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**The Connection**  
Community-based Services, Advocacy  
and Research for Connecticut

# THE START PROGRAM YOUNG ADULT SHELTER

# PROGRAM HISTORY

- 2012: The Connection piloted a small rapid rehousing-like program for youth age 18-24 who aged out of foster care and were ineligible for re-entry (called the Start Program).
- 2014: Through DCF funding, program expands to serve non-system youth and add crisis housing component
- January 2015: Program creates small, 4-bed atypical shelter specific to young adults in Hartford
- 2016: Expanded this crisis housing component to 18 beds

# 2014 - PLANNING THE MODEL...

Used data and information from our youth Rapid Re-housing pilot program and waitlist of over 100

- Knew young adults liked a high level of independence
- Patterns of youth homelessness from our waitlist
- Waitlisted youths' experiences in trying to access shelter and why they would avoid/refuse "adult" shelter options
  - Perception of lack of safety / Stigma
  - Mostly an older population there / too many people there
  - Rules/curfews
- Needed to be acceptable to LGBTQI youth given prevalence amongst homeless young adults
- Needed a shelter model that would attract youth away from higher risk options, as that's how they were resolving their homelessness when refusing adult shelter options.

# SHELTER MODEL...

- Scattered site apartments located throughout the city.
- Agency is the lease holder and uses these apartments as shelters
- Mix of 2/1 bedroom units
  - Roommates
  - Allows us to serve parenting youth along with single youth
- LOS up to 60 days, with opportunities for extensions
- No curfews; come and go as you please
- Restrictions on guests, no alcohol/substance use on premises
- No program fees/rent
- Daily case management visits. Staff are not located on-site (but can work from there if needed)
- 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> shift staffing with overnight on-call (3 staff total)
- Program staff have access to the units at any time.



# CASE MANAGEMENT...

- See apartments and youth daily
  - Vary the hours of visits
- Targeted towards youth's discharge plan
  - Family/Support reconnection
  - Employment/Earned income
  - Education programs that also provide housing
  - Entry into DCF / DMHAS YAS
- Connecting to community supports
- Independent living skill development
  - Daily money management (grocery shopping/meal planning, saving, etc)
  - Cleaning/Household upkeep...pretty much constantly
- Roommate conflict resolution
- 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> shift with overnight on-call

# OTHER DETAILS

- Open referral source system
  - 211 / CAN, Self-referrals, other community providers,
  - Waitlist varies daily

## Eligibility Criteria:

- 18-24 years old
- Actively homeless / Unstably housed/couch-surfing in unsafe environments
- Willing/Able to live with a roommate
- Basic level of independent living skills (basic cooking, basic cleaning, etc)
- Some felony restrictions (landlord stipulated)







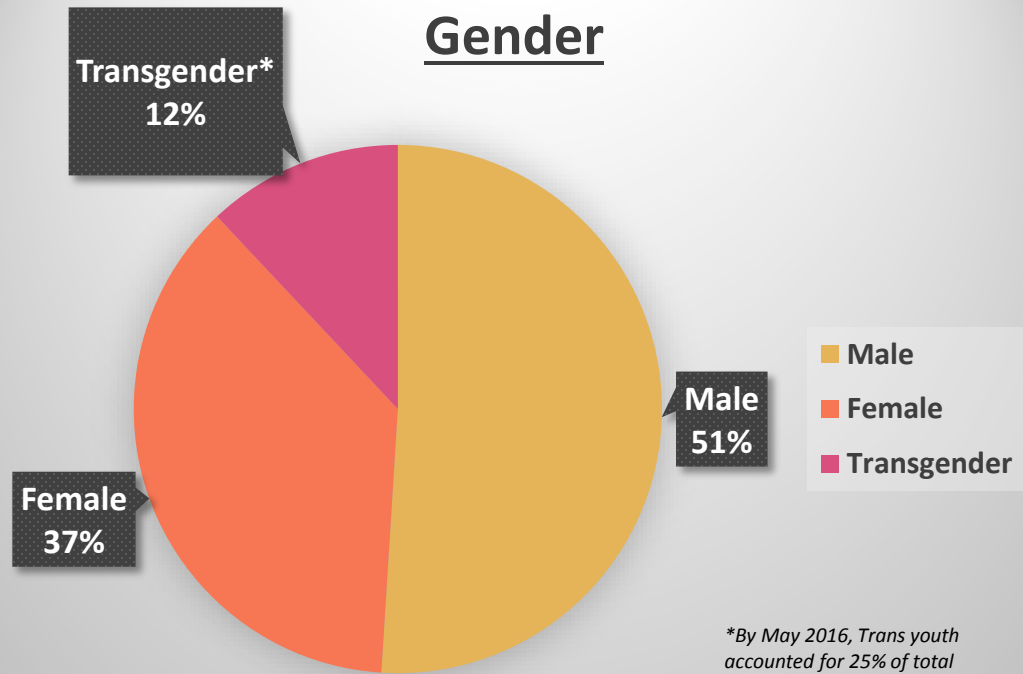
# A LITTLE ON DATA AND OUTCOMES

**Total Served: 57**

**Program Exits: 45**

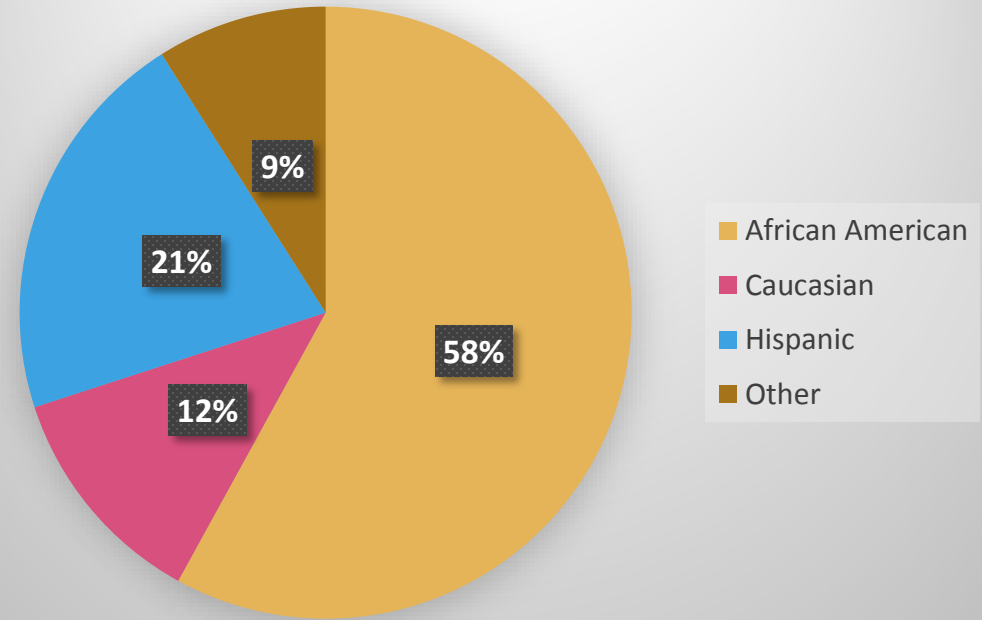
# DEMOGRAPHICS

## Gender



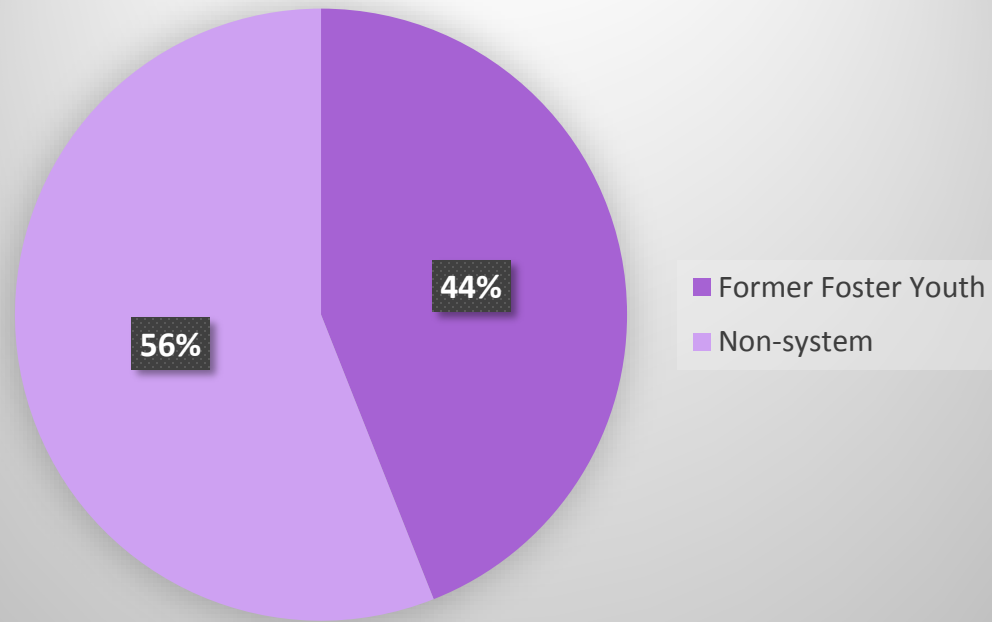
*\*By May 2016, Trans youth accounted for 25% of total youth served in the program*

## Race/Ethnicity

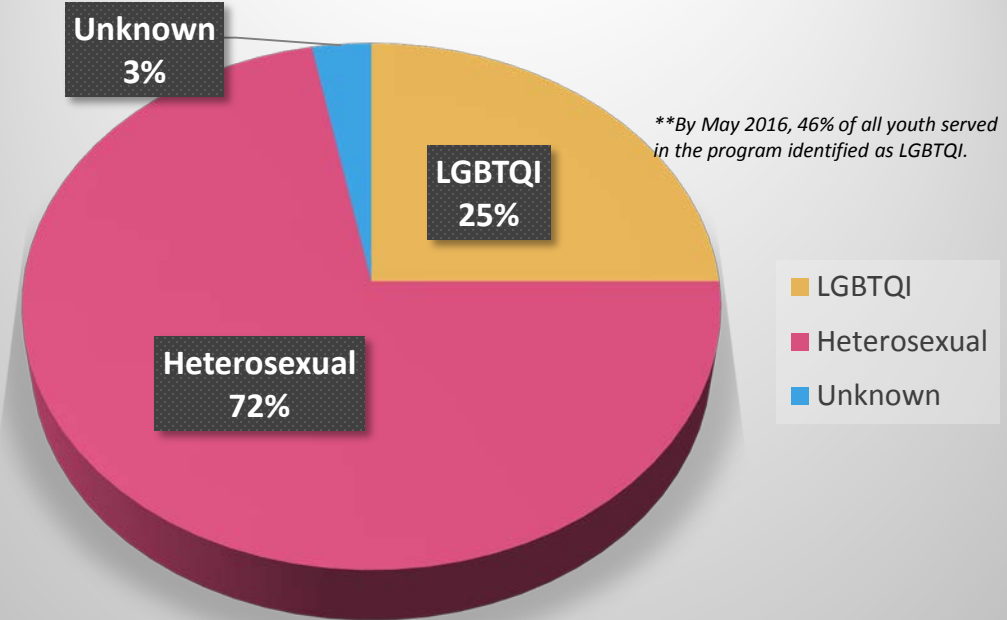


# A LITTLE MORE...

## System Involvement



## Sexual Orientation

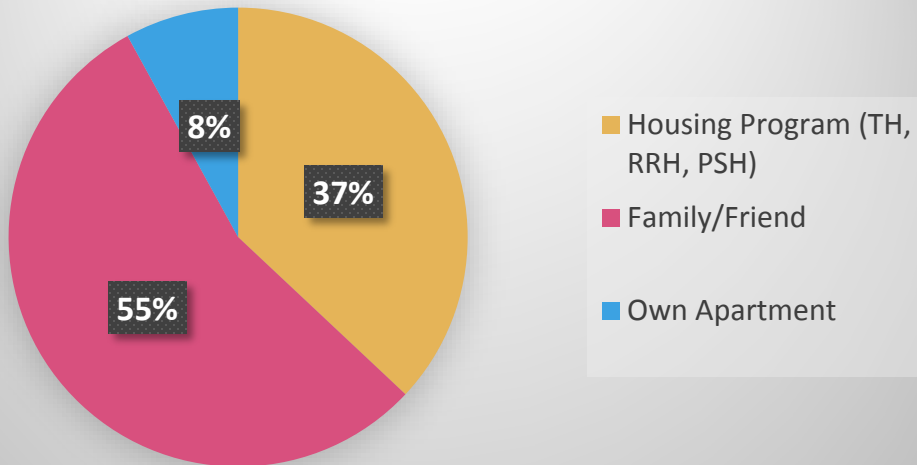


# DISCHARGED YOUTH

85%

## Stable Housing at Discharge

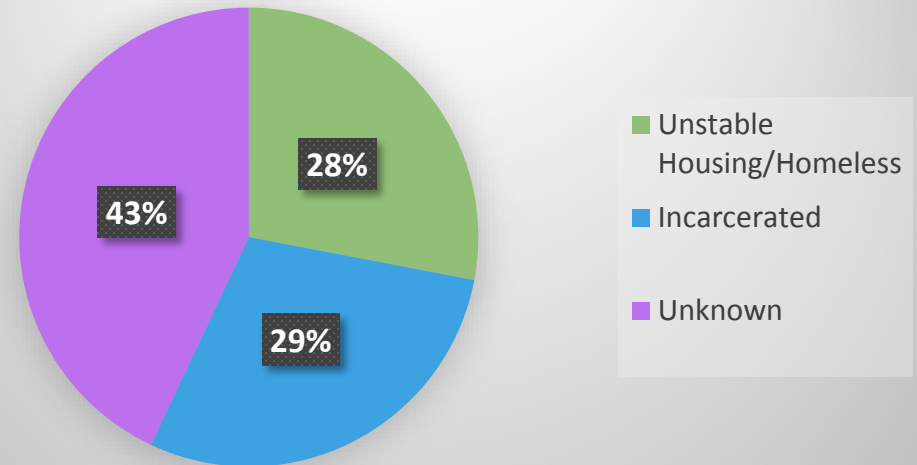
### Discharge Type



15%

## Unstable Housing at Discharge

### Discharge Type



# PROS OF THIS MODEL

- Youth find this to be an acceptable shelter model.
  - 1 refusal
- Limits the # of people they have to live with/adjust to.
  - Adjusting to just 1 other person (maybe 2 if a 3br) VS an entire floor of people you're sharing space with.
  - Non-residential feel
- Age appropriate option
  - Risk taking opportunities,
  - No curfews,
  - Existing peers won't know it's a shelter

# PROS CONTINUED...

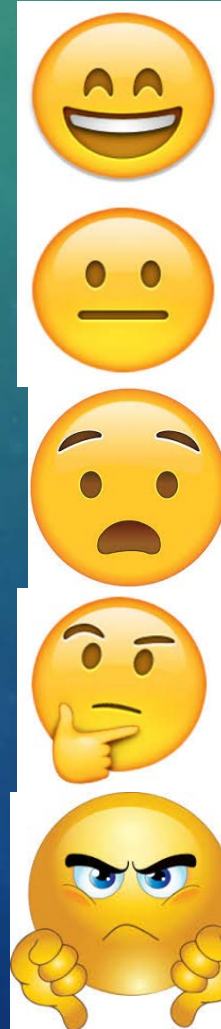
- Introduces them to the independent living experience
  - Youth & provider get to “test drive” living on their own
  - Exposure to standard renter’s behavior
- Perception of a safe environment.
  - Importance of getting to work with a “calm” brain
- Can be very flexible in location of units.
  - Don’t need to cluster a lot of high-need, high-risk youth all together in one geographic location.
  - Can move when you need them to.
- Potential to “pair up”.
  - Provides a discharge option of 2-3 youth getting an apartment together at an affordable price.
- Doesn’t require 24/7 staffing

*But if you run this type of model you will never ever sleep again.*

# DRAWBACKS IN THIS MODEL

## Very difficult to recruit landlords for this.

- I'd like to see if you'd be willing to rent a nice apartment to my agency. We'd pay in full each month and rent would never be late.
- You see, what we're going to do is take people experiencing homelessness and put them in this apartment for about 30-60 days....
- Oh, and they'll change every month or so and we'll need to get them in quickly so we can't let you do criminal background checks, etc...
- And they'll all be young adults. Do you have any experience renting to people between the ages of 18 to 24?



# DRAWBACKS CONTINUED...

## Independent-living nature of the model

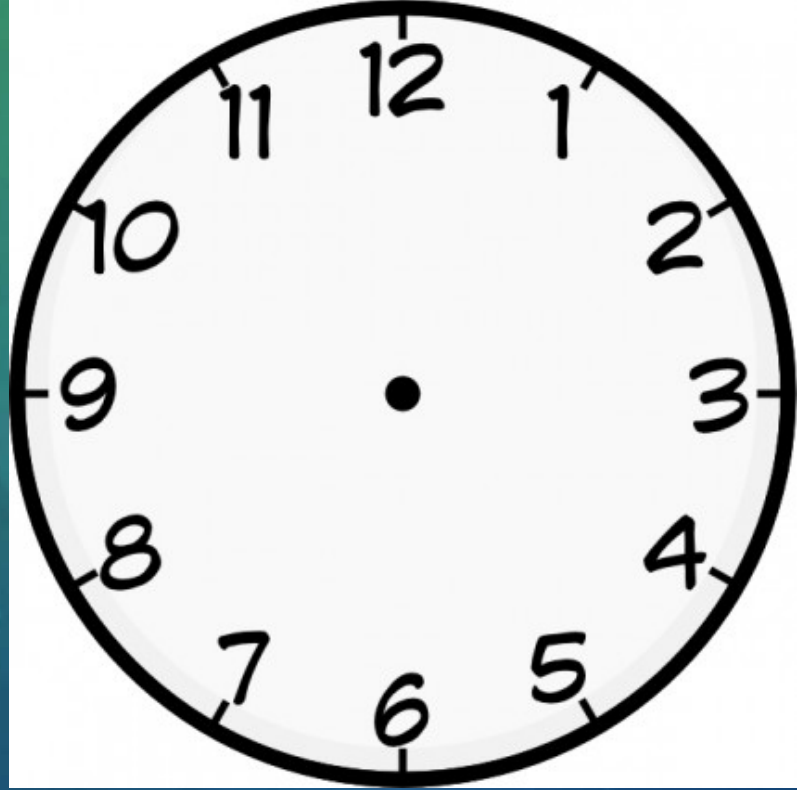
- youth need to have some ability to live independently (cook, clean, etc) so some added barriers to entry.
- housekeeping

## Lack of on-site staff=

- Guests
- Issues with Community Tolerance / Neighbors
- Alcohol, drugs, gangs, pets....pets in gangs drinking alcohol while doing drugs.









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