National Alliance to
END HOMELESSNESS

Housing for Homeless Youth

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Young People Are Homeless in America

With over two million youth experiencing at least one night of homelessness each year—and over a hundred thousand more leaving child welfare, juvenile justice, and the child mental health system—America must find increased housing resources for youth living without their parents, or unaccompanied, homeless youth. The consequences of youth homelessness take their toll in both human and economic dimensions. Youth who are homeless as adolescents face bleak outcomes and can perpetuate a cycle of dependence on public systems that have extreme costs to the individual and communities. Homeless point-in-time counts grossly under-estimate the number of youth who experience homelessness on a regular basis.

Homeless youth are difficult to count because they are hidden in the homes of their friends or in their cars, often they do not use the shelter system, and they can easily look like a student or any other youth walking the street or sitting in a library. A Government Accounting Office (GAO) report estimates that only one in twelve homeless youth ever comes into contact with the shelter system.[1]

Housing is a Solution to Ending Youth Homelessness

Numerous studies show that housing is the key to ending homelessness. Only a small percentage of all homeless youth seek shelter services. Research shows that for those who do, 10 percent will fail to find residential options after exiting shelter care. In addition, 15 percent of the homeless youth population have lived on the streets for six months or more and most likely require housing assistance to find a stable residence. A regional survey of homeless youth in Min-

nesota found that 47 percent of homeless youth were homeless for one week or less.[2] Additionally, in a study of 13-17 year olds conducted longitudinally over 7 years (249 homeless youth and 149 housed youth), nearly 93 percent of the homeless youth were no longer homeless at the end of the study. One third lived with their families, about 20 percent lived with relatives or friends, and over a third (34 percent) lived on their own.[3] The data shows that most younger homeless youth between the ages of 13-17 eventually find stability after experiencing short periods of homelessness. However, older youth, often outside the reach of public systems of care, likely require some form of intervention to secure housing and services to end their homelessness episodes.

When runaways and homeless youth cannot be reunited with their families, the creation of housing models that also address the service needs of youth is one solution to ending youth homelessness. The goal of this brief is to outline a spectrum of youth housing models that connect affordable housing, self-sufficiency services, and positive youth development approaches. This brief examines youth housing combined with positive youth development services and highlights four housing models and programs that demonstrate promise in housing for older adolescents and young adults. It is not intended to review the entire spectrum of housing models for youth. This brief draws on existing research on youth housing models, youth development, and interviews with program staff to identify some of the key issues surrounding the design of youth housing combined with services to prevent and end homelessness for youth. Additionally, specific community-based youth housing programs are highlighted to offer examples of some housing models.

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Housing and Positive Youth Development Services Combat Homelessness

Housing models that deliver positive youth development services combine stable and affordable housing with life skills that youth will use throughout adulthood. Youth housing and service models vary in design, scope, and operation. Youth housing combined with positive youth development services is especially valuable in preventing homelessness for youth who are aging out of the foster care system, transitioning from the juvenile justice system or children's mental health system, parenting, or not able to return home. In addition, it can assist youth who are currently living in shelters, experiencing inconsistent overnight arrangements or long-term homelessness.

Positive youth development (PYD) describes an age-appropriate delivery of services. The delivery method focuses on a strength-based approach that identifies and builds upon the abilities of the youth. Positive youth development practices motivate youth to expand and maximize their potential toward a goal of a prosperous adulthood. More specifically, for unaccompanied homeless youth, PYD encourages young people to not just survive, but to thrive.

Why Does Youth Homelessness Matter?

Youth homelessness is disturbingly common. Although the prevalence of youth homelessness is difficult to measure, researchers estimate that about 5 to 7.7 percent of youth – about 1 million to 1.6 million youth, under the age of 18 – experience homelessness each year.[19] Homelessness has serious consequences and is especially dangerous for youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who do not have family support.[20]

A Spectrum of Housing for Homeless Youth

Youth housing models include a wide spectrum of configuration and structure. Typically, a community's response to youth homelessness is to offer emergency shelter and, perhaps, a community-based transitional living program. However, other models include: group homes, dormitories, host homes, shared homes, congregate or single site housing, scattered-site housing, foyer employment-focused housing, permanent supportive housing, and residential treatment. Youth housing models differ from adult or family supportive and transitional housing because they employ service delivery approaches that incorporate positive youth development principles. Although both youth and adult housing may include similar programmatic services, like education, vocational, and life skill training, and health services, the application or delivery of these services is different from their delivery in adult housing through the application of positive youth development methods.

A youth housing spectrum incorporates various housing models that appropriately respond to the broad range of needs of youth as they learn and test independent living skills during their transition to adulthood. A youth housing spectrum is defined as various forms of housing without predetermined time limits that allow youth to transition from one housing model to another according to their individual developmental needs. Youth should have the ability to experience various housing programs as they exhibit improved independent living skills and economic stability, including the flexibility to re-enter housing types and cycle throughout the spectrum if their current needs or abilities change. Ideally, different housing options would be available to a youth in response to his/her immediate situation.

For example, a young person living in a scattered-site apartment may be unable to resist allowing his drug-addicted mother to move in with him. After his mother's addiction causes him to lose his job, he calls the program to say that he cannot tell his mother to leave, but he knows that he will become homeless without help. His program advisor suggests he move into a shared home owned by the organization and helps him find services to offer assistance to his mother. By living in a shared home, he can still maintain his independence, but he does not have to experience the pressure of taking in his mother because the other residents, while sympathetic, will not allow it.
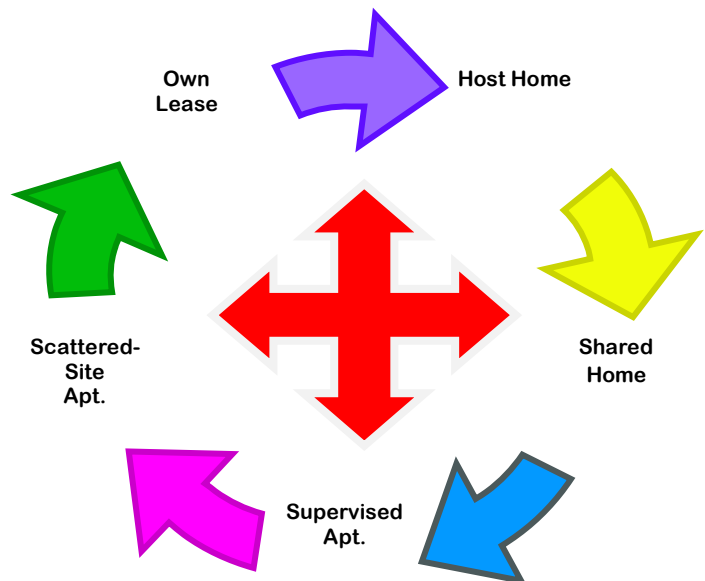
Positive Youth Development Services: A Critical Component of Youth Housing Models

By virtue of human ecology, youth are largely dependent upon their families for financial, emotional, and psychological development. Young people learn about basic life skills from relationships between their families and their natural social environments. Youth homelessness is often a reflection of family dysfunction and breakdown, specifically family conflict, abuse, and disruption. Therefore, many homeless youth will not have the chance to learn about adulthood in a typical setting. Mark Kroner, Director of Training for Lighthouse Youth Services and author, explains, "For thousands of youth nationwide, the ability to obtain long-term support from any family, be it biological, foster, or adoptive, is not going to be there on a consistent basis. The survival of these youth depends on their ability to function and live independently in the community."[4]

Age-appropriate services are particularly important for human development. According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, normal early adolescent behaviors include establishing a sense of identity, focusing primarily on the present, and having a tendency to return to childish behavior, particularly when stressed.[5] During adolescence, most youth are unprepared to take on adult responsibilities, including securing housing, earning a livable income, obtaining an education, and planning for their future. It is during adolescence, however, that many youth without family support are forced into these responsibilities. PYD services are critical components of housing models for youth because the services give youth vital instructions on how to not just survive these pressures, but also how to thrive in the midst of them.

Service models also vary in design and scope. Yet, there are common themes in a positive youth development service delivery approach. Those themes include creating opportunities for youth to contribute to their well being, developing competencies, and establishing connections and supports for youth as they transition into young adulthood. Youth Development Strategies, Inc. explains the PYD approach as,

"A process of human growth through which adolescents move from being taken care of to taking care of themselves

Definition of Youth Development

Youth Development (noun) - A process which prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent. Positive youth development addresses the broader developmental needs of youth, in contrast to deficit-based models which focus solely on youth problems. (The National Collaboration for Youth, March 1998)[11]

and others; an approach where policy, funding, and programming are directed at providing supports to young people as they build their capacities and strengths to meet their personal and social needs; and a set of practices that adults use to provide youth with the types of relationships and experiences needed to fuel healthy development."[6]

ABC's of Designing Positive Youth Development Services for Youth Housing Models

From the beginning, youth housing programs will have to assume the role of guardian and life skills coach for homeless youth by providing services that encourage positive youth development (PYD). Services provided in such youth housing programs encourage youth to continue their personal development and gain independent living skills that will sustain them throughout adulthood while providing them with the security and support they need as adolescents. Special attention should also be placed upon delivering services that are trauma informed. Services encompass physical and mental health services, counseling, case management, and personal development. The array of services can include assisting a young person in finding and securing future housing, learning how to apply for and get a job, reentering and completing school, caring for a young child, balancing a budget, cooking a meal, navigating interpersonal relationships, and establishing short- and long-term goals.

There are a number of key ingredients that should be included in designing PYD services for youth. First, when developing PYD services, it is critically important to involve youth in the design process. This involvement provides leadership opportunities for youth and establishes the organization as one that values youth engagement. According to Advocates for Youth, involving young people provides an organization with several benefits, including:

- Fresh ideas and new perspectives on decision making;
- Relevant information about young people's needs and interests;
- Candid responses about existing services;
- Additional data for analysis and planning that may be available only to youth;
- More effective outreach that provides important information peer to peer;
- Additional human resources as youth and adults share responsibility;
- Greater acceptance of messages, services, and decisions because youth are involved which creates a sense of ownership and accountability;
- Increased synergy from partnering the energy and enthusiasm of youth with the professional skills of adults; and
- Experience and enhanced credibility of the organization to both youth and advocates.[7]

To better serve youth, agencies and providers should engage youth in meaningful ways, shifting the adolescent's role from a recipient of service to that of a leader and decision-maker in program development, delivery, evaluation, organizational management, and advocacy.

Second, PYD services should address a young person's total well being. Youth housing programs will vary according to the project, yet the basic design should promote youth involvement, encourage critical thinking, develop life and vocational skills, address mental and physical health management (especially post-traumatic stress, depression, and risk of exposure to domestic violence and sexual exploitation), and respond to substance use problems.[8]

Third, youth housing combined with positive youth development services programs should have flexible time limits and recognize the adolescent tendency to test rules and limits. Rarely is a "zero-tolerance" policy recommended as a response to irresponsible or even threatening behavior. Additionally, these programs should allow young people to discharge, voluntarily exit a placement, or re-enter housing programs as their current needs or abilities change.

Fourth, youth housing combined with PYD services should match the level of responsibility with present skill sets and developmental abilities of the youth at a specific point in time. However, youth programs should also provide opportunities for youth to be challenged beyond their current abilities to develop and progress to the next level of taking care of themselves and fulfilling their responsibilities. Youth programs must be comfortable with the risks that are involved with encouraging and pushing a youth outside his/her assumed limitations. Most importantly, youth programs and staff should celebrate the small and significant accomplishments of young people who are learning about themselves and life.

Four Models of Youth Housing Combined with Positive Youth Development Services

Ending youth homelessness necessitates adequate community resources for youth housing models. Youth can be assisted in accessing affordable housing that is linked to trusting adults, community resources, and opportunities to build life skills and developmental assets. The following youth housing models, combined with application of positive youth development grounded services, do not represent an exhaustive list of options; these models, however, have demonstrated promise toward the gradual preparation of youth to live independently and transition from the streets or dependence on homeless shelter systems.

Community-based group homes

A community-based group home is a congregate care housing model for young people often under the age of 18 years old. In most group homes, youth share bedrooms and communal living spaces. Many group homes require youth to participate in a structured daily schedule that includes meal times, as well as recreational activities. Often, there are several rules to maintain program compliance.

The concept of a community-based group home incorporates neighboring community services with opportunities to incubate a sense of culture and interdependence for the residents and staff. Often these homes are associated with the foster care, juvenile justice, and child mental health systems, and many are designed for young people who cannot be reunited with their families. A community-based group home can be defined as "a non-secure residential program emphasizing family-style living in a homelike atmosphere."[9] Typically, group homes have shared living spaces with staff taking the primary

role in cooking and house keeping. Group homes can combine court-appointed youth with youth who are placed there by child welfare. They use existing community services, but also provide supervision by staff who are scheduled in shifts to cover 24 hours but do not live on site. Community-based group homes are considered "semi-independent living." The goal of most programs is to increase the capacity of its residents to enter into independent living programs.

The advantages of community-based group homes include the provision of supervision and social contacts. It may seem more "normal" than living alone and can provide an open community experience. Also, the staff can spend one-on-one time with the young people to work on self-sufficiency skills. A well-managed community-based group home can provide a young person a stable home and family-like environment with connections to dedicated and caring staff when they live in the same home over longer periods of time.

On the other hand, group homes seem to be more vulnerable to problems than other youth serving housing models. Specifically, many group homes accept only residents that are referred to them by the local child welfare or juvenile justice system and often youth are challenged to accept stability and structure after years of multiple placements. Some disadvantages of group homes include group and crowd control issues, peer pressure, live-in negative influences, and high staff turnover rates.[10] Group home experiences can be very damaging if youth are not afforded opportunities to develop independent living skills or if they are cared for by un-trained and highly cyclical staff. Often, youth who experience multiple group home placements either runaway or "age-out" of the system with little to no connections to community or caring adults and few life skills. Homeless youth who need more intensive PYD services and housing often come from pasts with multiple, mismanaged group home placements.

The majority of young people need ongoing support and connections to caring adults while living in stable affordable housing to develop self-sufficiency skills. A community-based group home may be an appropriate housing solution for a homeless youth who has extremely limited familiarity with or connections to the community or constructive family support,

lacks fundamental living skills, or lacks access to resources. This model may be a match for youth who are still in middle or early high school years, need to re-enroll and attend high school, or need intensive, consistent, and specific guidance to accomplish an academic or vocational goal. This model infuses extensive positive youth development principles throughout daily routines in order to lead youth to a level of independence.

Shared Houses

As basic life skills are learned and practiced, the shared home model shows promise in building on and enhancing self-sufficiency. Shared houses are homes that young people share with a live-in staff member. Housemates share a communal kitchen and living area. Residents are responsible for preparing meals and housekeeping. Most shared homes are designed to provide residents with their own bedroom but, depending on the house size, some may have two residents per room.

The shared home model requires greater independent living skills than living in a group home because residents cook their own meals and determine their schedules. Instructions on how to use appliances or to turn off light switches are not posted on walls, there are no designated study hours, and there are no locks on food storage areas. With direction from the residential staff, residents will have to depend on each other to create a structure that allows for a comfortable living environment. It is important to differentiate between this model and a group home, as many residents may be moving from group homes into shared houses. Young people living in shared homes will want their living environment to reflect their progression, maturity, taste, and lifestyle as young adults. When designing a shared house, a program should consider youth participants' opinions in designing and decorating interior spaces.

Staffing can be one of the most critical concerns with this model. Using shift staff is highly discouraged within this model because it disrupts a 'home-like' environment. The residents need resident managers who will build trusting, caring, and interpersonal relationships with them. Shared home residents are housemates with someone officially living there to enforce house rules and harmony. Geographic location is also

From Boys to Men

In Washington, D.C., the Tabara House is a community-based group home program within the Sasha Bruce Youthwork, Inc. youth services and housing continuum. The Tabara House is an eight-bed community-based group home solely dedicated to young men between the ages of 16 and 21. Opened in 1998, residents are referred by the DC Child and Family Services Agency. Tabara House provides youth in the child welfare system with educational, vocational, and employment services, as well as social, cultural, and recreational activities, and life skills training. The purposeful selection of staff includes hiring direct line and administrative employees who are positive role models for the residents. At Tabara House, the ethnicity of the staff in the group home closely resembles the ethnicities of the young men. Many of the residents lacked tangible, positive role-models of their ethnicity throughout childhood. The intentional selection of leadership within the home helps the residents and staff to create bonds and sense of family. The art on the walls and colorful murals reflect their heritage and community. Most importantly, young men have regular opportunities to voice their concerns and thoughts about the home and other general life questions with the staff. The goal is for residents to either move into more independent living or return to their families. Annually, 80 percent of the youth served, successfully "graduate" from the program into independent living.[12]

important when designing a shared home model. Shared homes should be close to public transportation, schools, jobs, and support networks.

One advantage of the shared home model is cost-effectiveness. There are usually no zoning or licensing requirements, so they blend easily into a neighborhood, and buildings can be donated or made available through federal or local housing authorities or financing agencies, or corporate and private philanthropies. Additionally, the live-in staff can have daily contact with the residents. This allows for more of a mentoring relationship to develop versus feeling accountable to a case manager.

A few disadvantages to the shared home model include staff turnover rates and lack of housemate synergy. It is strongly recommended that youth housing providers take the time to sufficiently assess the appropriate level of independence, service needs, and temperament of shared home applicants. Careful consideration should be taken to determine the mix and maturity of the residents. Disadvantages of this model also include negative peer influence and apathy toward rules and others.

Shared homes are ideal for young people who are interested in having their own space, yet are comfortable with and willing to live with other people. Residents must have the ability to live with and respect the time and property of others.

Supervised Apartments

Supervised apartments, also known as cluster apartments, is a housing model that gives youth the chance to truly practice independent living with guidance and immediate access to assistance if necessary. The definition of supervised apartments is, "an apartment building, rented or owned by an agency, in which numerous youth live with a live-in supervisor who occupies one of the units."[14] Supervised apartments or "cluster apartments" can house youth in units with or without roommates. Most programs encourage gradual steps to increase a young person's responsibilities regarding their needs and other freedoms, such as visitors and overnight guests. In general, supervised apartments are located together and young people

serve as each other's neighbors. Apartments typically have a kitchen and bathroom. The size and number of units in an apartment building determines the capacity of the program. This model usually serves older youth, ages 17 to 24, who have some independent living skills but would benefit from on-site access to services. Most supervised apartment programs are voluntary and residents are encouraged to actively participate in the program components which include mental and physical health services, group meetings, life skills development, and other various activities. This model allows for the integration of youth who have varying levels of service needs and independent living skills.

The advantages of the supervised apartment model is the positive effect residents can have on one another's growth, development, and understanding of social norms. Services, like group counseling and life skills training, are easy to organize as the clients are in one place, and a strong resident manager can demonstrate and encourage leadership skills for a positive peer-driven atmosphere.

Some disadvantages include group control issues and the possible interruption of progress for the majority of residents based on the negative behaviors of a few.

This is a model from which young people can go directly into living on their own, in their own separate unit with little to no services.

Scattered-Site Apartments

Scattered-site apartments are privately owned apartments rented by an agency or youth in which youth live independently or with roommates with financial support, training, and some monitoring.[16] Most frequently, organizations provide apartments in various geographic areas where youth live on their own or with roommates. In scattered-site apartments or semi-supervised apartments, the tenant or agency has a lease or occupancy agreement, and there is flexibility on the length of tenancy as long as the youth or agency follows the conditions of the lease or agreement. If the agency holds the lease, the goal of most models is to eventually transfer the contract to the resident so that the youth can transition from the program in the

The Real World: Season Life

The YMCA of Greater Seattle-Transitions Office manages five shared home sites. All of the shared homes are near colleges and four to five participants share a single-family home in a residential neighborhood. Residents have their own bedroom and are responsible for their own meals. Each shared home has a live-in resident manager who provides mentoring and oversight. Most resident managers work at other jobs or are in school. Residents are required to work or pursue educational or vocational opportunities.[13] Andrea Owner, former Housing Director, explains, "The shared home model fosters the opportunity for casual mentoring. As the young people learn to live in community, supportive mentoring relationships are developed with the resident manager. A sense of community is built into this model and the young people are able to create lasting relationships, which sometimes leads to friends becoming roommates in the future. It is important to design shared homes not to look or feel like group homes. The residents are completely independent and they make the choice to live in a home that has a supportive environment." About 40 people are served per year in the shared homes. Residents can stay up to a year, although exceptions have been made allowing stays up to two years.

same housing.

The services associated with scattered-site apartments include apartment visits and staff advocates. Staff are directed to visit apartments at least once every week or more depending on the circumstances of the youth. Additionally, staffing is a critical component of success for scattered-site models. Scattered-site programs require experienced staff members who are able to be proactive in the face of the challenges and adjustments youth will have to make to live independently. Supportive services in this environment focus on case management. A critical component of these services is the balance the roles of assisting youth participants in navigating mainstream services, providing constructive feedback, demanding accountability for inappropriate behavior from the youth, and being an advocate for youth residents. Many scattered-site apartment programs provide youth the standard items to set up an apartment and help with moving services. Depending on the program, financial assistance can be decreased incrementally in accordance with the progression of the youth's financial ability.

An advantage of the scattered-site apartment model is that it requires program participants to develop internal control mechanisms and an understanding of consequential actions apart from the continual presence of a caregiver or enforcer. Not only are youth able to experiment with control mechanisms, but they are also forced to practice healthy coping skills to deal with loneliness, control visitors, interact with neighbors, and cooperate with landlords. Youth have probably already experienced many of these situations in different public systems or when homeless, but now they must be mindful of the control they must have over their own living environment. Another advantage is that landlords prefer to rent to tenants when they know they have a dependable case worker or responsive program that they can call if they have problems with the tenant. Another organizational benefit to the scattered-site model is cost -- no capital is required for this model. If a neighborhood is not a good match, it is easy to move to another location. Kroner explains that scattered site models are not always the best, first choice for high-risk youth, but some youth do better alone than in group settings when presented with great challenges.[17]

While the transition to self-sufficiency can be easily managed in scattered-site apartments, because the living situation more accurately emulates independence, there are disadvantages when youth are not ready for this stage of independent living. Loneliness can cause some youth to stray from the program's goals and violate the rules. Other disadvantages include property damage and poor tenant relations. Friends and relatives of the youth can cause damage or take over the apartment and cause safety issues for program staff. Another challenge of scattered-site housing can be proximity to amenities and services. Some communities may not have affordable housing close to public transportation or employment opportunities.

Within a youth housing spectrum, scattered-site apartments is the housing model that most closely resembles complete autonomy. Usually, youth leave this model with sharpened independent living skills and the ability to stay housed throughout adulthood. The purpose of this model is to allow youth to learn by doing, yet youth involved with this program should demonstrate some level responsibility and possess some skills to live on their own without constant supervision.

Helping Hands All Around
The Chelsea Foyer in New York City is a supervised apartment youth housing and positive youth development services collaboration between Good Shepherd Services and Common Ground Community. The Chelsea Foyer serves young adults who are aging out of foster and residential care, homeless youth, and others who are at risk of homelessness. The 40-bed Foyer opened to residents in April 2004. Residents live in suites or studio apartments in a safe and stable coeducational environment where they receive personalized services for up to 24 months. Services include employment training and assistance, independent living, and educational services. Residents also receive case management and after-care services. The model is semi-independent. As one resident reports, "I feel the Foyer will be a great stepping stone for me to be successful in society. It's like being on your own with help."[15]

Conclusion

Homeless youth require housing programs tailored to meet the demands associated with the transition from adolescence to adulthood on an individual basis. Some runaway youth may be able to return home or to extended family or close friends with the proper family supports. However, for youth who are not able to live with their families, other options should be made available for them to contribute and take care of themselves. Communities must develop affordable housing which assists homeless adults, families, and unaccompanied, homeless youth. Communities should also consider the various

Lighting the Way to Self-Sufficiency

Lighthouse Youth Services (LYS) Independent Living Program, in Cincinnati, Ohio is a scattered-site apartment model that accepts males and females, ages 16 to 19, as well as pregnant or parenting teens who cannot return to their families. Lighthouse Independent Living covers the security deposit, rent, utilities, phone bills, and furnishings. Most young people take over some of their bills toward the end of their stay. Youth receive $60 weekly ($15 is placed in savings and the remaining $45 covers food, transportation, and personal items). Residents are allowed to keep their apartments, furniture, supplies, and security deposits if they are employed at the end of the program and have proven to the landlord that they are responsible. LYS utilizes apartments rented from private landlords, affordable to youth after they are out of the program, located in areas in which youth are familiar and close to public transportation. The staff has weekly contact with residents and there is a 24 hour, seven day a week phone number for emergencies or crisis counseling.

Lighthouse Independent Living program establishes rules and polices that are agreed to by every young person living in their own apartment. They need permission to have overnight visitors and are allowed no more than two visitors at a time. Youth can be terminated from the program for involvement in illegal activities. Mark Kroner, Director of the Division of Self-Sufficiency Services, states, "We believe that the teens we work with need time to adjust to the 'real world,' to make decisions on their own, within limits of course, and make mistakes while still under the support of caring adults. We believe that teens learn best by doing and mistakes are necessary for learning to take place. We want our teens to understand that they have the strength, intelligence, and resources necessary to live in the community without lifelong dependence on government support."[19] Since 1981, Lighthouse has served over 1,400 youth in their Independent Living Program and over 1,000 in the Transitional Living Program. 75 percent of these youth have lived in scattered-site apartments, and about 15 percent of them with children of their own. Over the years, about a third of the youth have taken over the lease of their current apartment.

models available and evaluate which model is best suited to meet the developmental and residential needs of youth. Some communities may require group homes, while others may have a higher need for supervised apartments.

In attempting to expand housing options for homeless youth, community planners should not rule out short-term or one-time financial assistance. For some youth who are working on a regular basis or going to school, a small monetary grant or shallow subsidy can help them stabilize their housing by covering first and last month's rent or a security deposit for an affordable apartment. Some youth may simply need someone to sign a lease for them until they are of age to legally take the lease over. These young people may need little to no PYD services because their life skills, experiences, and community connections have equipped them with a greater level of self-sufficiency than other homeless youth. On the other hand, most youth will require more intensive PYD services and housing options that can help them to develop independent living skills and gain connections to communities and caring adults.

Community-based group homes, shared houses, supervised apartments, and scattered-site apartments are among the many promising models that house youth and provide services to enhance independent living skills. For many youth, these housing models have ended their episodes of homelessness and redirected their life's journey to fulfillment and productivity. They are able to make lifelong connections to staff and will often say the programs "saved their lives." As in any human services program, there is the possibility of mismanagement. Yet, these programs, alone or as part of a youth housing continuum, allow for greater success in transitioning to adulthood and

preparing youth to avoid homelessness. Youth housing combined with positive youth development service models are beneficial for youth without family supports because these programs embrace a young person during the trials and errors of early adulthood and prepare them for successful independent living.

National, state, local, and community planning efforts to prevent and end youth homelessness should utilize services like

WHAT HURDLES DO YOUTH EXERIENCE ACCESSING HOUSING?

- No rental history
- Age discrimination
- No job or not enough income to afford market-rate rents
- Lack of standing to sign lease
- Troubles with mobility due to few public transportation options
- Exposure to domestic violence, sexual assault and adults who solicit youth for illegal activity in exchange for housing
- Teen parents
- Limited job skills
- Past abuse and trauma resulting in mental or cognitive disabilities
- Failure to find housing with proficiencies in various youth cultures

family counseling and kinship options to help youth and their families in crisis so that the youth can return home. When family preservation services fail, local communities must provide a spectrum of youth housing models that deliver positive youth development services to nurture youth and prepare young people for lives of greater self-determination.

Additional Resources:
For more information regarding Federal funding options for homeless youth housing programs, please see "Federal Funding for Housing Youth," a ten page resource chart on the Alliance's website at www.endhomelessness.org.

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