STRATEGIES TO END HOMELESSNESS
prevent. assist. solve.

Safe and Supported
A Cincinnati/Hamilton County Initiative to Prevent LGBTQ Youth Homelessness

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Committed to ending youth homelessness for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth
Case for the Initiative

In Hamilton County, Ohio-
• Homeless youth (under age of 18, unaccompanied by an adult) make up about 10% of the homeless population
• 43% of the homeless population is under the age of 25
• Approximately 15% of clients at local shelter for young adults (ages 18 to 24) self-identify as gay or transgender
• Such self-reporting numbers are likely low because some won’t disclose such personal information, some are reluctant to seek services at all.
Vision

Hamilton County will be a safe and supportive community for youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) or are questioning (Q) their gender identity or sexual orientation. These young people will have access to stable housing, health care, education, employment and emotional connections that ensure they thrive. Youth in Hamilton County are proud of their LGBTQ identity and community members support them. Every youth has a home.

Purpose

The purpose of the initiative is to:
1. Prevent homelessness for LGBTQ youth.
2. Intervene early to prevent chronic homelessness.
Structure

• Lead Agency- Lighthouse Youth Services (LYS)
• Lead Partners are:
  • Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN)
  • Human Rights Campaign (HRC)
  • Strategies to End Homelessness (STEH).

Strategic planning was also guided by a Steering Committee comprised of members from community organizations.

Implementation is led by a Steering Committee comprised of a Lead Agency, Lead Partners, and Sub-Committees specific to an activity or goal.

Technical assistance is provided from federal agencies and non-profits including the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) and the True Colors Fund.
Key Partners

Additional partners include:

- Child Welfare
- Faith Leaders
- Law Enforcement
- LGBT Groups
- Youth Homelessness Providers
- Juvenile Justice
- Education (K-12 and Universities)
- Homeless Management Information Systems
Youth Involvement

Key members of the Lighthouse Youth Advisory Council have provided a youth voice in the planning process.

Private donors funded meals, stipends and transportation assistance for youth who participated in initiative activities.

Media training and Strategic Sharing training was provided to all members of the youth council and media spokespeople to support them sharing their experiences.
Timeline

The timeline for the project:

• Strategic planning began in March 2014.

• Community plan was submitted to the Department of Housing and Urban Development on September 30\textsuperscript{th}, 2014.

• Implementation and evaluation began in October 2014 and will last at least 2 years.

• 6 sub-committees are currently meeting to implement activities outlined in the community plan.
Key Outcomes

Aligned with the USICH Framework to End Homelessness, the plan focuses on improving outcomes for LGBTQ youth in four core areas:

• Social and Emotional Well-Being

• Permanent Connections

• Stable Housing

• Education / Employment
Key Goals

1. Facilitate greater community awareness of issues contributing to LGBTQ youth homelessness and the initiative’s efforts to address these issues.

2. Facilitate greater local collaboration among stakeholders including youth, community members, youth-serving agencies and staff of youth-chosen spaces.

3. Improve data quality on sexual orientation and gender identity.

4. Use risk and protective factors for screening and assessment of youth at risk of or experiencing episodic homelessness.
Key Goals- continued

4. **Improve the quality of interventions** to reduce risks and build protective factors that can prevent LGBTQ youth homelessness.

5. **Support positive outcomes for LGBTQ youth** in the areas of social and emotional well-being, permanent connections, stable housing and education / employment.

6. **Obtain new funding and in-kind resources** to support plan implementation.

7. **Evaluate the initiative** include its progress and outcomes.
Example Activities

• Lighthouse participated in the All Children-All Families training led by HRC to improve staff practice with LGBT foster youth and families. (Stable Housing)
Example Activities

• Lighthouse has partnered with the Hamilton County Sheriff’s Office and the Cincinnati Police Department.

• A billboard campaign was launched that promotes the partnership and demonstrates support for homeless youth. (Social and Emotional Well-Being)
Example Activities

• GLSEN and the HRC provided cultural competency training to staff in local school districts. (Social and Emotional Well-Being)

• Conducting a feasibility study on additional housing options for LGBTQ youth (e.g. Host Homes) (Stable Housing)

• STEH scheduled cultural competency training for all COC members. (Social and Emotional Well-Being)
Implementation

• We have 6 sub-committees consisting of service providers, community stakeholders and youth. These sub-committees are:

  – Finance
  – Resource Sharing and Awareness Building
  – Cultural Competency and Training
  – Housing
  – School and Community Spaces
  – Data and Evaluation

• Sub-committees meet monthly and are responsible for implementing relevant activities.
Implementation

“Every American should have access to decent, affordable housing. It’s a tragedy that so many LGBTQ youth are being mistreated simply because of who they are, making them particularly vulnerable to homelessness,” said HUD Secretary Julián Castro. “Our partnership with the True Colors Fund and these two communities will help ensure that these young folks have a place to call home and an opportunity to achieve their dreams.”

Excerpt from a national press release with quotes from HUD Secretary Julian Castro, and other national and community leaders.
Lessons Learned

• There is overwhelming community support and cross-system participation and a need to build a solid structure to engage people.

• Intersection of homelessness agencies and LGBTQ youth organizations.

• Involving new partners and LGBTQ partners adds energy and insight to the work to end youth homelessness.

• Data resources are limited, especially on sexual orientation and gender identity.
Thank you

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