

communityshelterboard

Until everyone has a place to call home

# Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program

## Executive Summary



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Youth between the ages of 18 to 24 experience unique stressors and challenges as they transition from childhood into adulthood. Without adequate support, transition-aged youth (TAY) may find themselves at risk of homelessness. In an effort to prevent and address youth homelessness, Community Shelter Board (CSB) partners with local organizations throughout Franklin County and Columbus communities. CSB also partnered with Measurement Resources Company (MRC) to evaluate its Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) for Fiscal Year 2021–2022 (FY22) and create an Evaluation Report. As part of this process, data were collected from interviews and focus groups with youth served, client tracking systems, eviction records, and collective impact surveys to answer a series of evaluation questions about the effectiveness of YHDP in preventing youth homelessness. Key findings from this evaluation are presented below.

### Services Provided

- Prevention
- Coordinated Entry
- Drop-in Center
- Outreach Program
- Emergency/Crisis Shelter
- Rapid Re-housing
- Transitional Housing
- Permanent Supportive Housing

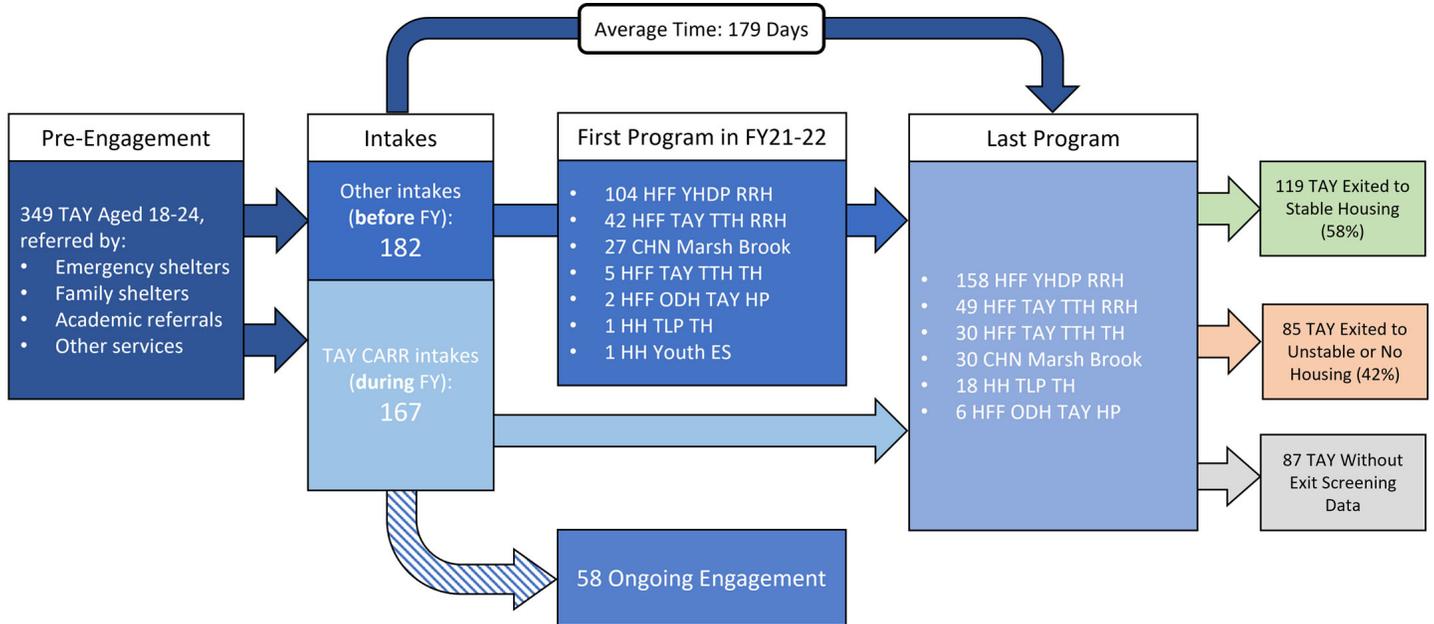
A total of 681 TAY were provided a variety of YHDP-funded services during FY22, ranging from coordinated entry and referral to permanent supportive housing, across a total of 402 unique TAY households. Across the entire system, emergency shelter services were the most frequently provided (267 households), followed by Rapid Rehousing (185), CARR Team Coordinated Entry services (183), and Transition to Home via Rapid Rehousing (104).

## Collective Impact Partners



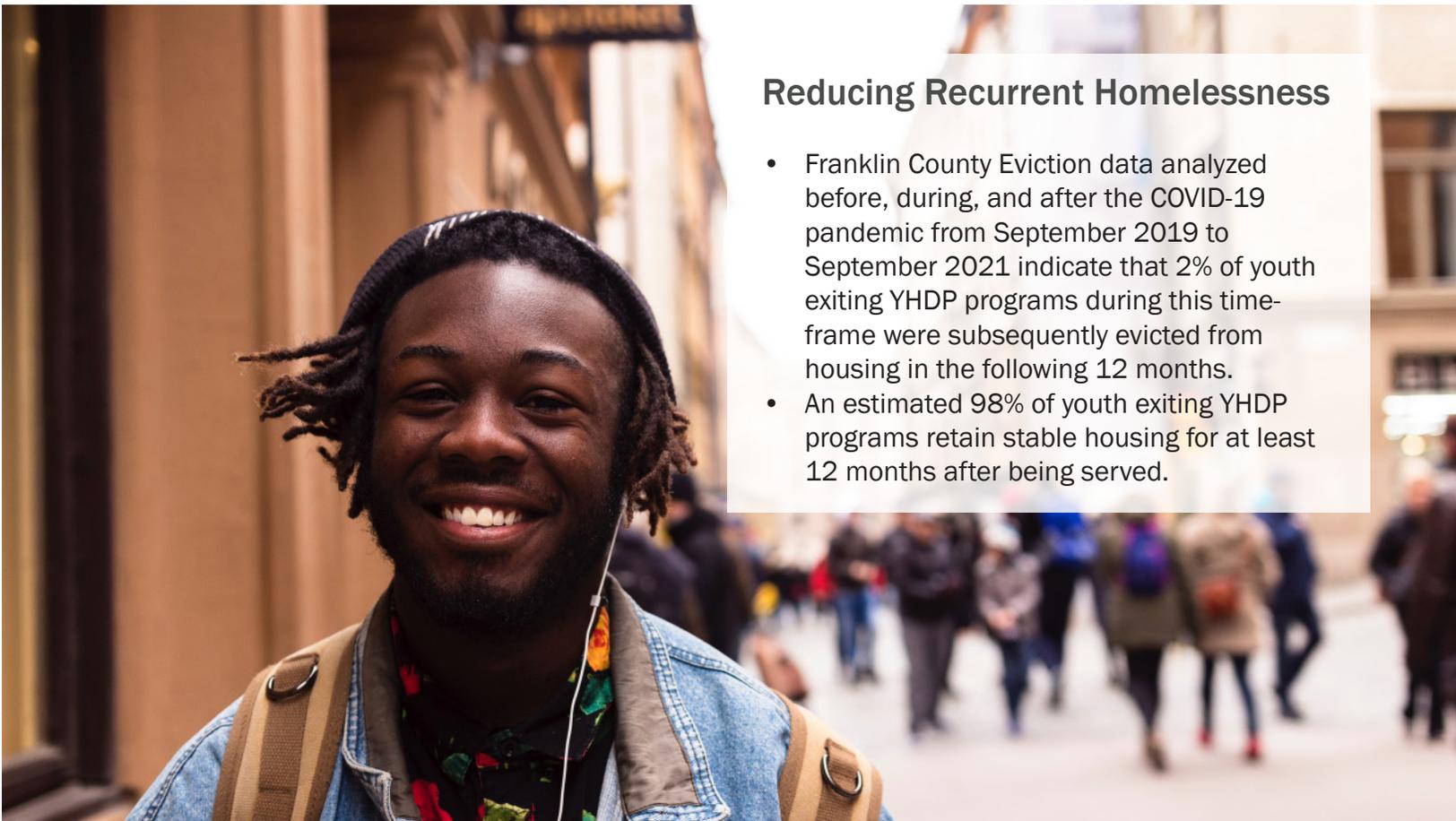
## Keeping Episodes of Homelessness Brief

- After YHDP partners are made aware of a youth in need, it takes most youth eight days to be processed into a YHDP program.
- Most youth are provided same-day referrals to community services at intake.
- It takes an average of 26 days for youth to get connected with community services after referral.
- The journey from homeless to housed took an average of 179 days during the fiscal year.
- More than half of TAY who completed exit screeners reported exiting to permanent stable housing (58%), while the rest either exited to unstable, temporary, or no housing (42%). Of the 121 TAY that exited to permanent stable housing, 54% moved into unsubsidized housing and 46% moved into subsidized housing (e.g., with housing subsidies, vouchers, etc.).



## Reducing Recurrent Homelessness

- Franklin County Eviction data analyzed before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic from September 2019 to September 2021 indicate that 2% of youth exiting YHDP programs during this time-frame were subsequently evicted from housing in the following 12 months.
- An estimated 98% of youth exiting YHDP programs retain stable housing for at least 12 months after being served.



## Strengths of the System

Youth feedback from focus groups and interviews show that youth feel important, supported, and that staff are friendly.

*“Without [Partner], I would still be homeless. Not just because I have housing, but because they helped me find employment and therapy services.”*

*“I felt very safe there. It’s a safe haven. I loved going there.”*

*“They don’t judge you and they ask the right questions ahead of time before they get stuff wrong (pronouns, what you’ve been through). A lot of people with a background in homelessness have triggers and traumas. They word them correctly to where you’re not triggered but you’re also not confused. They understand. They respect your boundaries if you don’t want to say something or explain something about your past.”*

*“The staff is really supportive. They don’t make me feel ‘less than’ or crazy. They make me feel like they understand.”*



### Collective Impact Survey Results (feedback from providers)

Funded and non-funded YHDP collective impact partners were given a survey designed to understand partners’ experiences and perceptions of how the collective (i.e., youth system) is doing at creating, sharing, and achieving a shared vision of ending youth homelessness in Franklin County. Partner responses were generally favorable, indicating a strong foundation for the collective impact evaluation process to successfully achieve its goals. Partners saw improvements in five out of five collective impact behaviors over the course of the fiscal year:

- Common agenda,
- Shared measures,
- Mutually reinforcing activities,
- Continuous communication, and
- Backbone support.

More than 77% of partners agreed that the collective was engaged in these positive collective impact behaviors by the final measurement period. Partners also reported training in a wide variety of topics during the fiscal year. The most frequently cited trainings were in trauma-informed care and cultural competency, although partners also reported trainings in social justice, management, human trafficking awareness, crisis intervention, and group-specific issues (e.g., racial justice, LGBTQIA+ issues). The ability for YHDP to leverage its resources, partnerships, and collaborative partners to better provide for youth was the most frequently mentioned strength of the collective among partners.

## Opportunities and Threats of the System

Youth feedback from focus groups and interviews identified the need to reduce stigma, create safe spaces, address inconsistencies in staff treatment of youth, and provide continued assistance into adulthood.

*“The staff are inconsistent with holding up rules. They pick and choose what’s zero tolerance today and what they let slide. They aren’t on the same page, and I feel like I can’t trust them.”*

*“They should have an on-site nurse [crisis prevention specialist]. Things happen out here. You have people coming from all different walks of life. Some people do drugs, some are suicidal. People and kids get hurt or sick. There could be a person who gets there before the ambulance does.”*

*“When I was in shelter, I was used to the drama. But here, I want to feel safe. It affects me and my child.”*

*“We don’t just turn 21 and stop needing resources.”*

In interviews and focus groups, partners highlighted the need for more affordable housing options for youth, interventions to address root cause issues underlying youth homelessness, and innovation in service delivery as the greatest opportunities for improvement within the collective.

Trends in the community during 2021 and 2022 revealed environmental threats that challenge the success of the YHDP. The most notable barrier to stable housing for TAY is the lack of affordable housing. With only 32 affordable homes available for every 100 extremely low-income families in the Columbus statistical area,<sup>1</sup> TAY are often unable to find affordable community-based housing. From the TAY and service provider perspectives, there is also a stigma against TAY experiencing homelessness among landlords, resulting in an added housing challenge. Finally, the workforce shortage across the entire social sector threatens the capacity to support TAY with quality services.

<sup>1</sup>The GAP | National Low Income Housing Coalition (<https://nlihc.org/gap>)





## Recommendations

The following recommendations arose from the results of evaluation activities over the year:

### **Leverage Collaborative Will to Address Safety.**

Safety was a primary concern of TAY, and YHDP partners feel particularly passionate about needing to address this fundamental concern. The collective has extensive partnerships and a common commitment to helping youth transition to stable living conditions which can be leveraged to implement strategies to improve the safety of TAY in YHDP programs.

### **Increase Quality Training for Staff.**

While partners are engaged in training initiatives, results from the 2021-2022 evaluation show that there continue to be opportunities to improve the experiences of TAY. More specifically, TAY said staff are inconsistent with how they treat TAY. Ongoing and quality learning collaborative trainings, particularly in areas of trauma-informed care and cultural competency, will help partners see improved outcomes for TAY and possibly increased staff retention.

### **Improve Data Management.**

Collective impact data collection is challenging at the individual partner level but can be supported at the system level. This evaluation shows a need to reinforce a culture that values best practices in data management, particularly in practices such as aligning and maintaining reporting standards across both funded and non-funded partners and creating capacity for data collection when needed.