



SOUTH CAROLINA INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS

Youth Experiencing Homelessness Task Force

GAPS ANALYSIS REPORT



MARCH 2022



SOUTH CAROLINA INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS

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Acknowledgements

The South Carolina Youth Experiencing Homelessness Task Force would like to express gratitude to its members for tirelessly advocating for youth experiencing homelessness across the state. We would like to especially thank the members of the South Carolina Interagency Council on Homelessness for believing in us and the work of effecting systemic change that prevents and ends youth homelessness across the state.

Membership

Membership includes representatives from state agencies, representatives from the four regional Homeless Continuums of Care, youth-serving providers located within those four regions, and individuals with lived experience. This report represents the determination and dedication of Taskforce members to elevate the issue of and response to youth homelessness in South Carolina.

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Gaps Analysis Brief – Overview

The South Carolina Youth Experiencing Homelessness Taskforce has identified four areas of focus:

Area 1 – Identifying points of contact for reliable collaboration within state systems

Justification: Whereas 30-40% of South Carolina youth experiencing homelessness were previously served by the SC Department of Social Servicesⁱ, and whereas nearly 50% of youth experiencing homelessness were previously incarcerated in juvenile justice, jail, or prisonⁱⁱ, and whereas not completing a high school education is the single leading predictor of youth homelessnessⁱⁱⁱ and South Carolina public high school students experiencing homelessness have significantly lower graduation rates^{iv}, and whereas youth experiencing homelessness have higher rates of mental health issues^v and suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth ages 15-24^{vi}, *identifying and partnering with reliable, key personnel at the SC Departments of Social Services (DSS), Juvenile Justice (DJJ), Education (SCDE), and Mental Health (DMH) is critical to preventing and ending youth homelessness in South Carolina.*



Area 2 – Operationalizing a statewide count of youth experiencing homelessness

Justification: Whereas the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires Homeless Continuums of Care to conduct annual point-in-time counts of individuals experiencing homelessness during a scheduled week-long period, and whereas the point-in-time counts underrepresent the number of youth experiencing homelessness, and whereas the Riley Center at the College of Charleston has

implemented an effective model for counting youth, *replicating this model across the Continuums of Care will provide valuable data on the extent and cost of youth experiencing homelessness in South Carolina.*



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Area 3 – Prioritizing youth experiencing homelessness within the four Continuums of Care

Justification: Whereas HUD operates the government's largest homeless program, and whereas HUD awards homeless funds through South Carolina's four Homeless Continuums of Care, and whereas the four Homeless Continuums of Care can prioritize specific populations of focus to improve the homeless services and housing system, *prioritizing youth experiencing homelessness as part of the HUD funding competition is a first step for the Continuums of Care to prioritizing youth in their efforts to prevent and end homelessness across the state.*

Area 4 – Developing specific, definitive language

Justification: Whereas the True Colors United State Index report indicates that South Carolina ranked 50th in services to youth experiencing homelessness in 2020, and whereas top-ranking states have dedicated language defining youth experiencing homelessness, and whereas those states provide access to additional resources to prevent and end homelessness, *collaborating with the state legislature to develop specific, defining language is critical to improve South Carolina's response to youth experiencing homelessness and to improve the state's overall ranking.*



ⁱ Bailey, M.A., Rosemond, T.N., Baughman, A., Jones, T. (2019). Disparate experiences: Highlighting the health and well-being of youth exiting the foster care system in SC.

ⁱⁱ Morton, M.H., Dworsky, A., & Samuels, G.M. (2017). Missed opportunities: Youth homelessness in America, National estimates. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*

^{iv} Hatchimonji, D.R., Flatley, C.A., Treglia, D., Cutuli, J.J. (2021). High school students experiencing homelessness: Findings from the 2019 Youth Risk Behavioral Surveillance System (YRBSS)

^v Mental health and youth homelessness: Understanding the overlaps. RHY National Clearinghouse.

^{vi} Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2021). Facts about suicide.

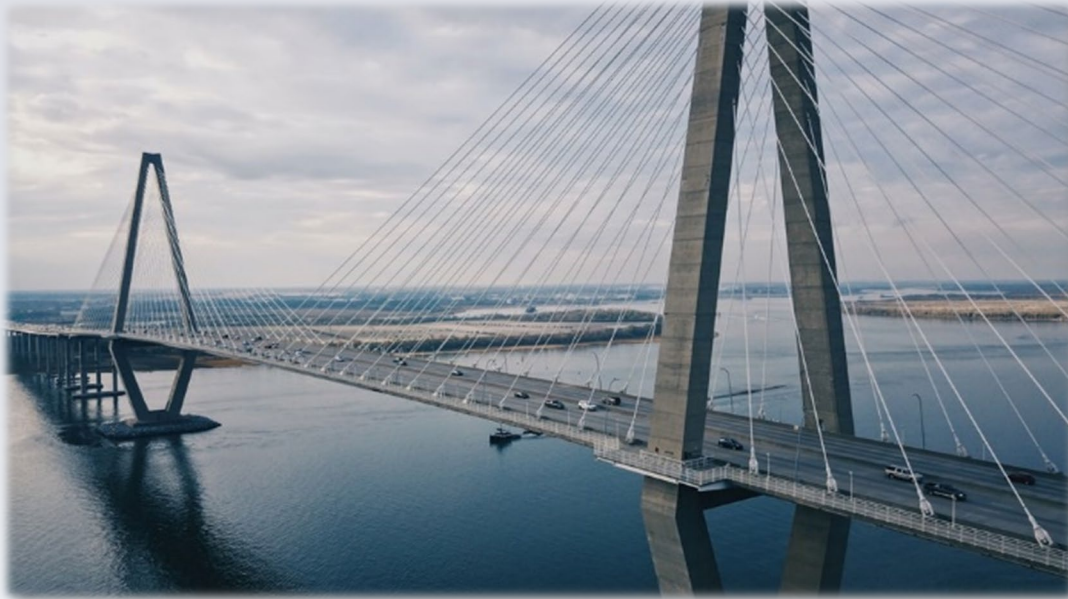


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Gaps Analysis Brief – Area 1

Identifying Points of Contact for Reliable Collaboration within State Systems



Relevant Gaps

The Task Force has identified gaps preventing reliable collaboration between homeless services providers, stakeholders, and state systems. These gaps include the following:

- Consistent communication between state agencies, homeless Continuums of Care, homeless service providers, and stakeholders.
- Reliable connections between the homeless Continuums of Care and key state agency positions, and reliable connections between homeless service providers and key state agency positions.
- Familiarity with and understanding of specific roles – “Who does what?”
- Commitment from state agencies to prevent and end youth homelessness.
- Education about housing instability, insecurity, identification, and referral.
- Shared strategy to prevent and end youth homelessness – operating in silos.
- Research indicates significant obstacles identifying children and youth experiencing homelessness, suggesting that homelessness among this population is severely underreported.
- Students experiencing homelessness are far more likely than housed students to have lower scores on state proficiency tests; drop out of school; or fail to graduate on time.



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Action Needed (Prioritized Actions in bold)

The Task Force recommends the following actions:

- When changes occur in state agency key positions, that change is reported to the homeless Continuums of Care to be disseminated to service providers. **Identify specific key positions and/or departments within state agencies and approach for collaboration.**
- Request authorization from South Carolina's Governor of the South Carolina Interagency Council on Homelessness to improve the Council's – and the Task Force's – credibility with state agencies.
- **Create a communications strategy and educational materials targeting the intersection between youth experiencing homelessness and state systems. Identify financial and public benefits for state agencies.**
- **Advocate for state funding to prevent and end youth homelessness.**
- **Include youth in advocacy work and service planning.**
- Ensure Lead Educational Agencies (LEAs) and their McKinney-Vento Liaisons are accurately identifying McKinney-Vento eligible students. Create collaborative approaches between LEAs and community providers.
- Develop a system of accountability for state system participation.

Involved Parties

Involvement from the following parties is critical to ensuring the success of these actions:

- the four Homeless Continuums of Care
- SC Department of Social Services
- SC Department of Juvenile Justice
- SC Department of Health and Human Services
- SC Department of Mental Health
- SC Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services
- SC Housing
- SC Department of Education
- Local Service Providers

Target Dates

March 2022

Create materials to be distributed.
Identify at least 3 benefits of involvement for state agencies.

October 2022

Establish key connections with 60% of identified parties.



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Gaps Analysis Brief – Area 2

Operationalizing a statewide count of youth experiencing homelessness



Relevant Gaps

The Task Force has identified gaps in available data that prevent an accurate estimate of youth experiencing homelessness in the state. These gaps include the following:

- Homelessness is a multifaceted and complex problem:
 - o Youth experiencing homelessness are made up of a variety of demographics and come from a variety of geographic locations (urban, suburban, rural).
 - o Youth homelessness experiences occur on a spectrum, from couch surfing to street homelessness.
 - o Multiple risk factors precipitate homeless experience, including exits from state systems, family dysfunction, and not graduating high school; mental health; LGBTQ+ identity.
- Gaps in knowledge and awareness about the need for a statewide youth count.
- Involvement from non-HUD funded agencies.
- Lack of integration between McKinney-Vento data and HUD Point-in-Time Count data.
- Common language.
- Ability to identify benefits of participation for systems or agencies with limited capacity.
- Involvement and acceptance from youth identifying as part of the LGBTQ+ community.



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Action Needed (Prioritized Actions in bold)

The Task Force recommends the following actions:

- **Establish a coordinating committee to define the roles and relationships of those involved in a statewide count; to develop a budget outlining projected expenses and potential revenue streams; to create an implementation plan including materials distribution, volunteer recruitment, and roll-out across the four Homeless Continuums of Care.**
- Leadership from within the four Continuums of Care.
- Involve agencies serving youth in a meaningful way, and highlight benefits of participation.
- Create written materials and educational documents to guide training, preparation, implementation, and participation to be distributed to youth, volunteers, Continuums of Care, state agencies, service providers, and other stakeholders.
- **Recruit participants from Continuums of Care, state agencies, service providers, youth with lived experience, and other stakeholders, and maintain engagement through the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages.**
- Improve Continuums of Care eligibility for receiving HUD Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project funds. **Coordinate efforts within the existing HUD Point-in-Time Count structure.**

Involved Parties

Successful execution of a statewide count will require active participation from the following stakeholders:

- the four Homeless Continuums of Care
- SC Department of Social Services
- SC Department of Juvenile Justice
- SC Department of Health and Human Services
- SC Department of Mental Health
- SC Department of Alcohol and Other Drugs of Abuse
- SC Housing
- SC Department of Education
- Local Service Providers
- Youth with lived experience

Target Dates

August 2022

Identify participants to join the Coordinating Committee.

December 2022

Define the roles and relationships of those involved.
Complete a timeline for projected implementation.



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Gaps Analysis Brief – Area 3

Prioritizing youth within the Continuum of Care HUD Funding Competition



Relevant Gaps

The Task Force has identified barriers to housing youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness due to differing funding priorities set by the four regional Continuums of Care. The gaps contributing to these barriers include the following:

- Ownership and championing youth-specific housing by each Continuum of Care's governing body.
- Established priorities for rating and ranking committees that include youth.
- Unsuccessful attempts to obtain HUD Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project funds.
- Competing priority populations within each Continuum of Care.
- Limited funding available to accommodate priority populations.
- Inadequate commitment to alternative funding sources to expand available funds beyond HUD.
- Remaining committed to priority populations despite limitations in funding.
- Use of prevention-based models to interrupt homelessness and/or chronic health conditions.



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Action Needed (Prioritized Actions in bold)

The Task Force recommends the following actions:

- Identify providers who are serving youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- **Enroll youth-serving providers into Continuum of Care membership**
- Increase the number of youth-serving providers participating in Continuum of Care activities
- Involve providers who have experience “cobbling together” funding sources to advance mission-driven efforts
- Educate Continuums of Care and providers about
 - o alternative funding sources
 - o prevention-based strategies
- **Develop education materials for Continuum of Care leadership and membership about alternative funding opportunities, best and promising practices, and prevention-based strategies**
- Create avenues for youth involvement including in leadership positions within each Continuum of Care
- Involve youth in shaping rating and ranking priorities
- **Recruit youth to serve in leadership positions and participate in priority-setting activities**

Involved Parties

The Task Force views HUD funding as one critical component of a statewide response to preventing and ending homelessness for youth. As such, involving youth and youth-serving providers in priority-setting activities is essential to ensure the needs of youth are prioritized within the Continuum of Care HUD funding competition. The Task Force also acknowledges the value and expertise of Continuum of Care member agencies, lead agencies, and governing bodies in working together to prioritize youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Target Dates

October 2022

Develop region-specific lists of youth-serving providers.

December 2022

Use the provider list to recommend new Continuum of Care members. Create and distribute materials to educate Continuums of Care.



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Gaps Analysis Brief – Area 4

Develop a “defining language” presentation



Relevant Gaps

The Task Force affirms the recommendations of the True Colors United and National Homeless Law Center State Index on Youth Homelessness report to ensure each state has legislative language that reflects the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. The current lack of common language has exposed the following gaps:

- Disparity between definitions of youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness (i.e. housing insecure, literal homelessness, couch surfing, etc.) and discrepancies within the source material (i.e. HUD, McKinney-Vento, Runaway and Homeless Youth Act).
- Inclusive, accommodating language that accounts for the varied definitions.
- Consensus that standardized, common language is needed for an effective, statewide response.
- Current legislative language is scattered across the SC State Code of Laws and Code of Regulations. ^{i, ii, iii}
- Little to no legislative language includes youth experiencing homelessness within a family unit or reflects language in the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act.
- Limited insight into the prevalence of housing instability beyond street or sheltered homelessness.
- Culture of resistance around youth accessing available shelters and associated safety concerns.



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Action Needed (Prioritized Actions in bold)

The Task Force recommends the following actions:

- Survey Continuums of Care, youth-serving providers, and other stakeholders to evaluate the need for and benefits of common language
- **Develop standard survey questions to evaluate the need for standardized language and distribute the survey to Continuums of Care, youth-serving providers, and other stakeholders.**
- Identify examples of legislative language successfully implemented in other states, and **document an analysis of states that have successfully implemented legislation.**
- Request assistance from legislative liaisons or other parties experienced with the legislative process
- Determine specific materials to be included in presentation
- Determine specific vehicle for presentation (slides, documents, video, etc.)
- **Create a presentation outline that includes a list of materials; target audience; and relevant information.**
- **Distribute presentation materials to legislators, Continuums of Care, youth service providers, and other stakeholders.**

Involved Parties

The Task Force recommends involvement from legislative liaisons, members of the legislature, state agency representatives, Continuums of Care, youth-serving providers, youth, and other stakeholders. Federal agencies may also provide assistance with closing gaps in this area.

Target Dates

October 2022

Create presentation materials about common language.

December 2022

Distribute presentation materials to identified parties.

ⁱ SC Code of Education – Title 59

- 59-40-111(A)(1)(3)(k) – Homeless students as defined by McKinney-Vento
- 59-63-31(A)(3) – Qualifications for attendance in public schools

ⁱⁱ SC Social Services Code – Title 43

- 43-1-110 – Strengthening services for the protection/care of special populations including neglected and/or homeless children

ⁱⁱⁱ SC Education Regulations – Title 43

- 43-272.2 – Resolving disputes involving unaccompanied youth and/or homeless students