

September 28, 2017

Central YETI Needs Assessment

General Statement of Need

There is a large number of youth, 13-24, who struggle with housing instability, ranging between staying with friends to chronic homelessness. Youth are innately transient and it becomes challenging to maintain consistent communication. Although initial engagement is achieved, there remains an ongoing challenge in meeting youth where they are at. This includes their geographical location.

The Central CAN is composed of Berlin, New Britain, Bristol, Plainville and Southington. And more data. Based on the 2017 Point In Time Count for the Central CAN we have estimated 293 youth aged 13-24 that were homeless and unstably housed. Up until August 31 2017 we have had 167 appointments for youth in Central. Of these appointments made there were 105 no shows which speaks to the need for outreach and follow-up and age appropriate services for youth.

Local Services Provided

- START Program
 - The Connection runs this program with some dedicated beds in the Central region. There are waitlists and need to be high priority to gain access.
 - John Lawlor is the contact, jlawlor@theconnectioninc.org
- Lisa Inc. Group Homes
 - Kimberly Selvaggi, Executive Director Lisa Inc. KSelvaggi@lisainc.org ; two programs – SAIL in Bristol and Lisa's Wish in Plainville
 - DCF referrals only, often for those aging out of DCF care.
 - 20 total beds for youth 17-23
- Family Promise (Family Only)
 - Professional development and housing
 - Head of Household must be 18
 - Recently increasingly integrated with the CAN, time limited to 90 days.
- Coram Deo Transitional Living Program
 - Substance abuse treatment for women.
 - Over 18

Friendship Service Center

- X dedicated beds for youth 18-24.
- Referral through CAN matching

Gaps in Services

The Central CAN needs more knowledge regarding coordination of DCF supports. We need to know more about short-term DCF supportive housing in our region. How many units are available? What are the criteria for youth to access these programs?

What kinds of services are available for youth that have graduated and are over 18? School based services exist but we know there is a gap in service for this age.

There is currently no outreach specifically for homeless youth. There is outreach to youth through Youth Service Bureaus but the levels of this outreach vary per town. Bristol has a dedicated Youth Advocate/Outreach Worker. Plainville is very active with youth and integrated with schools.

Participation in the Point In Time Count and the Youth Count! We were constrained by time last year with the quick turn-around that was articulated by HUD for the Youth Count! We need to engage local schools and colleges for participation and volunteers.

Two-week rule regarding Public Housing and guests staying. We want to be able to support families changing the size of the housing unit they are living in to be able to stay in public housing.

What are the areas highest priorities for the areas of need.

Assessment site. A dedicated site that is safe and accessible to youth when they are seeking assistance regarding housing or housing instability.

Youth Navigator. Ideally this person should be youth. We need to create a centralized message and direct marketing around the work that this person does so that it is clear to the greater community.

Drop in Center. A dedicated safe space for youth to access a broad scope of housing related services.

Increased opportunities for youth to not just participate but lead and drive decision making process including implementation, evaluation and planning of programming and resources.

It's important that agencies that are charged with working with 18 year olds and younger are present and participating in CAN. YETI participation needs to be supported by a broad representation of providers focusing on youth.

Host Homes and communal Housing for Under 18 with supervision

Flexible Funds. Funds should be made available to help homeless or imminently homeless youth find and secure safe housing. These funds could be in the form of utility assistances, security deposits, transportation, and identification to name a few.

Summary

The greatest need, according to the people in the region who attended the meeting, is for outreach and engagement to youth in the region. Youth engagement is centered on the relevancy of the approach, and the opportunity made available to the youth at the time of that initial contact. Youth driven strategies for engagement are centered on youth being the agent of their own development. Including youth in the decision making process, and empower the youth with the opportunity to drive the discussion ensures relevancy. Strategies for engagement will be tailored based on the individual needs of the person. Reflected in the low percentage of youth who attend their CAN Assessment Appointment, it is clear that there is a need to establish a process that is flexible and reflective of individual circumstance. This dedicated staff would be able to articulate the scope of services available at any moment with an emphasis on the practice of harm reduction and a focus on the tenants of housing first.