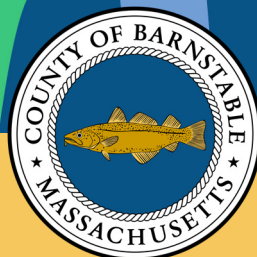


# HOPEFUL HOMES: Sea Change for the Cape and Islands Youth & Young Adults





## Acknowledgments

Hopeful Homes: Sea Change for The Cape and Islands Youth and Young Adults, Cape Cod and the Islands' Coordinated Community Plan to Prevent and End Youth and Young Adult Homelessness, was funded by Barnstable County, on behalf of the Cape Cod and the Islands Continuum of Care (MA-503) and supported by technical assistance provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development through its Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program. Matthew Aronson Consulting led a core team that included Youth Action Board member Parker Thomson, Homeless Prevention Council Case Manager and Youth Action Board Supporter Mary O'Reilly, Fenway Health Cape Cod VRP Advocate Ann Burke, Housing Assistance Corporation Director of Clinical Services Caitlin Pierce, Barnstable County Department of Human Services Deputy Director, Mandi Speakman, Continuum of Care Program Manager, Dan Gray, and Technical Assistance Collaborative Consultants Ellen Fitzpatrick and Lauren Leonardis. Together, they compiled the information herein and led the writing of this document in collaboration with the Youth Action Board. The plan was designed by Anya Piatrova.

We are grateful for the participation of over 80 partners from a multitude of organizations covering each region of Cape Cod and the Islands. They participated in long brainstorming sessions, joined workgroup meetings, actively listened

through presentations, and responded to a variety of information requests. We also appreciate the sacrifice made by 25 dedicated community partners who participated as members of our planning committee, met several times a month, and went above and beyond to support this plan's development. Most importantly, we want to share our gratitude for our Youth Action Board members. They stepped up time and again, even when adult partners let them down. They honored us with their time, trust, and expertise, and we hope that it is evident to each of them that Hopeful Homes represents their values, priorities, and experiences.

### Disclaimer

The substance of this work is dedicated to the public. For more information about its contents and the process by which it was created, contact **Daniel Gray** at the Barnstable County Department of Human Services.

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LETTER FROM

## Cape and Islands Youth Action Board



Authentic youth collaboration has been instrumental in the development of Hopeful Homes: Sea Change for The Cape and Islands Youth and Young Adults, our Coordinated Community Plan (CCP). The Cape and Islands Youth Action Board (YAB) played a key role in ensuring that this plan reflected the solutions and approaches needed to meet the unique needs of youth experiencing homelessness within Cape Cod and the Islands. Our goal was to ensure that the plan was intersectional in its approach and mirrored the feedback provided by youth with lived experience and expertise throughout our community.

The mission of the YAB is to advance awareness and advocacy toward ending youth homelessness, with the intention of creating lasting macro-level change. We exist to create systemic change by challenging current assumptions and biases about youth homelessness through authentic youth collaboration and lived experience. We believe that young people deserve housing where they feel safe and secure with support to achieve goals beyond housing, regardless of their background, identity, and capacity. We heavily relied on our mission and principles in guiding the decisions we made throughout the development process for the CCP. Utilizing the network of young people with lived experience that the YAB has developed over the past year has been very effective in providing CCP design elements that advocate for the larger youth homelessness community.

We are so grateful for the opportunities to hold leadership positions that allow us to make meaningful impacts in preventing youth homelessness through the YHDP process. From assisting in the application process, to holding key roles in the design of the CCP, we are proud to see this plan come into fruition. Youth have been able to participate in focus groups, evaluate requests for proposal submissions on special projects, and provide candid perspectives and opinions throughout different stages of the YHDP process. YAB members participated in prioritizing the objectives, action steps, and principles in this CCP. We wanted action steps that addressed other factors that can exacerbate the challenges of experiencing homelessness on Cape Cod and the Islands. Our greatest priority was creating a CCP that promotes approaches that are youth-driven, and we are pleased to have created a plan that does so.



Cape Cod and the Islands is a rural community that is also a popular tourist destination, which lends unique challenges to implementing a homelessness response system that is immediate, affirming, and effective. With concern to our housing market, it is implausible to acquire affordable, stable housing, particularly for young people who do not have extensive rental or long-term employment history. With the absence of such housing, the Cape is rapidly seeing a decrease in its diversity and workforce within a community that so many of us love. We are confident that this CCP can address these barriers to acquiring housing, as it is imperative for young people to be able to reside in the community that they have grown up in, with their support network that includes their friends, family, employers, and so forth. To maintain a community that is rich and inclusive, young people must be included in the discussion, and real change—no matter how difficult to impose—must be prioritized. The development of this CCP not only includes young people but places them at the forefront of decision-making opportunities.

We believe that the CCP includes policies that address the unique challenges that homeless youth face in our community. From the collaboration between the Cape and Islands YAB and Barnstable County, several design elements that were important to young people are included throughout the action steps outlined in the CCP. As the planning committee, including select YAB representatives, brainstormed special projects to be funded through the YHDP grant, it was agreed that agencies carrying out the projects should prioritize hiring young people with lived experience for the positions that would be created. The YAB also worked to ensure that such positions were hired with livable, competitive wages and benefits, to match the high living expenses seen in our region. This is especially true for the Mobile Navigation Project that we helped develop, which we hope will minimize the significant amount of hidden young people in our community experiencing housing instability. We are confident that peer navigators will be able to connect with other young people in our community to ensure they are getting the support and resources they need. We also helped to outline the importance of providing programs or assistance targeting communities including multi-lingual youth who may need interpretation services, immigrants, pregnant and parenting youth, and so forth. There is a significant population of youth who are aging out of supportive services due to programs that only serve people under 25. As a result, we ensured this CCP included action steps around addressing the cliff effect.

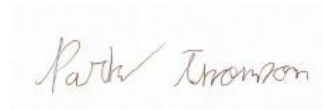
We hope that the CCP continues to challenge the norms surrounding housing in our community and propel service providers and community members to adopt new strategies that are inclusive, innovative, and effective. This plan can bring light to a problem that is often ignored for the sake of comfort while outlining evidence-based solutions that can minimize the incidence of youth homelessness. We encourage readers to join the initiative and fight alongside the YAB towards ending and preventing youth homelessness on the Cape and the Islands. We will continue to use our platform to create a safe space for young people to feel accepted and listened to as they navigate their own experiences with housing instability. We thoroughly believe that we have a right to be included in the decisions that affect our lives and thank YHDP for challenging our community's current response system to include youth voices and to think creatively in developing solutions. Youth collaboration does not end as this plan is released into the community, and we will continue to use our voices to advocate for safe, stable, and affordable housing as a human right.

Sincerely,

The Cape and Islands Youth Action Board



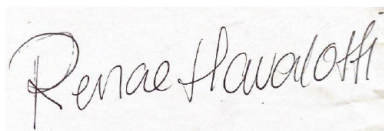
Amanda Hutchinson



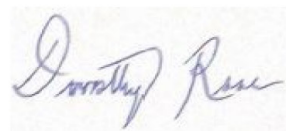
Parker Thomson



Brittini Cormier



Renae Havalotti



Dorothy Rose



## Introduction

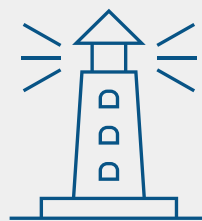
Hopeful Homes: Sea Change for The Cape and Islands, is the culmination of an eight-month effort and over four years of systems building. We have engaged a multitude of partners, including youth and young adults (YYA) with lived experience of homelessness and housing instability and partners across both the geographic area and YYA serving sectors. Through intensive processes of information collection, sharing values, co-analysis, and co-development, we have made tremendous progress in understanding community needs and designing a strategy that will address those needs. Thanks to a generous grant from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), we have incorporated learnings from peer communities around the country and designed projects to kickstart our plan that HUD will fund through its Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP).

In this Coordinated Community Plan (CCP), the reader will find a detailed description of the development process, the planning parameters identified by community partners, and the vision, goals, objectives, and action steps that have guided our planning and will guide implementation. You will find the details concerning our HUD funded projects, and a broad range of ambitious actions that we believe are necessary to make YYA homelessness rare, brief and one time in our community. You will also read how we expect to implement this strategy and hold ourselves accountable to the community members who have invested so much time and energy in the process.

Cape Cod and the Islands is a unique and special place. It is urban, suburban, and rural, with important differences and similarities between each of the sub-regions; a multifaceted place that changes dramatically in size, economy, and character with the seasons, and represents unique demographics with implications for tax revenue, language support, political engagement, and cultural cohesion. To address this diversity during the planning process, it was important to learn from community members across the region and share ownership with both YYA with lived experience and a group of partners representing a range of sectors, organizations, and perspectives. The result is a

CCP that reflects the principles of equity, inclusivity, and accessibility that will be central in efforts to identify, engage, and meet the needs of YYA no matter which sub-region they call home.

**Lastly, we acknowledge that this plan is ambitious. Our vision is bold, our goals aspirational, and our objectives and actions challenging to pursue.** This is by design. Unless we act differently, we will not end YYA homelessness in our community. While we may fall short, we commit to taking steps to address each action and to hold ourselves accountable for continuously and authentically engaging with this document. Hopeful Homes is a living strategy that we will regularly assess and improve over time as our response and community evolves toward ending YYA homelessness.



For more information on services and resources available to YYA, please visit the Barnstable County Dept. of Human Services YYA Homelessness page [here](#).





# Vision, Goals, and Principles

The Cape and Islands YHDP Planning Committee developed the following vision to guide our efforts during the development of **Hopeful Homes**. It is an expression of the community that we want to live in and world that we are trying to create:

*“All YYA experiencing housing instability on Cape Cod and the Islands have equitable access to meaningful, empowering, and culturally responsive opportunities for housing, health, education, employment, and community connections that ensure they can maintain authentic, stable, and independent lives, so that YYA homelessness is rare, short lived and one time.”*

To achieve that vision, the YHDP Planning Committee further established the following seven goals:

## 1. SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT AND TRANSFORMATION

Build a YYA homelessness response network that is equitable, comprehensive, widely known, accessible and easy to navigate. It is built on YYA leadership, cross-sector partnership, transparency, culturally responsive support, safety and YYA self-determination and empowerment.

## 2. PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

Prevent YYA homelessness using a proactive, sustainable, systemic, equitable and coordinated approach built upon strong partnerships with entities that engage YYA before or early in their housing instability, including those that have not traditionally focused on housing or homelessness.

## 3. SAFE AND STABLE HOUSING

Provide YYA experiencing a housing crisis with immediate, safe, supportive and flexible housing options that are YYA-driven, honor their specific needs and goals, and lead to equitable, long-term and sustainable housing outcomes.

## 4. EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Provide all YYA and children in their care with education, employment and training opportunities and resources that prioritize equity, use an individualized approach and support sustainable pathways toward independence.

## 5. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Provide YYA with immediate and equitable access to resources that support physical, social-emotional, developmental and spiritual well-being, delivered with a holistic and healing centered approach that is culturally competent, inclusive and responsive, so they can thrive.

## 6. PERMANENT CONNECTIONS

Support YYA in identifying, establishing and maintaining positive relationships with individuals and community organizations of their choosing that meet their daily social, mentoring and networking needs while reinforcing long-term stability and equitable outcomes.

## 7. EQUITY

Remove obstacles rooted in historic, systemic and interpersonal bias that result in the persistent overrepresentation of affected populations among those experiencing homelessness, inequitable distribution of resources and disparate outcomes, and invest in culturally affirmative models, services and resources.

*Finally, we committed to the following principles as integral to the success of preventing and ending YYA homelessness in the region and as key tenets in the development of our plan’s objectives and actions.*



GUIDING PRINCIPLES	DESCRIPTION
<b>Racial and LGBTQIA+ Equity</b>	Approach all elements of YHDP planning and implementation through an equity lens; understanding that BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ youth are disproportionately impacted by homelessness as a result of structural racism, implicit bias, homophobia, transphobia, and other systems of oppression. Cultural competence and equitable representation for those delivering services will be placed at the forefront of prioritization for program design.
<b>Inclusivity</b>	<p>Include, focus on and represent the needs of marginalized YYA, including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YYA diagnosed with physical health, behavioral health or developmental challenges</li> <li>• YYA fleeing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual abuse or sexual exploitation</li> <li>• YYA who speak English as a second language</li> <li>• YYA involved in the justice system or child welfare</li> </ul>
<b>Data Informed</b>	Strive to use best available and most current data at any given point to inform decisions and continuous improvement.
<b>Evidence Informed Practices</b>	Prioritize program areas that are trauma informed, culturally competent, human centered, and designed to meet YYA “where they are at” while encouraging self-advocacy and self-determination.
<b>Cross-Sectoral Collaboration</b>	Strive to develop a culture of active and ongoing communication amongst families and all involved stakeholders who may touch the lives of YYA experiencing housing instability across the Cape and Islands. Nantucket, Martha’s Vineyard and each sub-region of Cape Cod is unique in its culture and resource availability, and these unique features will be recognized as we build a comprehensive system to address YYA homelessness
<b>Emphasis on HUD Identified Values and Principles</b>	<p>Federal agencies coordinating the national approach to homelessness have identified the following as key program elements for addressing and ending YYA homelessness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsiveness to the needs of Special Populations</li> <li>• Centering Equity in services and resource availability</li> <li>• Incorporating Positive Youth Development and Trauma Informed Care</li> <li>• Engaging Family when appropriate</li> <li>• Housing First as a cornerstone of program design</li> <li>• Addressing YYA experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness</li> <li>• Emphasizing Youth Voice and self-determination</li> </ul>
<b>Integration of the US Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) Outcomes</b>	<p>USICH Framework to End Youth Homelessness Four Key Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stable Housing includes a safe and reliable place to call home;</li> <li>• Permanent Connections include ongoing attachments to families, communities, schools, and other positive social networks;</li> <li>• Education/Employment includes high performance in and completion of educational and training activities, especially for younger youth, and starting and maintaining adequate and stable employment, particularly for older youth; and</li> <li>• Social-Emotional Well-Being includes the development of key competencies, attitudes, and behaviors that equip a young person to succeed across multiple domains of daily life, including school, work, relationships, and community.</li> </ul>



## The Plan

The following represents the collective wisdom of our community partners. If completed, we believe the combined effect of the actions included below will fundamentally change our response to YYA homelessness and bring us closer to preventing and ending it.

Our plan is ambitious and comprehensive. It addresses all seven goal areas and will require a high level of partnership and collaboration to successfully implement. To organize such a broad strategy, we have divided the following section by individual goal, the challenge associated with each goal, and our response to those challenges. The Challenge includes short statements of need to ground the reader and our work in the realities of homelessness on Cape Cod and the Islands, while the Response includes concrete objectives and actions that we will take to address each challenge.

Please note that we have attempted to add a Lead and Time Frame to as many actions as possible. We will continue to add these details during the first phase of implementation and are actively seeking commitments from our partners. The organizations and individuals that you see listed below are responsible for the action moving forward, although they may simply be coordinating rather than doing each step.

**Some actions may take longer to achieve to the fullest extent. However, many actions listed below have important steps that can be completed within the short, intermediate, or long term. We have reflected these steps when determining the time frame.**

The timeframes are as follows:

### SHORT TERM

0 - to 1 year after the approval of our plan

### INTERMEDIATE TERM

1 to 2 years after the approval of our plan

### LONG TERM

2 to 3 years after the approval of our plan





## GOAL 1

# System Improvement and Transformation

Build a YYA homelessness response network that is equitable, comprehensive, widely known, accessible and easy to navigate. It is built on YYA leadership, cross-sector partnership, transparency, culturally responsive support, safety and YYA self-determination and empowerment.

## GOAL 1: THE CHALLENGE

Cape Cod and the Islands needs to authentically include YYA in designing a system to meet the needs of all YYA experiencing homelessness and housing instability.

Cape Cod and the Islands needs to improve transportation systems to ensure access to services and resources.

Cape Cod and the Islands launched YYA homelessness specific programs in 2019 but did not have a Youth Action Board (YAB) or a YAB member with a formal seat on the Regional Network on Homelessness Policy Board until Spring 2022. As such, most efforts to develop services and resources to address YYA homelessness to date have been crafted by older adults. Feedback from YYA that have participated in strategic planning over the past year highlight the differences in their needs, experiences, and perspectives from other demographics. For example, the CoC's focus on adult-oriented Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) unintentionally prioritizes older adults for placement due to scoring on standardized assessment tools.

*As one YYA put it, “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.” Expanding opportunities for authentic YYA voice will help to shape the system to best help YYA thrive.*

Transportation challenges impact all areas of a YYA's lives making it difficult to access the resources they need and stay consistently connected. It is a two-hour bus ride each way for someone living in Falmouth to attend classes at Cape Cod Community College. Some areas of the Cape only have public transportation access to centrally located services once per day. If appointments or employment opportunities fall outside of per-determined bus schedules, there are no other options.



**Community Providers needs to adapt the best and most promising practices relating to YYA homelessness, including training and support, to integrate such practices within the community.**

Until 2019, there was very little YYA homelessness infrastructure on the Cape and Islands. YYA reported challenges engaging with older adult staff who held different expectations and understanding of their needs and priorities. Similarly, adult staff have asked for increased training and access to best practices from around the country to support their work with YYA. In 2020, the community launched a year-long training institute with a small group of providers. Participants greatly appreciated the experience, showed increased understanding of best practices through pre and post surveys, and built lasting relationships with their peers. Unfortunately, participants were predominantly from YYA serving agencies, and some have since transitioned to other roles. Increased knowledge of the unique needs of YYA experiencing housing instability would benefit outward facing staff from all regional homelessness providers.

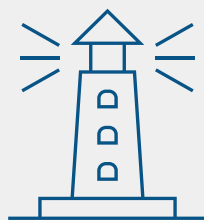
**Cape Cod and the Islands needs to improve and expand its data collection and analysis to better serve YYA.**

Our data collection efforts have come a long way in the past several years, allowing us to track our progress and produce data of a reasonably good quality for HUD, state grant reporting, and our annual YYA homelessness CNA updates. We have also learned about the gaps in our efforts. For example:

- Our coordinated entry intake processes use an old assessment tool that may lead to inequitable outcomes,
- Our system reporting relies on a limited set of manually incorporated publicly available annualized cross-systems data rather than up to date detailed information from a broad range of partners.
- We do not have regular methods for collecting qualitative information directly from YYA and providers that will add critical detail missing from our quantitative methods.

**The homelessness system needs a concerted effort to combat the challenging effects of its unique demographics, seasonal changes, and political fragmentation.**

People on the Cape and Islands are caring and have significant capacity to help others. Unfortunately, our 2019 needs assessment identified several forces that make it difficult to build a coalition in support of ending YYA homelessness. An aging, wealthy population, with many seasonal residents, means fewer people with YYA in their lives, little experience and connection with economic hardship, and therefore little collective action and funding for YYA who need it. Having 22 towns and 3 counties means a difference in opinion concerning local politics and potential political roadblocks as well as small social networks, stigma against hardship, and a lack of awareness that suppress self identification and community action. Finally, unevenly distributed resources and challenges between towns means that needs and interests are not always aligned.



**Increased knowledge of the unique needs of YYA experiencing housing instability would benefit outward facing staff from all regional homelessness providers.**

## GOAL 1: THE RESPONSE

### OBJECTIVE 1.1 Improve data sharing across systems interacting with YYA

**ACTION 1.1.1** Regularly coordinate and update available resources across regional public agencies and organizations, and publicly share those updates over traditional channels, social media, and other technology as appropriate

- Consider a regular convening of agencies and organizations to update and share resources
- Include HAC, HPC, Cape Cod Times Needy Fund, and many other providers
- Include DTA, DCF, DDS, DMH, and other state systems to map and coordinate services & resources
- Include a list of BH specific resources
- Consider developing an app or web based resource that is comprehensive for the needs of our YYA
- Include benefits eligibility and enrollment consistent with DTA practices
- Connect to existing databases in parallel fields
- Integrate with Navigator program, hotlines, and other information dissemination channels

**LEAD**

YYA Homelessness Committee

**TIME FRAME**

Short Term

**ACTION 1.1.2** Develop a shared definition of YYA homelessness across YYA-serving system partners

- Work with partners to advocate for using a more precise, cross-system definition and understanding of homelessness to improve identification of students experiencing homelessness
- Include the CoC, K-12 and post-secondary education, DCF, DYS, and other relevant systems

**LEAD**

Barnstable County Department of Human Services (BCDHS)

**TIME FRAME**

Intermediate Term

### OBJECTIVE 1.2 Increase and improve Cape & Islands CoC's HMIS capacity and data collection

**ACTION 1.2.1** Identify YAB member(s) to join the CoC's HMIS/data committee and partner in our coordinated entry systems improvement efforts (e.g., development of a new assessment approach) to ensure that coordinated entry meets YYA needs.

**LEAD:** YAB/BCDHS

**TIME FRAME:** Short Term

**ACTION 1.2.2** Establish method(s) for collection of qualitative data on youth experiencing homelessness and housing instability on the Cape and Islands

**LEAD:** BCDHS and Future CQI subcommittee

**TIME FRAME:** Short Term

**ACTION 1.2.3** Establish working group or subcommittee to develop and implement CQI plan that includes the following:

- Equity data and metrics that are regularly analyzed to ensure equitable access and outcomes in housing programs for historically marginalized and overrepresented populations (BIPOC, LGBTQ+ YYA)
- A process for regular analysis of qualitative data
- Systems-level data and outcomes metrics
- A broad range of system partners that help measure the impact of YYA homelessness efforts on other YYA-serving systems

**LEAD**

BCDHS

**TIME FRAME**

Short Term

### OBJECTIVE 1.3 Decrease stigma associated with homelessness and housing instability on the Cape & Islands

**ACTION 1.3.1** Establish space and method for community-wide conversations about increasing housing development and addressing NIMBYism

- Consider coordinating with local housing coordinators representing each community

**LEAD:** BCDHS in partnership with local housing coordinators

**TIME FRAME:** Intermediate Term

**ACTION 1.3.2** Develop ongoing strategy to increase awareness about youth homelessness across broader Cape & Islands population

- Strategy must be culturally congruent, considerate of geographic differences
- Inclusive of tribal communities
- Targeted to retirement community who may be least familiar with youth homelessness/local needs

**LEAD**

YYA Homelessness Committee

**TIME FRAME**

Intermediate Term

**OBJECTIVE 1.4 Strengthen relationships between the homelessness response system and community partners**

**ACTION 1.4.1** Build and strengthen relationships with communities who may not traditionally partner with or trust systems to increase YYA representation in efforts to prevent and end YYA homelessness

- Tribal communities, immigrant communities, Black community, LGBTQIA+ and other historically marginalized populations on Cape & Islands
- Establish relationship between CoC and Amplify POC Cape Cod

**LEAD**

YYA Homelessness Committee

**TIME FRAME**

Intermediate Term

**OBJECTIVE 1.5 Increase leadership opportunities for youth both across and outside of homeless response system**

**ACTION 1.5.1** Incorporate youth into decision-making and leadership at organizations serving YYA experiencing homelessness (e.g., Duffy Alternative Peer Group)

**LEAD:** YYA Homelessness Committee and YAB

**TIME FRAME:** Intermediate Term

**ACTION 1.5.2** Identify funding for and encourage programs to support YYA leaders within their programs at competitive wages to combat hiring challenges and inclusive of transportation and accessibility options that allows for geographic equity

**LEAD:** YYA Homelessness Committee and YAB

**TIME FRAME:** Intermediate Term

**ACTION 1.5.3** Diversify YYA participation beyond the clients of YYA providers by partnering with high schools to identify youth leaders, expanding the list of agencies invited to regularly attend YYA homelessness meetings & developing a social media strategy for outreaching to a wider network of YYA

**OBJECTIVE 1.6 Improve YYA-specific capacity, equity, and cultural competence and humility of all YYA housing and services**

**ACTION 1.6.1** Work with providers in every region to ensure YYA have access to bilingual case management and services

- Emphasize Portuguese and Brazilian-Portuguese speaking providers on Martha's Vineyard and throughout the region
- Develop a flexible strategy based on the resources available to the organization and region (program staff, county support, partner staff)

**LEAD**

YYA Homelessness Committee

**TIME FRAME**

Long Term

**ACTION 1.6.2** Develop a regional strategy for ongoing and recurring training and guidance on YYA homelessness, YYA partnership, DEI, supporting LGBTQIA+ identifying YYA, adulthood, healing centered approaches, harm reduction, and Positive Youth Development for all YYA-serving housing and service providers

- Include learning and accountability on equity, implicit bias, anti-racism, & dismantling homophobia and transphobia
- Consider a facilitated community of practice following trainings to maintain and deepen learning
- Ensure that new staff have access to learning and materials to account for turnover
- Consider affinity groups, ongoing growth, and learning opportunities for special populations

**LEAD**

BCDHS

**TIME FRAME**

Short Term

**ACTION 1.6.3** Connect YYA homelessness service providers with GSA groups in each school district to increase awareness and build regional connections

**LEAD:** McKinney-Vento Liaisons and Fenway Health

**TIME FRAME:** Short Term



## GOAL 2

# Prevention and Early Intervention

Prevent YYA homelessness using a proactive, sustainable, systemic, equitable and coordinated approach built upon strong partnerships with entities that engage YYA before or early in their housing instability, including those that have not traditionally focused on housing or homelessness.

## GOAL 2: THE CHALLENGE

Cape Cod and the Islands needs resources and training to identify housing instability to prevent and divert YYA from experiencing homelessness.



ACCORDING TO  
NATIONAL AVERAGES  
AND CENSUS DATA:

**2,400 YYA** on the Cape and Islands experience some form of homelessness over the course of a year, including:

**1,735** 18 to 24 year olds

**652** 10 to 17 year olds

Using national averages and census data, as many as 2,400 YYA on the Cape and Islands experience some form of homelessness over the course of a year, including 1,735 18 to 24 year olds and 652 10 to 17 year olds. However, only an average of 128 YYA received services through our State funded YYA homelessness grant each year over the past three years. In the past two fiscal years 7 YYA under age 18 received services. Only 56 YYA-led households received services according to HMIS data in CY 2021. Those numbers include very few youth under 18, even though data from our annual state YouthCount consistently report that the first experience of homelessness occurs before 18. 42% of referrals to YYA homelessness service providers did not identify as literally homeless, not including periodic episodes of unsheltered homelessness. National data similarly suggests that many YYA experiencing homelessness, particularly those who do not initially interact with systems, appear to fall outside of traditional definitions of homelessness and only need light touch support to stabilize.

Moreover, there are many who still go unidentified who do need high level support, even though our identification methods have been improving as services and resources increase.

YYA who participated in our strategic planning processes stated they lacked information on services and resources prior to experiencing housing instability. They prioritized a need for accessible housing resources for YYA, including for those who remain in dangerous housing situations due to lack of options. During YHDP planning, YYA and community partners identified the need for improved connection to school systems for dissemination of information on accessing housing stability resources to more effectively engage with minors.

**While we need to improve connections with all systems, including child welfare with whom we now have a system navigator, the school systems appear to be a priority for building impactful relationships to expand opportunities for those under age 18 to connect with service providers.**

**Cape Cod and the Islands needs to improve connections between YYA homelessness providers, child welfare and YYA carceral systems.**

In the annual state YOUTH count, 11% of respondents from the Cape and Islands identified a connection to the child welfare system and 33% reported connection to carceral systems. These percentages are both below national averages, and anecdotal reports from providers indicate underreporting. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) Liaison connected to the state funded Unaccompanied Homeless YYA grant has provided services to 29 child-welfare connected YYA since January 2022. During FY 2022, there were 382 commitments to the Department of Youth Services (DYS) in the Southeast Region (also includes Plymouth, Bristol, and Norfolk Counties), and 62 probation cases on Cape Cod and the Islands. Connections between YYA homelessness serving agencies and YYA leaving these systems need to improve.

**Cape Cod and the Islands needs to develop timely and effective risk assessment services and emergency housing resources.**

There are currently no outreach services specifically targeting YYA experiencing homelessness or unstable housing. This means that the primary source for identification in our system comes from services provided to older adults experiencing homelessness and the school system, which relies on self-identification and primarily identifies minors, although referrals through the schools is inconsistent. The strong stigma concerning homelessness and other community effects identified during our community needs assessment make it unlikely that our system will identify YYA before they are in crisis and well into their homelessness experiences (e.g., only 10 students identified as “unaccompanied homeless” in school year 20/21). When YYA do look to the system for crisis housing, there is no YYA emergency shelter capacity, leaving them with potentially unsafe spaces that do not meet their needs. During our 2022 strategic planning and 2023 YHDP planning processes, YYA and providers repeatedly reinforced the need for YYA-specific emergency housing resources.

**Cape Cod and the Islands needs to improve connections between the YYA Homelessness system and services for YYA survivors of sexual exploitation and domestic violence.**

In a 2022 report, the Child Advocacy Centers for Cape Cod and the Islands, Bristol County and Plymouth County identified 420 children referred for online exploitation, a 40% increase from the previous year. It included 355 female identified, 63 male identified, and 2 transgender identified children ages 5 years old to 17 years old. 77% of these cases were youth between 13 and 17 years old. 33 YYA identified as survivors or fleeing domestic violence in HMIS between 3/2021 and 3/2022, all over the age of 18, and providers do not currently use the R15 Commercial Sexual Exploitation/Sex Trafficking data element. Only 10 YYA under age 18 overall received services through the state funded Homeless YYA grant over the past three years.



**IN A 2022 REPORT, THE CHILD ADVOCACY CENTERS FOR CAPE COD AND THE ISLANDS, BRISTOL COUNTY AND PLYMOUTH COUNTY IDENTIFIED:**

**420** children referred for online exploitation

that is a **40%** increase from previous year

**355** female  
**63** male  
**2** transgender

**70%** between **13** and **17** years old

**only 10 YYA** under age 18 received services

### OBJECTIVE 2.1 Better identify YYA at-risk and experiencing homelessness, inform them about system resources, and connect them to programs

**ACTION 2.1.1** Add street outreach capacity that incorporates new and creative methods to identify YYA experiencing homelessness and housing instability who are not interacting with homelessness response system and other state systems

- Partner with businesses, healthcare systems, recreational centers, and other community partners who interact with both youth under 18 and young adults 18-24
- Consider incorporating this into the navigator program funding through YHDP

#### LEAD

Homeless Prevention Council

#### TIME FRAME

Short Term

### OBJECTIVE 2.2 Expand outreach efforts and information dissemination to ensure that YYA in need of assistance know where to turn

**ACTION 2.2.1** Develop a (or build out an existing) hotline for YYA to access housing and services resources

- Staff must be trained to support youth under 18, young adults 18-24, and YYA from different cultural backgrounds and the system must have the capacity to communicate with YYA in multiple languages (consider connecting with existing regional translation resources)
- Consider connecting this with the work of community navigators as a primary way for them to connect with new clients and respond quickly to YYA needs.

**ACTION 2.2.2** Develop an anonymous text line for YYA who do not want to self-disclose but are curious about resources

- System must be ready to respond to youth under 18, young adults 18-24, and YYA from different cultural backgrounds and have the capacity to communicate back via text with YYA in multiple languages (consider connecting with existing regional translation resources)
- System must be proactive in its capacity to support YYA in dangerous situations, including those who are attempting to flee domestic violence and trafficking given the anonymous and subtle design of this service

### OBJECTIVE 2.3 Increase coordination across youth-serving systems to expand access to housing-related resources for at-risk youth

**ACTION 2.3.1** Establish formal direct relationships between CoC and each of the following, developing specific plans to support YYA transitioning from systems and aging out of mainstream and community services (e.g., school-age activities):

- Boys & Girls Club (B&GC)
- State level youth serving systems through their local counterparts (DCF, DYS, DMH, etc.), considering replicating the DCF liaison role
- Local K-12 educators, guidance counselors, MV Liaisons, school resource officers, school adjustment counselors, and out of school time providers
- School time programming
- Local law enforcement, the county jail and probation
- IHT agencies (JRI, Youth Villages, etc.)

#### LEAD

YYA Homelessness Committee

#### TIME FRAME

Short Term



**ACTION 2.3.2** Develop a curriculum of support and dedicated resources for those reentering the community from prison, DYS facilities, and other forms of involuntary custody

**ACTION 2.3.3** Partner with first responders and healthcare professionals (EMS, community health centers, ERs, etc.) and provide education about YYA homelessness as a means to interrupt a family's or youth's trajectory toward homelessness

- Incorporate training on YYA homelessness, engaging, and assessing at-risk youth for system partners whose missions are not focused on homelessness
- Consider inviting these partners to committees on YYA homelessness
- Consider inviting these partners to joining more comprehensive training with system providers

## **OBJECTIVE 2.4 Increase access to prevention and early intervention resources for YYA at risk and experiencing homelessness**

**ACTION 2.4.1** Build or identify Drop-In Centers in each region for YYA at risk or experiencing homelessness to quickly connect them to resources

- Consider first conducting a feasibility study and reviewing programs and feasibility studies from Boston, California, NYC, and other jurisdictions to learn from their experience
- Provide access to laundry, computers and internet, food pantry, and other basic needs
- Incorporate navigators, mentorship, case management, behavioral health trained staff
- Consider incorporating trainings and learning experiences that YYA identify as a need
- Incorporate opportunities for YYA to build social relationships
- Consider a small number of crisis beds
- Available and ready to support YYA already in time limited housing to access resources
- Incorporate "office hours" to work with staff from local agencies and programs
- Consider offering hybrid drop-in hours on Zoom or other media platforms
- Consider a mobile drop in center approach that can move around the region
- Consider both new or renovated spaces and locating or co-locating in existing community spaces
- Ensure that the space is safe and affirming to all YYA, that avoids stigma, and can support legal minors (youth under 18) as well as young adult 18-24
- Consider partnering with libraries to create spaces for YYA to meet with professionals- outreach sites with a focus on mentorship and navigation, ensuring that hours fit the schedules of YYA and not just adult staff, and offering hybrid drop in hours on zoom or other media platform

### **LEAD**

YYA Homelessness Committee

### **TIME FRAME**

Long Term

**ACTION 2.4.2** Implement a Mobile Support and Navigation program using YHDP funds that provide flexible, mobile supportive services for YYA across geography of CoC focused on addressing immediate needs, connection and referral to resources, and general support until YYA have a longer-term intervention in place and a pathway to obtain and maintain permanent housing

- Integrate the navigators throughout the region as a system-wide response, and in close coordination with other related actions in this plan
- Ensure navigators are trained in problem solving, equity, trauma-informed care, and Positive Youth Development
- Ensure navigators are trained to support youth under 18 and young adults 18-24
- Consider a wide variety of partners and ensure support for each region of the Cape, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket

### **LEAD**

Homeless Prevention Council

### **TIME FRAME**

Short Term

**ACTION 2.4.3** Investigate and implement a program for flexible financial assistance (e.g., direct cash transfers) that supports the following populations and experiences

- Transitional financial assistance for youth exiting systems of care
- Supporting costs like rental arrears, fuel assistance, security deposit, among other expenses.
- Consider unconditional spending

### **LEAD**

YYA Homelessness Committee

### **TIME FRAME**

Long Term

- Consider funding that is regularly available beyond one time payments to easily cover debts that serve as barriers to housing
- Consider YYA in housing who do not have a fixed or reliable income and may exit unsuccessfully from time limited housing or be unable to pay bills in more permanent housing

**ACTION 2.4.4** Build out THRIVE and other community center peer support programs to include YYA at risk or experiencing homelessness

**ACTION 2.4.5** Decrease barriers to early intervention resources for families who are not systems-involved

- Early intervention for families not involved in systems is important given that services often mandate DCF/DMH involvement to work with a child or their family

**ACTION 2.4.6** Identify programs on Cape & Islands that can serve YYA existing systems or aging out of programs (cliff effect) and develop a strategy to expand or target those resources to YYA facing a loss of support

- Consider programs that will not trigger a loss of benefits so that YYA have extra time to build savings, complete education goals, etc.

## OBJECTIVE 2.5 Quickly, safely, and effectively provide shelter for YYA experiencing a housing crisis

**ACTION 2.5.1** Develop low barrier, YYA-specific crisis beds with connected YYA-specific supports at all existing shelters and homelessness programs, including Champ Homes, Homeless not Hopeless, and the NOAH shelter (St. Josephs)

- First conduct a review of current and proposed crisis residential beds and recommend specific policy, staff, programmatic, and structural action steps that will ensure YYA feel safe and comfortable
- Focus of the review must include a trauma, racial equity, and LGBTQIA+ affirming lens
- YYA-specific resources must include specific strategies to address barriers that YYA face in accessing shelter and ensure that LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC YYA feel safe and support their unique needs
- Must include trauma-informed approaches, positive youth development methodologies, and harm reduction, and consider physical separation from the older adult population
- Include flexible and supportive case management services

### LEAD

YYA Homelessness Committee

### TIME FRAME

Long Term

**ACTION 2.5.2** Identify and support crisis residential beds specifically designed for survivors of intimate partner violence and human trafficking

**ACTION 2.5.3** Conduct a feasibility study and analysis for a short-term crisis Host Homes pilot program throughout the region

- Investigate whether adding a flexible model like Night Stop in the UK will meet our community's needs, assuming that we will build in the wraparound supports and navigation to quickly address their crisis (this should complement our longer-term host home model being piloted by HPC - see Action 3.1.1)
- Continue to look to other countries to replicate their best and promising practices here
- Incorporate building community connections and community awareness into the model
- Previous model from Independence House where DV survivors stayed a night or two in community- members home when fleeing
- Consider partnering with second-home owners to use their homes while they are off-cape or off-island

### LEAD

YYA Homelessness Committee

### TIME FRAME

Intermediate Term



### GOAL 3

## Safe and Stable Housing

Provide YYA experiencing a housing crisis with immediate, safe, supportive and flexible housing options that are YYA-driven, honor their specific needs and goals and lead to equitable, long-term and sustainable housing outcomes.

### THE CHALLENGE

**Cape Cod and the Islands needs new YYA specific subsidized housing resources.**

There are currently only 6 beds of Permanent Supportive Housing for young adults and none for youth under 18. All other housing resources are open to all demographics and prioritized using the VI-SPDAT, an assessment that often yields higher vulnerability scores for older adults. Additionally, the requirement of a disability for PSH participants can be a barrier for YYA given the lack of behavioral health resources and poor connections to healthcare providers. There were 45 unaccompanied YYA entered into HMIS in FY 2022 and 22 YYA counted in the 2023 Point In Time count. Both underrepresent YYA in need of housing resources when compared to the average of 128 YYA who have received services through the state funded Unaccompanied Homeless YYA grant over the past three fiscal years, and the 2,400 ceiling that we estimate using national averages. That suggests a significant gap in available YYA-specific housing relative to the need.

**Cape Cod and the Islands needs to develop year-round stable housing options for YYA.**

Housing is limited and very expensive on Cape Cod and the Islands. Average housing costs exceed 37% of area median income and the rental vacancy rate is only 1%. More than 36% of the housing stock is seasonal homes meaning short term leases with thousands of dollars in rent increases for individuals to stay housed through the spring-summer-fall. Populations surge during the tourist months, with Nantucket's population expanding 3 times, but zoning laws make it difficult to build high density residential units. Landlords in the region often conduct credit checks which is an additional barrier for YYA with little to no credit history. Partner agencies on Martha's Vineyard report that almost all leases are "at will" rather than year-round, making all renters unstably housed.

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

## OBJECTIVE 3.1 Develop a network of community-based housing for YYA experiencing homelessness

**ACTION 3.1.1** Replicate the Host Home model being developed by HPC in collaboration with the BCDHS in each region of Cape Cod and the Islands

- Include robust guidance to the host home landlord

**LEAD** : Homeless Prevention Council  
**TIME FRAME**: Short Term

## OBJECTIVE 3.2 Lower current program barriers for YYA to access and continue using homelessness housing and resources and ensure that YYA who engage with the homelessness system always have access to a housing first option

**ACTION 3.2.1** Work with all existing YYA-dedicated housing organizations to remove income, motivation, citizenship, and sobriety requirements for program eligibility and participation

**LEAD** : YYA Homelessness Committee  
**TIME FRAME**: Intermediate Term

## OBJECTIVE 3.3 Increase access to community-style housing with on-site resources and supports

**ACTION 3.3.1** Explore opportunities to create (or expand existing) housing for students enrolled at Cape Cod Community College

- Consider transitional type housing tapped into the CCCC infrastructure
- Consider following a host homes model
- Rental discussions currently underway with CCCC

**ACTION 3.3.2** Investigate and develop a communal living model that includes a broad array of onsite wraparound services

- Consider dormitory style, efficiency, group home, and workforce models
- Should include robust case management models
- Consider repurposing old schools and having wings for different ages
- Consider Joint Base Cape Cod resources to house YYA experiencing homelessness

## OBJECTIVE 3.4 Improve transitional housing outcomes by increasing adoption of best practices and promising strategies

**ACTION 3.4.1** Work with current and new transitional housing programs to incorporate new supportive services and a holistic approach to thriving

- Add a curriculum benchmark that includes budgeting, basic banking, life skills, hygiene, laundry, grocery shopping, housekeeping, basic home maintenance (e.g., cleaning, trash),
- Incorporate healthy engagement or re-engagement with family and community members
- Prepare for post-transitional living from day one
- Incorporate harm reduction practices for YYA who may experience homelessness and substance use
- Provide connections to workforce development programs on-site, job opportunities, mental health services, and psychoeducation, as well as training and experience in adult responsibilities (“adulthood”), routine, career paths, housing maintenance, and transitioning to independence

## OBJECTIVE 3.5 Reduce barriers to maintaining long-term housing and remove penalties for negative behaviors

**ACTION 3.5.1** Develop savings account model to embed in YYA programs - YYA pay X toward savings and get it back at the end of their enrollment

**ACTION 3.5.2** Work with providers to ensure robust transition services to increase self-sufficiency

- Answer the questions “How do I get off a voucher, eventually? What does that look like, how do I get there?”
- Help YYA consider that support could be time-limited



### OBJECTIVE 3.6 Invest in new YYA specific long-term housing models

**ACTION 3.6.1** Partner with local employers for year-round housing, including those who currently provide only seasonal housing, currently provide long-term housing, or do not currently provide housing

- Investigate whether a financial incentive, local rule change, or other mechanism might be most impactful in recruiting committed business partners

**LEAD**

YYA Homelessness Committee

**TIME FRAME**

Intermediate Term

**ACTION 3.6.2** Launch a Transitional Housing - Rapid Rehousing model that combines crisis residential housing and permanent scattered site housing and allows YYA to both enter whichever model meets their needs and to transition between the models seamlessly without having to re-enroll

- Must use housing first principles and case management supports that are healing centered, strengths-based, and YYA-led
- Incorporate peer positions into YHDP project design and future YYA-dedicated funding opportunities

**LEAD**

Regional Network on Homelessness

**TIME FRAME**

Long Term

**ACTION 3.6.3** Develop a YYA housing program for YYA struggling with significant BH challenges

- Include BH supports on-site
- Including a prescriber to meet BH medication needs immediately
- Housing first and YYA centered approach

### OBJECTIVE 3.7 Increase access to existing housing stock resources

**ACTION 3.7.1** Advocate for tax credits or other subsidies for homeowners to rent homes year-round rather than seasonal when renting to YYA and engage local landlords through a targeted outreach effort to increase awareness of and support in using vouchers and other subsidies for our YYA

**LEAD:** BCDHS

**TIME FRAME:** Short Term (advocacy),  
Long term (legislative change)

### OBJECTIVE 3.8 Make more effective use of existing community resources to support YYA in housing programs

**ACTION 3.8.1** Partner with small existing businesses and non-profit organizations to work with YYA to learn life skills based on their entities, work, and expertise

- Consider organizations that can teach cooking, health, nutrition, organization skills, time management, finance, banking, etc
- Consider outcomes that include education and employment as a program focus
- Consider a “learn how to” volunteer program that engages soup kitchens, animal shelters, community clean up, etc., to teach valuable skills and build resumes

**LEAD :** YYA Homelessness Committee

**TIME FRAME:** Short Term

**ACTION 3.8.2** Partner with Legal Aid to target legal services and consultation to YYA engaging the homelessness system

- Consider partnering to provide training to homelessness system staff and YYA that familiarizes them with housing and tenant laws and how to fight for their rights
- Consider credit repair and support with debts (including those caused by parents, guardians, or other instances of stolen identity)
- Consider supporting YYA with a felony charge or probation struggling with housing and employment
- Consider specific supports for legal minors (youth under 18) and young adults 18-24

**ACTION 3.8.3** Work with organizations that can provide furniture as YYA move in

- Consider a voucher for Falmouth Hand-in-Hand, Bobs, ReStore, Good Will, etc.
- Connect to programs with experience providing furniture, like HAC

## GOAL 4

# Health and Wellbeing

Provide YYA with immediate and equitable access to resources that support physical, social-emotional, developmental and spiritual well-being, delivered with a holistic and healing centered approach that is culturally competent, inclusive and responsive, so they can thrive.

## GOAL 4: THE CHALLENGE

**Cape Cod and the Islands needs prompt access to mental health services.**

Our community needs assessment identified a severe lack of readily available and YYA-appropriate mental health services with 58.9% of YYA accessing homelessness services in FY22 report experiencing a mental-health condition. Clinical mental health challenges have an outsized effect on YYA experiencing homelessness and housing instability and vis-a-versa; but YYA also cope with the toll that sub-clinical mental health challenges can take, making it less likely that YYA will quickly exit homelessness or thrive in other aspects of their lives. Partners have repeatedly reported that shortages of clinical providers and disincentives such as poor insurance reimbursement rates drive long wait times and frustrate efforts to make more health-related services available to YYA.

**Cape Cod and the Islands needs YYA focused substance use treatment and recovery services.**

There are too few services with the special capacity to support YYA experiencing homelessness in recovery from substance use disorder. Self-identification likely limits the efficacy of HMIS data (13 YYA reported substance “abuse” between 3/21 and 3/22) and data on “homeless” status in the state’s substance treatment system (51 self-identified in 2018), which then makes resource development challenging. YYA have explained that many YYA do not need substance use disorder treatment or protective settings. One YYA reported “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,” as existing resources are designed for older adults. There is also a need for better understanding of outcomes for YYA with disabilities in the region’s programs.



**13** YYA reported substance “abuse”  
between 3/21 and 3/22

**51** self-identified in 2018

## GOAL 4: THE RESPONSE

### OBJECTIVE 4.1 Improve access and lower wait times to outpatient behavioral health services for YYA

**ACTION 4.1.1** Create pathways to increase therapists, psychiatrist, NPs, etc. who are certified to work with YYA.

**LEAD**

BCDHS/ Health Resources in Action (HRiA)

**TIME FRAME**

Intermediate Term

### OBJECTIVE 4.2 Increase peer-to-peer positions and programs to support YYA behavioral health

**ACTION 4.2.1** Expand Alternative Peer Group programs and recovery coaching and include transportation

### OBJECTIVE 4.3 Integrate behavioral health into programming, services, and education

**ACTION 4.3.1** Expand the work of PIER Recovery Support Center of Cape Cod to include a focus on YYA experiencing homelessness and connect them with crisis residential programs across the region

**ACTION 4.3.2** Work with the school districts to identify and then incorporate additional school-based behavioral health options for YYA at-risk and experiencing homelessness

**LEAD**

BCDHS/ HRiA

**TIME FRAME**

Intermediate Term

### OBJECTIVE 4.4 Develop alternative models for supporting YYA health and wellbeing needs

**ACTION 4.4.1** Create a mobile clinic based on Community Health Center model

- Mobile services targeted to YYA identified needs, not what adult allies identify
- Ensure physical health resources and referral abilities and ability to complete applications for MassHealth and other benefits
- Include a prescriber
- Include as many providers as possible in mobile services (Duffy, AIDS Support Group, Health Centers)
- Potential to include connection to other services via clinic (e.g., employment supports)

**LEAD**

YYA Homelessness Committee

**TIME FRAME**

Long Term

**ACTION 4.4.2** Make physical wellness opportunities accessible and free of charge for YYA engaged with the homelessness system

- Include yoga, salt caves, etc.
- Consider coordinated entry providing a voucher or centralized access to validating access as well as YYA housing, drop in, and services organizations



**ACTION 4.4.3** Partner with animal shelters to develop a volunteer animal program for YYA in the homelessness system

- Consider how to better support YYA with pets currently restricted from shelter
- Consider how to advocate for YYA with pets in housing search

**ACTION 4.4.4** Mobile shower program that adds a shower trailer to mobile resources from the Prevention and Early Intervention section

**LEAD**

YYA Homelessness Committee

**TIME FRAME**

Intermediate Term

**OBJECTIVE 4.5 Increase services to assist with insurance applications and renewals**

**ACTION 4.5.1** Offer “pop-up” centers for MassHealth enrollment and changes

**LEAD**

Regional Network Policy Board

**TIME FRAME**

Intermediate Term

**ACTION 4.5.2** Provide language interpretation and immigration resources

**OBJECTIVE 4.6 Increase opportunities for YYA to improve health and well-being through cultural participation**

**ACTION 4.6.1** Provide social opportunities for YYA that includes transportation and child care at community centers or other central locations

**ACTION 4.6.2** Develop a list of community groups for historically oppressed populations (LGBTQIA+, BIPOC, the tribes) and an effective warm process for connecting YYA in homelessness system programs to those groups

**LEAD**

BCDHS

**TIME FRAME**

Short Term

*YYA have explained that many YYA do not need substance use disorder treatment or protective settings and that “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,” as existing resources are designed for older adults.*

## GOAL 5

# Education and Employment

Provide all YYA and children in their care with education, employment and training opportunities and resources that prioritize equity, use an individualized approach and support sustainable pathways toward independence.

## GOAL 5: THE CHALLENGE

Cape Cod and the Islands needs to improve opportunities for non-seasonal employment and support young people employed in the seasonal workforce through the offseason.

The Cape and Island's service-based economy poses unique challenges to stable employment including:

- lack of transportation resources for those working non-traditional hours
- unstable businesses (i.e. restaurants frequently changing owners)
- competition from non-permanent residents during summer months
- lack of full time positions that provide benefits

Cape Cod and the Islands needs proactive and intentional pathways from high school to post-secondary education, workforce development, and employment.

While the public school system is well-funded, there are too few subsidized and accessible educational and workforce programs. Additionally, access to Cape Cod Community College, the only post-secondary option in the region, is challenging for those without their own transportation. There are several graduate level programs on the Cape, but all are in specific fields that lack post-secondary options supporting YYA in gaining pre-requisites.

Cape Cod and the Islands needs to improve coordination between the school district and the YYA homelessness response system.

There are no formal connections between K-12 education systems and YYA homelessness providers. Teachers and school counselors report that they are not aware of which students are eligible to receive assistance through the homelessness system and do not report information during the PIT count due to lack of information.



Despite counting more than **310 total students experiencing homelessness in school year 20/21**, including those in families, school districts only counted **10 unaccompanied students** experiencing homelessness.

## GOAL 5: THE RESPONSE

### OBJECTIVE 5.1 Improve access to education-related support for youth experiencing homelessness or housing instability

**ACTION 5.1.1** Fund an education and employment focused advocacy center for youth - one-stop shop space for all related needs (vocational, DTA, post-secondary education, resume support, etc.)

- Partner with Masshire to implement - they do most of this work already
- Could be mobile

**ACTION 5.1.2** Develop (or expand existing) models for free/sliding scale childcare for young parents who are enrolled in education programs

- Connect with vocational programs/early childhood development ed programs to identify potential childcare staff for this model

**ACTION 5.1.3** Expand access to/increase scholarship opportunities targeted to YYA who have aged out of traditional K-12 setting

- Increase # of youth who can be served by Moving to College scholarship through Dept. of Education
- CCCC offers free college and certificates to qualifying individuals

**ACTION 5.1.4** Invest in and coordinate with alternative learning programs to support YYA at risk or experiencing homelessness

- Inclusive of night schools, trade schools, life skills programming, and more

**LEAD**

YYA Homelessness Committee

**TIME FRAME:** Intermediate Term

### OBJECTIVE 5.2 Increase opportunities for mentorship, peer support, and tutoring for YYA

**ACTION 5.2.1** Utilize existing staff positions within K-12 education (e.g., coaches, after school activities) to develop mentorship opportunities between staff and students at risk of or experiencing homelessness

- Strategy to allow safe connection between staff/student
- Add extra component/time/compensation, or something similar, to allow staff to do so

### OBJECTIVE 5.3 Expand access to employment and income related resources and services to high-school aged youth throughout the Cape and Islands

**ACTION 5.3.1** Host job fairs for summer employment within high schools

- Should be held during winter, application typically needs to be in late winter/early spring
- Should be hosted during times that youth can and will attend (e.g., not an optional event during lunch)
- Could replicate model that is used in Barnstable and Nauset

**ACTION 5.3.2** Incorporate flexibilities for working students - especially those who are the primary breadwinner for their families

- Falmouth has a model where students can request flexible schedule, start later or leave earlier, to accommodate a work schedule

**ACTION 5.3.3** Bring vocational education partners into schools to engage YYA and increase access to trade education as an alternative to traditional post-secondary education options

- Consider Mass Maritime Academy, Cape Cod Tech, CCCC



## OBJECTIVE 5.4 Increase employment-related mentorship and peer support opportunities for youth

**ACTION 5.4.1** Create opportunities for peer to peer, near peer, and older adult mentorship in employment to support youth with navigating critical elements (e.g., benefits)

- A model for this may exist in DV space or parts of school system
- Consider a program at CCCC
- Embed in the community to meet YYA where they are (e.g., libraries, shelters) and consider combining with the drop-in center action if it moves forward

**ACTION 5.4.2** Develop and implement curriculum or training on employee rights for YYA to ensure they know how to advocate for themselves and their needs

## OBJECTIVE 5.5 Strengthen partnership between employment organizations and CoC/youth-serving organizations to improve access for at-risk youth

**ACTION 5.5.1** Connect with MassHire to target programming to YYA experiencing homelessness, expand access throughout the region, and ensure a warm, efficient, and effective handoff from homelessness system providers

- Currently at CC center, satellite offices to reach other regions for training

**LEAD:** YYA Homelessness Committee

**TIME FRAME:** Intermediate Term

**ACTION 5.5.2** Create program modeled after HPC's REACH Program, dedicated to supporting YYA

- Requires a number of inputs to be successful, including partnerships that will be unique in each region
- Life coaching, goal setting, mindfulness, case management, and stipend

**LEAD:** Homeless Prevention Council

**TIME FRAME:** Long Term

**ACTION 5.5.3** Engage Cape Cod AmeriCorps to fill slots quickly as they open with YYA from the homelessness system

- These programs include housing, jobs, and training

**LEAD:** BCDHS

**TIME FRAME:** Long Term

## OBJECTIVE 5.6 Partner with local employers to increase connection for YYA to job opportunities

**ACTION 5.6.1** Provide supports, incentives, or requirements for programs to hire youth specific workers in existing YYA homelessness agencies (i.e. We Can for legal advice, etc.)

- Include a recruitment strategy and peer support opportunities for BIPOC YYA, especially male-identifying BIPOC YYA who are not currently well represented among YYA-serving staff
- Consider targeted funding for staff positions that support YYA leaders at competitive rates (see Systems 7.b.)
- Reduce education requirements to make position more accessible if specific qualification not explicitly necessary

**LEAD:** YYA Homelessness Committee

**TIME FRAME:** Intermediate Term

## OBJECTIVE 5.7 Partner with local employers to increase connection for YYA to job opportunities

**ACTION 5.7.1** Partner with DTA and other agencies to increase location of kiosks for benefit enrollment

**LEAD:** Regional Network Policy Board

**TIME FRAME:** Intermediate Term

**ACTION 5.7.2** Design and implement a "traveling benefits show" to present on opportunities in places where homeless and at-risk YYA can be identified (shelters, schools, etc.)

- If a YYA does not qualify for benefits provided by this "traveling road show", they must be given resources to help them or connected through a "warm handoff" to the right partner

**LEAD:** Homeless Prevention Council and YYA Homelessness Committee

**TIME FRAME:** Short Term

## GOAL 6

# Community Connections

Support YYA in identifying, establishing and maintaining positive relationships with individuals and community organizations of their choosing that meet their daily social, mentoring, and networking needs while reinforcing long-term stability and equitable outcomes.

## GOAL 6: THE CHALLENGE

**Cape Cod and the Islands needs policy and resources to disrupt the severe cliff effect that YYA face when they exit high school.**

The community's unique population and political dynamics mean that, historically, there have been high investments in K-12 education but a dearth of community resources for YYA out of school. There are few opportunities for YYA without strong family and community networks to build intentional and supported connections through adult and young adult community spaces, activities and services that will sustain them (and that we all rely on).

**Cape Cod and the Islands needs to develop community resources that foster interpersonal connections and are designed for YYA.**

The Cape and Islands age demographics skew decidedly toward older adults, which influences town and regional decision making on resources and services that offer opportunities for connection. Additionally, public transportation is limited and operates primarily during the day, posing additional challenges for social interaction.

**Cape Cod and the Islands needs to create safe and supportive spaces to discuss housing instability and support meaningful connections to family and local community networks.**

Our community needs assessment identified that teachers, neighbors, social service professionals, and even family members struggle to appropriately engage or discuss YYA experiencing homelessness and housing instability.



While our small tight-knit communities enable powerful kin-like support mechanisms, YYA report that there can also be powerful isolating forces associated with stigma and shame.

## GOAL 6: THE RESPONSE

### OBJECTIVE 6.1 Better connect YYA experiencing homelessness and housing instability to existing community mentoring, leadership, and support programs

**ACTION 6.1.1** Map existing opportunities for community connection and building long term relationships in each region of the Cape and Islands, and develop relationships with identified community programs, protocols for YYA in the homelessness system to access them more easily, and training in YYA homelessness for partners, as necessary

- Consider the following examples: Y achievers program, YMCA, Cape Cod Young Professionals, Big Brother, Big Sister, Boys and Girls Club; Latinx in Action community kitchen program, Independence House, NAACP, THRIVE, Peer Recovery, Cape Cod Community College, Duffy, Cape Cod Healthy Families
- Ensure there is a clear, flexible, and supportive hand-off when referring a YYA to other services, resources, or community connections
- Work with partners to ensure language access for YYA who do not speak English as first language

#### LEAD

YYA Homelessness Committee

#### TIME FRAME

Long Term

**ACTION 6.1.2** Develop a centralized way for case managers to connect YYA to social networks

- Tap into existing social networks, like faith-based communities
- The shelter has a resource page for guests including a pamphlet with a QR code

**ACTION 6.1.3** Thoughtfully engage and partner with the tribes to ensure strong cultural connections

- YYA part of the tribes in non-tribe services could use tribe supports
- YYA part of the tribes in tribe services could use “mainstream” services
- The mainstream system can learn from the tribes to make sure services and resources are culturally respectful and affirming

### OBJECTIVE 6.2 Improve the capacity of YYA in the homelessness system to form community connections

**ACTION 6.2.1** Fund peer mentor positions in YYA homelessness programming across Cape Cod and the Islands

- Focus on building peer to peer connections

#### LEAD

Regional Network on Homelessness

#### TIME FRAME

Long Term

**ACTION 6.2.2** Create a working group of providers to develop stabilization and community connection supports for YYA beyond their programs

- For example, the shelter has capacity to do some stabilization beyond the shelter
- Fund and protect the relationships that YYA have with their provider beyond when they complete the program
- Allow providers to continue to “shadow” or mentor YYA and offer a “bridge” connection
- Consider this being especially important from middle school through high school
- Remove “dumping” policies from existing organizations and fund them to stay with YYA
- When agencies decide they are done and cut the relationship - really tough for YYA
- JRI offers a service that is a potential model for this
- Allow the YYA to decide when they age out and to keep their “in system” connection even if they are not “complying” or engaged with services

#### LEAD

YYA Homelessness Committee

#### TIME FRAME

Long Term



**ACTION 6.2.3** Advocate at the state level for programs to keep working with YYA so that there is no cliff effect and loss of important personal connections

**LEAD:** BCDHS

**TIME FRAME:** Short Term

**ACTION 6.2.4** Support providers to operate YYA-led peer groups in system programs that build community and practice relationship development

- Consider the Alternative Peer Group at Duffy as a model (specific population – teen SUD)
- Consider learning how to cook, how to do household tasks, personal banking, how to live with roommates, self care etc. “adulting” classes and “shaping an adult life”
- Find a way to pay YYA for their time leading these spaces

**ACTION 6.2.5** Invest in a policy or program that allows young parents time to be social and “have a night off,” in addition to the parental supports they need to work and attend school

- Provide options for childcare
- Consider building a network of people who provide one another with childcare support just like we might ask a parent, relative, or friend for free childcare
- Consider partnering with Faith Family Kitchens for cooking groups connected to community meal
- Consider working with restaurants to create a special voucher for young parents
- Ensure that the program has clear guidelines and addresses liability concerns for childcare - speak with programs who are already doing this

### **OBJECTIVE 6.3 Develop new connection opportunities in the community designed to specifically meet the needs of YYA experiencing homelessness**

**ACTION 6.3.1** Engage and support employers as mentors for YYA in the homelessness systems

- Identify and build strong relationships with employers who might be good mentors

**ACTION 6.3.2** Identify or develop a space for regularly scheduled clubs, meetings, and social support for YYA to increase peer connections

- Consider ways for YYA to find resources, make friends, and meet peers, not just in high school or college
- Consider self-care opportunities with peers like those offered at Wellstrong (yoga, fitness, etc.)
- Ensure that YYA have spaces to have fun and spend time together. Very few spaces for YYA to congregate and just be young people together - like malls, parks, etc.
- Consider transportation needs

**ACTION 6.3.3** Develop an electronic or virtual pathways for YYA to access peer connections

- Consider a hotline or social media campaign (Trevor Project’s open chat as a model)
- The shelter has a resource page for guests including a pamphlet with a QR code
- Consider a pamphlet and other information through the school guidance counselor about permanent connections and community resources - something that YYA can connect to on their phone or another device

**ACTION 6.3.4** Engage older adults in a new program to build connections with young people while focusing on supporting the needs of older adults

- It must be simple and easy
- Consider funds for the older adults to pay YYA to do tasks, etc.
- Outreach to groups, churches, community groups, etc.

**LEAD:** BCDHS

**TIME FRAME:** Intermediate Term



## GOAL 7

# Equity

Remove obstacles rooted in historic, systemic and interpersonal bias that result in the persistent overrepresentation of affected populations among those experiencing homelessness, inequitable distribution of resources and disparate outcomes, and invest in culturally affirmative models, services and resources.

## GOAL 7: THE CHALLENGE

**Cape Cod and the Islands needs to address systemic barriers to services and resources faced by minority populations.**

Based on July 1, 2021 Census estimates, approximately 3.5% of Cape Cod residents identify as Black/African American, 0.7% identify as American Indian and 3.4% identify their ethnicity as Latinx. In FY22, the Unaccompanied Homeless YYA programs provided services to 107 YYA of which 18.7% identified as Black/African American, 8.4% identified as American Indian and 10.3% identified their race as “Other”. 7.4% identified their ethnicity as Latinx. In the family shelter system, 25% of parenting YYA identify as Black/African American. The overrepresentation of minority populations accessing YYA homelessness systems must be a central consideration for all program development.

**Cape Cod and the Islands needs to expand partnerships between LGBTQIA+ serving agencies and the YYA homelessness system.**

National and Massachusetts averages indicate that 20-40% of YYA experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQIA+, yet only 6.5% of YYA accessing the homelessness service system on the Cape and Islands in FY22 identify as LGBTQIA+ and only 1 YYA identified as trans. This disparity indicates that improving connections between homelessness providers and LGBTQIA+ serving agencies could improve access. Research in our state consistently finds that LGBTQIA+ YYA are at higher risk of experiencing homelessness, their reasons for leaving home are significantly different, on average, from their cisgender-straight peers, and they experience homelessness more severely, with higher rates of sexual exploitation, violence, and suicidality.

*The overrepresentation of minority populations accessing YYA homelessness systems must be a central consideration for all program development.*

## GOAL 7: THE RESPONSE

Equity serves as scaffolding for our plan. Objectives and actions in each goal area must incorporate an equity lens to be successful, and our system response must strive to be anti-racist and proactively affirming the humanity of LGBTQIA+ YYA to prevent and end YYA homelessness. While the objectives and actions below are included in the goal areas above, we call them out here because they explicitly target racism, homophobia, transphobia, and cultural competency. These responses to our equity needs are essential to our coordinated community plan.

### OBJECTIVE 1.2 Increase and improve Cape & Islands CoC's HMIS capacity and data collection

**ACTION 1.2.3** Establish working group or subcommittee to develop and implement CQI plan that includes the following:

- Equity data and metrics that are regularly analyzed to ensure equitable access and outcomes in housing programs for historically marginalized and over represented populations (BIPOC, LGBTQIA+ YYA)
- A process for regular analysis of qualitative data
- Systems-level data and outcomes metrics
- A broad range of system partners that help measure the impact of YYA homelessness efforts on other YYA-serving systems

### OBJECTIVE 1.4 Strengthen relationships between the homelessness response system and community partners

**ACTION 1.4.1** Build and strengthen relationships with communities who may not traditionally partner with or trust systems to increase YYA representation in efforts to prevent and end YYA homelessness

- Tribal communities, immigrant communities, Black community, LGBTQIA+ and other historically marginalized populations on Cape & Islands
- Establish relationship between CoC and Amplify POC Cape Cod

### OBJECTIVE 1.6 Improve YYA-specific capacity, equity, and cultural competence of all YYA housing and services

**ACTION 1.6.1** Work with providers in every region to ensure YYA have access to bilingual case management and services

- Emphasize Portuguese and Brazilian-Portuguese on Martha's Vineyard and throughout the region
- Develop a flexible strategy based on the resources available to the organization and region (program staff, county support, partner staff)

**ACTION 1.6.2** Develop a regional strategy to offer ongoing and recurring training and guidance on YYA homelessness, YYA partnership, DEI, supporting LGBTQIA+ identifying youth, adulthood, healing centered approaches, harm reduction, and positive youth development for all youth-serving housing and services providers

- Include learning and accountability on equity, implicit bias, anti-racism, and dismantling homophobia and transphobia
- Consider facilitated community of practice following trainings to maintain and deepen learning
- Ensure that new staff have access to learning and materials to account for turnover
- Consider affinity groups, ongoing growth, and learning opportunities for special populations



**ACTION 1.6.3** Connect YYA homelessness service providers with GSA groups in each school district to increase awareness & build regional connections

## **OBJECTIVE 2.4 Increase access to prevention and early intervention resources for YYA at risk and experiencing homelessness**

**ACTION 2.4.2** Implement a Mobile Support and Navigation program using YHDP funds that provide flexible, mobile supportive services for YYA across geography of CoC focused on addressing immediate needs, connection and referral to resources, and general support until YYA have a longer-term intervention in place and a pathway to obtain and maintain permanent housing

- Integrate the navigators throughout the region as a system-wide response, and in close coordination with other related actions in this plan
- Ensure navigators are trained in problem solving, equity, trauma-informed care, and Positive Youth Development
- Consider a wide variety of partners and ensure support for each region of the Cape, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket

## **OBJECTIVE 2.5 Quickly, safely, and effectively provide shelter for YYA experiencing a housing crisis**

**ACTION 2.5.1** Develop low barrier, YYA-specific crisis beds with connected YYA-specific supports at all existing shelters and homelessness programs, including Champ homes, Homeless not Hopeless, and the St. Joseph's shelter

- First conduct a review of current and proposed crisis residential beds and recommend specific policy, staff, programmatic, and structural action steps that will ensure YYA feel safe and comfortable
- Focus of the review must include a trauma, racial equity, and LGBTQIA+ affirming lens
- YYA-specific must include specific strategies to address barriers that YYA face in accessing shelter and ensure that LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC YYA feel safe and support their unique needs
- Must include trauma-informed approaches, positive youth development methodologies, and harm reduction, and consider physical separation from the older adult population
- Include flexible and supportive case management services

## **OBJECTIVE 4.7 Increase opportunities for YYA to improve health and well-being through cultural participation**

**ACTION 4.7.2** Develop a list of community groups for historically oppressed populations (LGBTQIA, BIPOC, The Tribe) and an effective warm process for connecting YYA in homelessness system programs to those groups

## **OBJECTIVE 5.6 Partner with local employers to increase connection for YYA to job opportunities**

**ACTION 5.6.1** Provide supports, incentives, or requirements for programs to hire youth specific workers in existing YYA homelessness agencies (i.e. We Can for legal advice, etc)

- Include a recruitment strategy and peer support opportunities for BIPOC YYA, especially male-identifying BIPOC YYA who are not currently well represented among YYA-serving staff
- Consider targeted funding for staff positions that support YYA leaders at competitive rates (see Systems 7.b.)
- Reduce education requirements to make position more accessible if specific qualification not explicitly necessary



# Moving Forward

We developed our plan using a shared ownership model and are committed to an inclusive, YYA-led, and transparent implementation strategy. The following structure will hold us accountable and give entities identified to lead action steps the authority to move us forward.

**Barnstable County Department of Human Services (BCDHS).** Will oversee the day to day management of the plan. They will lead many action steps in the plan, track the progress of all objectives, actions, and outcomes, and lead reporting to the youth homelessness committee, continuous quality improvement committee, Regional Network board, YAB, and funders, as necessary. BCDHS will support YHDP grant recipients and help them meet their HUD obligations, while working to ensure that each action, including the YHDP-funded projects, remains integrated and evolves to meet the changing needs of the community.

**YYA Homelessness Committee.** Will act as a steering committee for BCDHS, meeting monthly to review progress and make recommendations. The Committee will be responsible for vetting documents and reports, providing insight and feedback, presenting recommendations to the YAB and Network Board, and establishing workgroups, as needed. At least two YAB members must be present or submit their votes offline before any YYA Committee decision regarding a significant plan change can be finalized.

**Continuous Quality Improvement Committee.** Will develop and implement a continuous quality improvement plan that includes the following: equity data and metrics that are regularly analyzed to ensure equitable access and outcomes in housing programs for historically marginalized and over represented populations (BIPOC, LGBTQ+ YYA); a process for regular analysis of qualitative data; systems-level data and outcomes metrics; and a broad range of system partners that help measure the impact of YYA homelessness efforts on other YYA-serving systems. The HMIS team at the BCDHS will co-lead the committee along with YYA homelessness partners and at least two YAB members.

**YAB.** Will provide oversight regarding the plan. YAB members will participate on the YYA Committee, Continuous Quality Improvement Committee, and Policy Board and review all plan reports independently. YAB is a decision-making body with the authority to recommend changes to the plan.

**Regional Network on Homelessness Policy Board.** Will review semiannual reports and offer guidance and support regarding the broader homelessness system, including HMIS, Coordinated Entry, the CoC Competition, and other areas of expertise. They will remove barriers to plan implementation to the greatest extent possible and promote the plan among their constituencies. They will designate most decision-making authority to the YYA Committee, Continuous Quality Improvement Committee, and YAB, however they will be a co-decision-maker with the YAB whenever decisions directly impact the work of other CoC Committees or directly conflict with existing CoC policy.

**To ensure continuous improvement, the YYA Homelessness Committee will regularly solicit feedback from YYA, providers, and other community partners. This will include an annual survey of partners, focus groups with YYA, and an annual update with recommendations for improvement. YAB members will be included in the design of all feedback materials and in the analysis of related data.**

# Signature Page

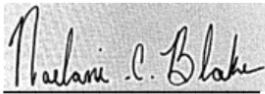
We, the members of Cape Cod and the Islands Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Planning Committee, approve our community's coordinated community plan to prevent and end youth and young adult homelessness.

We commit to supporting the implementation of this plan. We understand that it will take a community-wide effort and, not only our collective resources, but also the resources of many other community stakeholders. Nevertheless, we are confident that with our commitment, including a commitment to shared ownership, young adult leadership, transparency, and continuous improvement, that following the coordinated community plan will set us on a path to preventing and ending youth and young adult homelessness on Cape Cod and the Islands.

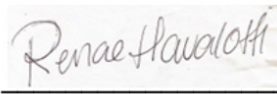
Given the nature and speed of our planning process, we understand that many included actions are aspirational. Nevertheless, they serve as important light posts on our path to ending YYA homelessness, and we commit to making meaningful progress to the greatest extent possible and continuously improving the plan.

Signed on this day, May 24, 2023:

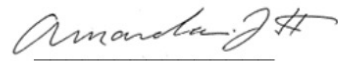
## YOUTH ACTION BOARD



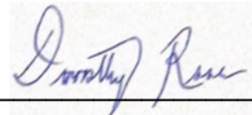
Naelani Blake



Ranae Havalotti



Amanda Hutchinson

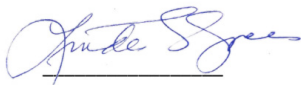


Dorothy Rose



Parker Thomson

## PUBLIC CHILD WELFARE AGENCY



Linda Spears, Commissioner, Massachusetts  
Department of Children and Families

## CONTINUUM OF CARE - REGIONAL NETWORK ON HOMELESSNESS POLICY BOARD



Hadley Luddy, Chair



Heidi Nelson, Vice Chair



Beth Albert, Barnstable  
County Administrator

## REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

## Planning Background

In September 2019, Barnstable County Department of Human Services (BCDHS), in partnership with Matthew Aronson Consulting, published Youth and Young Adults Experiencing Homelessness on Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket: A Community Needs Assessment (See Appendix A). One of the key findings stated: "The Cape and Islands do not have a system designed to prevent and end Youth and Young Adult homelessness."

In response, the Network and its partners committed to building a system that effectively responds to the needs of YYA to make their housing instability rare, brief, and one-time. At the March 28, 2022 annual meeting of the Network's Policy Board, its governance body, the following goal was adopted for 2022-2023:

***"The Regional Network on Homelessness Youth and Young Adult (YYA) Homelessness Committee will endeavor to complete and implement a strategic plan to address YYA housing instability by March 2023."***

In the Spring of 2022, the YYA Homelessness Committee held two strategic planning sessions. Participants discussed current services and resources available to YYA, identified gaps and barriers to successfully engaging with YYA, and brainstormed initiatives that would best meet the community's needs. In recognizing the needs of the community to address and end YYA homelessness, BCDHS, as the Continuum of Care (CoC) Collaborative Applicant, worked in conjunction with the Cape and Islands Youth Action Board (YAB) to submit an application to the US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for Round 6 of the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP).

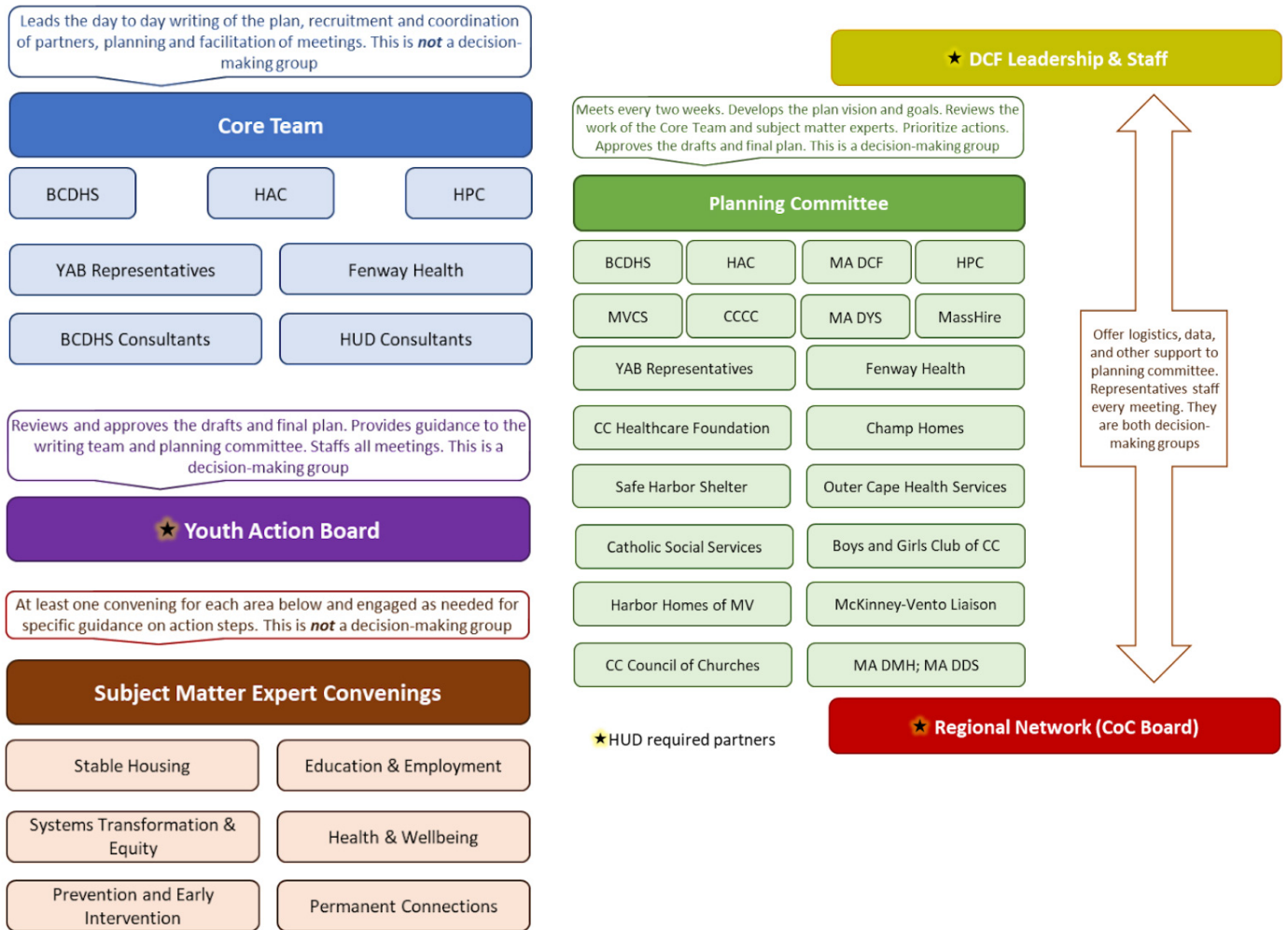
In October 2022, the Cape and Islands CoC was selected as a YHDP community and was awarded \$1.357 million for the two-year demonstration period. BCDHS began convening a YHDP Planning Committee and Core Team to draft a Coordinated Community Plan that included goals, objectives and action steps to address the needs of YYA experiencing housing instability on the Cape and Islands. To facilitate the work, the YHDP Planning Committee developed a Decision-Making structure and Group Agreements to guide their efforts on project design and shape their shared strategies

## Decision-Making Structure

The YHDP Planning Committee decision-making structure followed a shared ownership model of governance. Shared ownership models bring in diverse groups of stakeholders, offer equal power to traditionally powerless populations, and encourage creative and challenging conversations that lead to the following four impactful outcomes:

- New and innovative ideas that would otherwise not be considered
- Robust and long-lasting relationships between participating stakeholders
- Strong support for the plan and its actions from participating stakeholders and their constituents
- A strong sense of legitimacy for external stakeholders





The primary decision-making body was the **Planning Committee**. The Planning Committee used a consensus-building approach, by striving to make decisions through open dialogue to which all planning members agreed. **Our consensus approach observed the following rules:**

**PARTICIPATION.** Decisions could only be reached if 80% of CCP Committee member agencies (at least one authorized person), including two YAB members, participated in decision making.

**SEQUENCING.** CCP Committee members proposed elements of the CCP for discussion and approval following a sequential process to achieve consensus. Meeting facilitators established a set amount of time for discussion and allowed for no more than five tries for consensus.

**ENGAGEMENT.** Members committed to asking questions, clarifying specific needs, suggesting strategies to meet needs, allowing open discussion on suggested strategies, generating a clear proposal, and testing the proposal for agreement.

**DETERMINATION.** Member positions was indicated by a thumbs up (Agree), pointer finger (Agree with concerns), thumb sideways (Will stand aside), or thumbs down (Want to change). Members requesting to change a proposal committed to presenting an alternative, which the group took up and tested for agreement once again.

**BACK-UP.** If 100% consensus was not attainable after repeated attempts, the goal was for 80% of member agencies present during the meeting (or responding to an offline ask) to agree with a proposed strategy or step aside. The CCP Committee included member concerns with the approved strategy enabling the community to revisit those concerns during advanced planning, implementation, and CCP improvement.

## Group Agreements

The identified representative from each organization, agency, or group agreed to attend all CCP Committee meetings and as many CCP events and convenings as possible. If they could not attend a CCP Committee meeting, members agreed to authorize another member of their organization, agency, or group to attend and make decisions on their behalf. Any organization, agency, or group not represented at 3 or more meetings were no longer considered a CCP Committee member nor considered with regard to the decision-making protocol.

Additionally, participants adhered to the following agreements during meetings to ensure the work together upheld the values, honored the existing strategies, adequately addressed systemic racism and inequities, and demonstrated the commitment to long-term and impactful solutions.

- YYA are in positions of group leadership and will be at the center of all decision-making
- All committee members are open minded to all ideas and suggestions
- The committee focuses on solutions, not just listing barriers
- All committee members are accountable and can hold one another accountable
- All committee members have an opportunity to participate and connect with other members to understand their perspective
- All committee members commit to completing any “homework” in advance of the meetings
- Radical Imagination, meaning that “if we can do it, we can afford it” and acknowledges that we may need to “finesse” to make it happen
- All committee members will fully commit to the final decisions made by the committee, even when it is scary or when they feel skeptical
- Respectful disagreement is respectful, and we commit to fostering an environment where everyone can share their perspective
- Be mindful, not mind full, acknowledging that our time and space together is both precious and essential. All committee members commit to being present and engage with one another as humanly as possible – whatever your best is, own it
- The committee will strive to approach difficult subject areas with mindfulness and sensitivity to how they may impact the emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being of participants

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## Youth Action Board Integration

The Youth Action Board (YAB) will be at the center of all decision making during YHDP Planning. Support will be provided to the YAB by Adult Supporters employed by the state funded Unaccompanied Homeless YYA grant, including the Peer Navigator/YAB Coordinator. If two YYA are not present during Decision Making as detailed in the rules above, the Planning Committee will take a preliminary vote of members present, and will only finalize the decision when the YAB is able to discuss the decision and provide final approval. Additionally, the full YAB will be provided an opportunity to review and have final approval of the Coordinated Community Plan (CCP). Any decisions on changes to the CCP for final approval will be guided by the YAB’s governance structure.

During YHDP planning, any participating member of the YAB will be compensated at \$20 per hour provided by funding through the Unaccompanied Homeless YYA grant. Funding

for YAB participation will continue through this grant through FY24 and any changes to the compensation rate will be determined through a cost of living formula.

During implementation of YHDP, and moving forward, the MA-503 Cape and Islands Continuum of Care will provide an opportunity for YYA with lived experience to participate in all aspects of the homelessness system design. In addition to the two formal seats at the Regional Network on Homelessness Policy Board, YAB members will be included during annual monitoring and will be invited to sit on the Homeless Management Information System Committee and the Coordinated Entry Committee. Additionally, YAB members will be invited to sit in a leadership role on the YYA Homelessness Committee, so they are fully integrated in all future decisions regarding YYA specific service and resource development.

## APPENDIX B

# Planning Committee Roster

(In alphabetical order)

### YHDP PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

**Matthew Aronson** - Consultant, Barnstable County Dept. of Human Services  
**Ann Burke** - VRP Advocate (Cape Cod), Fenway Health  
**Adam Burnett** - Executive Director, Champ Homes  
**Jennifer Cummings** - Associate Director of Development & Community Benefits, Cape Cod Healthcare Foundation  
**Buster Donaldson** - Service Coordinator Supervisor, Massachusetts Dept. of Developmental Services  
**Wendy Dries** - Director, Safe Harbor Shelter  
**Jennifer Ferron** - Community Resource Navigators Program Manager, Outer Cape Health Services  
**Ryan Fonseca** - Caseworker, Massachusetts Dept. of Youth Services  
**Dan Gray** - Continuum of Care Program Manager, Barnstable County Dept. of Human Services  
**Cheryl Hall** - Cape Cod and Islands Area Director, Massachusetts Dept. of Children and Families  
**Malika Jamal** - District Manager, Massachusetts Dept. of Youth Services  
**Cheryl Kramer** - Student Wellness Case Manager, Cape Cod Community College  
**Susan Mercier** - Island Wide Youth Collaborative Program Director, Martha's Vineyard Community Services  
**Maura Morrison** - Director, Harbor Homes of Martha's Vineyard  
**Neila Neary** - Career Center Manager, MassHire  
**Edye Nesmith** - Executive Director, Cape Cod Council of Churches  
**Mary O'Reilly** - Case Manager and Youth Action Board Adult Supporter, Homeless Prevention Council  
**Danielle Pendleton** - Child, Youth and Family Case Management Supervisor, Massachusetts Dept. of Mental Health  
**Caitlin Pierce** - Director of Clinical Services, Housing Assistance Corporation  
**Ruth Provost** - Executive Director, Boys & Girls Club of Cape Cod  
**Dottie Rose** - Youth Action Board  
**Mandi Speakman** - Deputy Director, Barnstable County Dept. of Human Services  
**Parker Thomson** - Youth Action Board  
**Katie Turner** - Regional McKinney-Vento Liaison for Cape Cod and the Islands  
**Happiness Unaka** - Chief Operating Officer, Catholic Social Services  
**Ellie Zucker** - Senior Projects Director, Homeless Prevention Council

### TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDERS:

**Ellen Fitzpatrick**, Technical Assistance Collaborative  
**Lauren Leonardis**, Technical Assistance Collaborative  
**Dana White**, True Colors United

## APPENDIX C

# Full List of Partners

ORGANIZATION	ROLE
Youth Action Board	YHDP Planning Committee, Core Team and CoC Policy Board
Martha's Vineyard Community Services	YHDP Planning Committee and YYA Homelessness provider
Harbor Homes of Martha's Vineyard	YHDP Planning Committee
Dukes County	CoC Policy Board
Martha's Vineyard Hospital	YYA Homelessness Partner
Dept. of Mental Health	YHDP Planning Committee and CoC Policy Board
Dept. of Developmental Services	YHDP Planning Committee
Dept. of Children and Families	YHDP Planning Committee
Dept. of Youth Services	YHDP Planning Committee
Barnstable County House of Corrections	CoC Policy Board
Systems of Care (inter-agency group focuses on YYA services)	YYA Homelessness Partner
Nauset Interfaith Association- Youth Outreach and Hospitality	YYA Homelessness Partner
Cape Cod Community College	YHDP Planning Committee and CoC Policy Board
Nauset School District	Subject Matter Expert convening attendee
Barnstable School District	Subject Matter Expert convening attendee
Falmouth School District	Subject Matter Expert convening attendee
Cape Cod Technical High School	YYA Homelessness Partner
Dennis-Yarmouth School District	YYA Homelessness Partner
Martha's Vineyard School Districts	YYA Homelessness Partner
Nantucket School District	YYA Homelessness Partner
Barnstable Police Dept.	YYA Homelessness Partner
Yarmouth Police Dept.	CoC Policy Board and YYA Homelessness Partner
Dennis Police Dept.	YYA Homelessness Partner
Orleans Police Dept.	YYA Homelessness Partner
Chatham Police Dept.	YYA Homelessness Partner



ORGANIZATION	ROLE
Nantucket Police Dept.	YYA Homelessness Partner
Falmouth Police Dept.	YYA Homelessness Partner
Harwich Police Dept.	YYA Homelessness Partner
Provincetown Police Dept.	YYA homelessness partner
Baycove Crisis Intervention Team	YYA homelessness partner
Duffy Health Center	Healthcare for the Homeless, CoC grantee and YYA Homelessness Provider
PIER Recovery Center	YYA homelessness partner
Homeless Prevention Council	YHDP Planning Committee
Cape Cod Council of Churches	YHDP Planning Committee and CoC Policy Board
Housing Assistance Corp.	YHDP Planning Committee , CoC Policy Board & YYA homelessness provider
MassHire Career Counseling Center	YHDP Planning Committee
Community Action Committee of the Cape and the Islands	YHDP Planning Committee
Catholic Charities	YHDP Planning Committee, CoC Policy Board & YYA homelessness provider
Barnstable Recreation Dept.	YYA homelessness partner
Falmouth Service Center	YYA homelessness partner
Falmouth Human Services	CoC Policy Board
Falmouth Housing Authority	YYA homelessness partner
Sandwich Housing Authority	CoC Policy Board and CoC grantee
Outer Cape Healthcare	YHDP Planning committee
Lower Cape Outreach Council	YYA homelessness partner
Cape and Islands Gay Straight Youth Alliance/Thrive	YYA homelessness partner
Champ Homes	YHDP Planning Committee and homelessness provider
AIDS Support Group of Cape Cod	YYA homelessness partner
Cape Cod Healthcare	YHDP Planning Committee and CoC Policy Board
Fenway Health	YHDP Planning Committee and Core Team
Behavioral Health Innovators	YYA homelessness partner
Boys and Girls Clubs of Cape Cod	YHDP Planning Committee
Belonging To Each Other (homelessness winter response provider)	CoC Policy Board

## APPENDIX D

# HUD funded projects

HUD awarded Cape Cod and the Islands \$1.357 Million over two years to help launch the implementation of Hopeful Homes. During our planning process, the Planning Committee worked with our HUD TA and Core Team to identify projects that met three key criteria:

- Reflected an action identified by the community as critical to preventing and ending YYA homelessness on Cape Cod and the Islands
- Included eligible costs under HUD's Continuum of Care Program, accounting for the rule exceptions allowed by communities participating in YHDP
- Were not easily fundable by other available funding sources

Through three rounds of conversations, we selected four projects from a list of funding scenarios focused on different kinds of housing and navigation supports. During subsequent meetings, the planning committee added key project design details before handing the process over to a Request For Proposals (RFP) committee to set final details, review and ranking criteria, and a specific selection process.

[Click here to review the RFP.](#) BCDHS published the RFP in May 2023 and awards were issued to grant recipients in June 2023.

*Please note that there were no applications received for the Crisis Transitional Housing/Rapid Rehousing project necessitating the YAB and Planning Committee to shift selected project types.*

### PROJECT #1: MOBILE SUPPORT AND RESOURCE NAVIGATION

Homeless Prevention Council will provide flexible, mobile supportive services for YYA across the full geographic area of the CoC focused on addressing immediate needs, connection and referral to resources, and general support until YYA have a longer-term intervention in place and a pathway to obtain and maintain permanent housing.

<b>INFO</b>	<p><b>PROPOSED BUDGET:</b> \$600,000 for 2-year demonstration period</p> <p><b>CONTRACT TIMEFRAME:</b> 2 years</p> <p><b>APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF YYA SERVED ANNUALLY:</b> 60 (1:30 case management ratio)</p>
<p><b>ELIGIBLE COSTS</b></p> <p>(See Section 5 for more detail)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project administration</li> <li>• Supportive services</li> </ul>
<b>COMPONENTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project will serve all eligible YYA across the Cape Cod &amp; Islands CoC geography</li> <li>• Project will develop a plan to ensure equitable access for all youth and young adults; including language access</li> <li>• Navigators will provide supportive services directly to eligible YYA, as well as refer YYA to partner agencies for services and supports when necessary. Available services (or referrals with confirmed connections) should include, at minimum: support with meeting basic and urgent needs (e.g., shelter, food, clothing, hygiene, transportation, healthcare, childcare, etc.), family engagement, support with pursuing education and employment goals, exploration of variety of housing options, and overall continuity of support from the time a YYA presents to the crisis response system for assistance through to the point at which they are connected to a longer-term housing and services intervention.</li> <li>• Navigators will partner with key organizations and systems to ensure ability to connect YYA to all resources that they want and need, including but not limited to the following partners: DCF, DYS, local McKinney-Vento liaisons, LGBTQIA+ services, and more.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Navigation staff must be trained in, at minimum: equity and inclusion, family connections/reunification, trauma informed care, substance use disorder, adulthood and authentic YYA partnership</li> </ul>
<b>STAFFING REQUIREMENTS</b>	<p>The applicant must meet the minimum staffing requirements outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total Full Time Employee (FTE) positions to be determined by applicant and detailed in Question #40 of the application</li> <li>Peer support role must be funded</li> <li>More than competitive salary and benefits</li> <li>Prioritize hiring people with lived experience where possible, ideally peer or near peer</li> </ul>
<b>PROJECT #2: HOST HOMES (SSO)</b> Homeless Prevention Council will operate a host home project that aims to match young people in need of safe, temporary housing with adult community members who are willing to open their homes for a medium-term stay while case management supports the young person to search for a longer-term housing solution.	
<b>INFO</b>	<p><b>PROPOSED BUDGET:</b> \$450,000 for 2-year demonstration period</p> <p><b>CONTRACT TIMEFRAME:</b> 2 years</p> <p><b>APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF YYA SERVED ANNUALLY:</b> between 5 and 15 (5 actively in host homes, remainder being supported with housing stability case management after transitioning out of homelessness and exiting the host home into longer-term housing solution)</p> <p><b>CASE MANAGEMENT RATIO:</b> Up to 1:15</p>
<b>ELIGIBLE COSTS</b> (See Section 5 for more detail)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project Administration</li> <li>Supportive Services</li> </ul>
<b>COMPONENTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Host homes will offer a safe alternative to shelter or transitional housing to youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and in need of a temporary place to stay</li> <li>Youth will be matched with a host of their choice based on host recruitment by recipient agency, or by the self-identification of a safe adult of their choice in the community who is willing to host them</li> <li>Case manager will provide ongoing support through the duration of stay to help ensure a positive relationship between the young person and the host</li> <li>Supportive services will also include, but are not limited to, direct support with or referral to other agencies for: budgeting and financial coaching, housing search, transportation, employment, education, addressing basic needs (food, clothing, hygiene, etc.), life skills, training, managing landlord relationships, learning to be a roommate, child care, and more with the goal of supporting YYA to obtain and maintain permanent housing</li> <li>Case management will be housing-focused with goal of supporting young person to identify a longer-term housing solution in order to transition out of the host home within one year (goal timeframe)</li> <li>Once youth identify a longer-term housing solution and exit the host home, may continue to receive case management services for up to one year to support ongoing stability</li> </ul>
<b>STAFFING REQUIREMENTS</b>	<p>The applicant must meet the minimum staffing requirements outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 FTE case manager to support YYA &amp; hosts</li> <li>More than competitive salary and benefits</li> <li>Prioritize hiring people with lived experience where possible, ideally peer or near peer</li> </ul>

### PROJECT #3: COORDINATED ENTRY

The Barnstable County Department of Human Services will utilize a coordinated entry grant in order to build out and improve coordinated entry for youth and young adults in Cape Cod and the Islands.

<b>INFO</b>	<b>PROPOSED BUDGET:</b> \$250,000 <b>CONTRACT TIMEFRAME:</b> 2 years <b>APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF YYA SERVED ANNUALLY:</b> 30 YYA
<b>ELIGIBLE COSTS</b> (See Section 5 for more detail)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Project administration</li><li>• Supportive services</li></ul>
<b>COMPONENTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Project will allow for hiring of staff person dedicated to building capacity of Cape &amp; Islands coordinated entry system to better serve YYA</li><li>• Improvement of partnership across youth-serving systems and providers to ensure that YYA are connected to CES and supported to identify housing and services interventions of their choice</li><li>• Establishment and ongoing facilitation of youth case conferencing</li></ul>

### PROJECT #4: PLANNING GRANT

The Barnstable County Department of Human Services will utilize a planning grant in order to ensure that YAB members are paid for their time and expertise while supporting CoC-wide youth work and the implementation of projects and the Cape & Islands CCP.

<b>INFO</b>	<b>PROPOSED BUDGET:</b> \$57,556 <b>CONTRACT TIMEFRAME:</b> 1 year <b>APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF YYA SERVED ANNUALLY:</b> n/a
<b>COMPONENTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ongoing compensation for YAB members</li><li>• Consultant support focused on CoC-wide YYA planning and implementation efforts</li></ul>



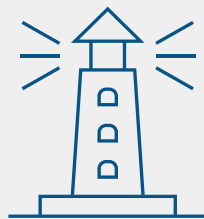
## YAB Vision, Mission, and Goals

**“The mission of the Cape and Islands YAB is to advance awareness and advocacy toward ending YYA homelessness with the intention of creating lasting macro-level change. We exist to create systemic change by challenging current assumptions and biases about YYA homelessness through authentic youth collaboration and lived experience.”**

**“The vision of the Cape and Islands YAB is an inter-connected community among unhoused and housing insecure youth, while achieving safe and sustainable living options who have access to necessary resources”**

The Cape and Islands YAB emphasizes the importance of understanding the unique experience of living on Cape Cod and the Islands. The goals of the YAB include:

- Advocate for the development and implementation of sufficient, safe, and stable housing for YYA,
- Spread awareness to the community and encourage open conversation surrounding youth homelessness,
- Connect YYA to the important resources that help meet the populations needs,
- To be part of and respected by the collective community with resources that lead to successful outcomes; and
- Create an inner community of young adults with strong mentorship and peer relationships, while providing a safe space to share experiences.



**Young adults experiencing homelessness should know that they are not alone, there are resources they can access, and people they can connect with who will listen, guide, and accept them.**

## APPENDIX E

# Detailed Systems Analysis

Our planning committee developed Hopeful Homes based on several years of work to understand YYA homelessness on Cape Cod and the Islands and build a system to address it. The following documents are foundational to that effort and serve as the basis for much of the data, both qualitative and quantitative, that we have included in the plan. These documents include citations and links to additional sources.

**YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS ON CAPE COD, MARTHA'S VINEYARD, AND NANTUCKET: A Community Needs Assessment; September 9, 2019**

**Community Needs Assessment 2022 Annual Update**

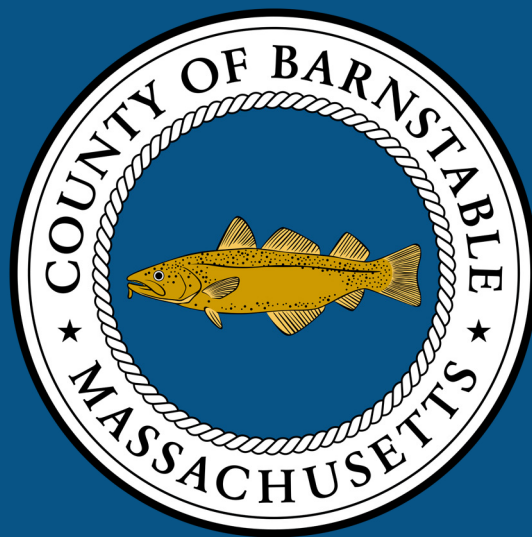
**YYA HMIS Data Element Summary 2022**

**YYA HMIS Detail Summaries 2022.pdf**

**2022-2023 YYA Annual Strategic Plan**

**YHDP FY 2021 Narrative Response**





**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

on services and resources available to YYA,  
please visit the Barnstable County Dept. of  
Human Services YYA Homelessness page.