cliff-effect," and that we identified specific data gaps and limitations. One person liked the link between YYA homelessness and chronic homelessness, and another the acknowledgement of CSE and the needs of DCF young people transitioning out of care. One person also appreciated to call to expand our network of stakeholders and resources beyond the homelessness insiders. Some see this as a path to next steps, providing the "proof" that we need to make progress.

What Needs to be Added and Major Themes that were Missed

Participants highlighted several issues that they believe need to be confirmed within our current findings, added as additional findings, or included in the discussions during our next steps:

Systems: Participants wrote 8 comments concerning systems with a focus on schools, DCF, DYS, and related adult agencies (e.g., adult jails, DMH-run programs). They would like to see more involvement from DCF, inclusion of more specific DCF data, and a focus on transitions out of care. They would similarly like to see greater inclusion of schools, including charter schools, a deeper understanding of the effect of multiple school and school district transitions, the role of schools in providing housing, and the connection between homelessness, health, and special education. They would like all systems to be more collaborative, to more readily share homelessness and housing related data, and for us to look into YYA involved in the 688 process.¹⁹

¹⁹ The 688 referral process is designed to help communities plan for needed adult services for students with severe disabilities. [Click here for more information provided by DESE.](#)

Inclusion: Participants wrote 7 comments concerning the inclusion of special populations in our analysis and solutions. They included 3 mentions of domestic violence, including YYA fleeing and attempting to flee, two mentions of people from the Lower Cape, YYA struggling with substance use issues, chronic illnesses, suicidality, and commercial or sexual exploitation, and both LGBTQ YYA and Native peoples.

YYA Partnership: Participants wrote 7 comments concerning YYA partnership. They strongly encourage greater inclusion of the voices of YYA with lived experience, including students, and both identified the challenge of finding young people to participate and the power and insight that their voices bring to the conversation. They also mentioned the importance of building trust, providing appropriate training to program staff, and the importance of hiring YYA with lived experience, a benefit of which may be that staff better represent clientele.

Families: Participants wrote 5 comments concerning families. They discussed the need to understand intersection of YYA homelessness and family homelessness and the connection between family risk, dysfunction, mental health, and our prevention efforts. One comment confirmed that about 50% of families in our shelter EA system are from off-Cape.

Language: Participants wrote 5 comments concerning the Language used in the report and the system. Several comments were related to definitions and eligibility, focusing largely on the need to include couch-surfing and the transient nature of YYA experiences in our definition of “homelessness.” Others discussed using language that YYA might better identify with, e.g., housing instability.

Awareness: Participants wrote 5 comments concerning awareness among different community stakeholders. They looked for information and tools that they could use to speak with local politicians and at town meetings, including the costs associated with YYA homelessness. They also provided examples of outreach opportunities, including sharing our work public TV and the Council of Churches network.

Partner Solutions: Participants wrote 5 comments about potential partner solutions, including using a common referral form for non-homelessness providers, using peer recover centers to collect data, and reaching out to JRI, DMH, and MRC. One participant recommended leveraging the new and emboldened relationships developed through this process to fill service gaps and problem solve. Another recommended tapping into potential staff support and resources available to schools.

Services: Participants wrote 4 comments concerning YYA homelessness services. One comment looked for a stronger statement concerning the lack of transportation, two concerned nuances in how we understand them (do they exist, are they accessible, are they appropriate), and one described the landscape of substance use services and the challenges associated with supporting very young users.

Health: Participants wrote 3 comments concerning health, looking for more information on health trends and the inclusion of health system partners

Access, Affordable Housing, Best Practices: Participants wrote 2 comments about access (asking for a better understand of policies that impeded access and recommending a website or app), 1 comment about affordable housing (FMR doesn’t work here), and 1 comment about Best Practices (learning from the rest of country where there is evidence rather than recreating the wheel)

APPENDIX F: SURVEY QUESTIONS

Q		Response Type	Response Options
1	My organization is based in	Multiple Choice	Upper Cape; Middle Cape; Lower Cape; Martha's Vineyard; Nantucket; Other (Please Specify)
2	My organization provides services in	Multiple Choice	Upper Cape; Middle Cape; Lower Cape; Martha's Vineyard; Nantucket; Statewide
3	Which best describes your role	Multiple Choice	Executive leadership; Administrative support; Licensed clinician; Case manager; Outreach worker; Board member; Peer specialist; Housing specialist; Other (Please Specify)
4	What services does your organization provide	Multiple Choice	Emergency shelter; Housing; Youth leadership development; Vocational/Workforce Development/Employment Services; Educational supports; Family reunification; Outreach; Jail/prison re-entry supports; Mentoring; Host homes; Case management; Substance use treatment; Peer supports; Mental health services; Health care services; Other (please specify)
5	Which organizations are your major partners, including state and local government offices, private non-profits, public housing authorities, for profit entities, foundations, etc.	Text Box	Open Narrative
6	Does your organization work with youth or young adults experiencing or at risk of homelessness	Multiple Choice	Yes; No

7	If so, which groups	Multiple Choice	Youth ages 13-17; Young adults ages 18-24; LGBTQ youth/young adults; Black youth/young adults; Hispanic/Latinx youth/young adults; Pregnant or parenting youth; Immigrant/refugee youth/young adults; Justice involved youth/young adults; Current or former Foster youth; None of the above; Other (please specify)
7a	LGBTQ YYA on the Cape: Does your organization collect data on sexual orientation and gender identify? If Yes, please explain how you collect these data	Multiple Choice	Yes: No: Comment Box "If Yes, please explain how you collect these data"
7b	LGBTQ YYA on the Cape: Regardless of whether you formerly collect these data, estimate the percentage of YYA who you serve who identify as non-straight (any sexual orientation other than straight)	Number	Percentage only (0 to 100)
7c	LGBTQ YYA on the Cape: Regardless of whether you formerly collect these data, estimate the percentage of YYA who you serve who identify as non-cis-gender (any gender identity other than the male or female gender assigned at birth - e.g., trans, gender queer, gender fluid, etc.)	Number	Percentage only (0 to 100)

8	What are the biggest challenges facing youth and young adults experiencing or at risk of homelessness in your region	Ranked Choice (1: Most to 10: Least)	Formal education; Job skills; Family conflict; Family acceptance (LGBTQ); Limited housing opportunities; Little or no income; Physical health; Mental health; Substance use; Limited social networks and positive adult relationships; Transportation; Self-efficacy (belief in one's ability to succeed, accomplish goals and tasks, or successfully address challenges)
9	What specific groups of youth and young adults are at the highest risk of experiencing homelessness	Text Box	Open Narrative
10	What factors are contributing most significantly to youth and young adult homelessness in the region	Text Box	Open Narrative
11	What are the greatest resource needs for youth and young adults experiencing or at risk of homelessness in your region	Ranked Choice (1: Most to 10: Least)	Educational supports; Higher education opportunities; Employment opportunities; Workforce development and job skills training; Family reunification and conflict resolution services; Short term shelter; Medium term housing (6 month to 3 years); Permanent supportive housing; Income supports; Medical care services; Mental health services; Substance use treatment; Mentorship programs; Strong social networks; Transportation; Comment Box
12	What is working well	Text Box	Open Narrative
13	What is not working well	Text Box	Open Narrative

14	What words or phrases would you use to describe the current state of the youth and young adult homelessness response system in your area	Text Box	Open Narrative
15	What organizations or individuals are currently the most active and important to the youth and young adult homelessness response system	Text Box	Open Narrative
16	What organizations could be playing a more active role in addressing youth and young adult homelessness	Text Box	Open Narrative
17	What ideas do you have for improving collaboration to address youth and young adult homelessness	Text Box	Open Narrative
18	To your knowledge, are youth and young adults helping to shape policy as members of youth-led committees or boards or as members of broader committee or boards in your community?	Multiple Choice	Yes, No, I Don't Know
19	Does your community include youth and young adults in policy-making decisions as members of a board or advisory committee	Multiple Choice	Yes, No, I Don't Know
20	Does your organization offer opportunities to young people as paid peer staff or as paid event speakers?	Multiple Choice	Yes, No, I Don't Know

21	How would you rate youth engagement in your area?	Multiple Choice	(1 star = no youth involvement in decision-making and 5 stars = youth and young adults involved in all decision-making as equal partners)
22	What would authentic youth engagement look like across service provision, community planning efforts, setting policy, or other activities?	Text Box	Open Narrative
23	Are you interested in participating in efforts to create a system that supports youth/young adults experiencing homelessness?	Multiple Choice	Yes: No: I'd like to learn more
24	If you would like to share your name and contact information so that we can follow up with you, please fill out the fields below:	Contact Fields	Name; Company; Address; Address 2; City/Town; State/Province; ZIP/Postal Code; Country; Email Address; Phone Number
25	What else would you like us to know about youth and young adult homelessness in your area?	Text Box	Open Narrative

APPENDIX G: SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interviews were conducted over the phone and lasted 30 minutes

Introductions

- *[Matt introduces himself and reviews the history and purpose of the work]*
- What is your role and how do you interact with young people experiencing homelessness?

Relationships

- What is the relationship like between your organization and the Cape and Islands Regional Network on Homelessness?
- What is your relationship like with other providers?
- Can you describe the relationship, as you understand it, between the provider community and child welfare, schools, justice, and
- adult systems?
- Who are the right people to participate in this youth and young adult homelessness effort?
- How do we make sure that the right people are at the table?

Systems

- What are the biggest youth and young adult system strengths on the Cape and Islands?
- What are the biggest youth and young adult system weaknesses on the Cape and Islands?
- Can you offer advice to enhance our success over the next 3, 6, and 9 months?

APPENDIX H: FOCUS GROUP SAMPLE AGENDA

Four focus groups were held between March and June 2019. Each lasted between 1 and 1.5 hours and involved between 4 and 15 participants.

Meeting Purpose

- Identify key strengths, needs, challenges, systems, places, and people related to the YYA experiencing homelessness with whom we work
- Learn from the perspective of providers how YYA interact with their programs, how the larger systems impact their work, and how they would change everything for the better

Agenda

1. Introductions

11:00 - 11:10 AM

- Name, Organization, Role, Pronouns, Favorite part of your job
- A brief introduction to the work

2. System Mapping

11:10 - 12:05 PM

- What are the strengths, needs, challenges, systems, places, and people related to YYA during each of the following phases?
 - Before: Early warning signs, risk factors, and instability
 - Beginning: The onset of a housing crisis
 - Middle: The experience of homelessness before a solution
 - End: The transition to stability and permanence
- *Depending on the size of the group, we may modify*

3. Your Perspective

12:05 - 12:55 PM

- About your interactions with YYA
- About the homelessness system
- Big thoughts

4. Closing

12:55 - 1:00 PM

- Motivation and Challenge
- Next steps