

Eligible Populations under the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project

Introduction

Communities awarded funds under the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project (YHDP) can serve unaccompanied youth up to the age of 24, including pregnant and parenting youth, who meet **Category 1, 2, OR 4** of homelessness in [HUD's Final Definition of Homeless](#). YHDP communities can also use **10% of funds** awarded under YHDP to serve youth meeting **Category 3** of the Final Definition of Homeless if they can meet certain requirements described in the *Criteria for Serving Category 3* section at the end of the document. This document offers YHDP communities a quick reference sheet on the 4 categories of Homeless to be used when planning and implementing new projects funded under YHDP. For more detailed guidance on determining the homeless status of youth and necessary documentation please see: [Determining the Homeless Status of Youth](#).

Category 1 – Literal Homelessness

Youth, including pregnant and parenting youth, in the following living situations:

- Shelter including emergency shelter, transitional housing, or hotel or motel paid by government or charity;
- Street or other place not meant for human habitation (ex. car, garage, park, abandoned building); **OR**
- An institution (ex., jail, hospital, juvenile detention) that the youth is exiting and where the youth was a resident for *90 days or less* **AND** the youth resided in emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately prior to entering that institution.

Category 2 – Imminent Risk of Homelessness

Youth, including pregnant and parenting youth, in the following living situations:

- In own housing, but being evicted within 14 days;
- A hotel or motel paid for by someone other than a government or charitable organization, including the youth, family, or friends where the youth cannot stay for more than 14 days (often due to lack of ability to continue paying); **OR**
- With family or friends and being asked to leave within 14 days, which includes:
 - Youth staying with their biological parents, relatives, any individual they identify as family or a friend
 - Youth who are moving from one home to another “couch surfing” and cannot stay at their current home or “couch”
 - Youth who are in a legal guardianship

Additionally, the youth must have no safe alternative housing, resources or support networks to maintain or obtain permanent housing.

Category 3 – Homeless under other Federal Statutes

Youth, including pregnant and parenting youth, who do not qualify as homeless under the other 3 Categories but meet **ALL** of the below criteria:

- Are homeless under other federal statutes including the Runaway & Homeless Youth Act (see “Other Federal Definitions of Homeless” section for further guidance);

- Have not had their own place with a lease, ownership interest or occupancy agreement in the last 60 days;
- Have moved two or more times in the last 60 days; **AND**
- Can be expected to have continued housing instability because of a disability, substance use addiction, history of domestic violence or child abuse, or two or more barriers to employment

Category 4 – Fleeing Violence

Youth, including pregnant and parenting youth, fleeing or attempting to flee their housing or the place they are staying because of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions related to violence that has taken place in the house or has made them afraid to return to the house, including:

- Trading sex for housing;
- Trafficking;
- Physical abuse;
- Emotional abuse, such as threats, intimidation, and exposure to trauma;
- Family conflict that has caused a youth to feel physically or emotionally unsafe and unable to stay in their current living situation;*
- Financial abuse, such as controlling a youth's income or stealing a youth's identity in order use their credit;
- Violence (or perceived threat of violence) because of the youth's sexual orientation or gender identity;
- Active drug/illegal substance use in the youth's current housing;
- Gang or neighborhood violence that is being directed to a youth in their home;** OR
- Other illegal activity in the household that is putting a youth or a youth's child at risk

Additionally, the youth must have no safe, alternative housing, resources or support networks to maintain or obtain permanent housing.

**If youth are under the age of 18 you may be required to report family conflict resulting in abuse or neglect to the local child welfare agency. It is important to understand the mandatory reporting laws for child abuse and neglect in your local jurisdiction.*

***Gang or neighborhood violence has to be directed at the youth in their home not just in the general community to be eligible under category 4.*

Criteria for Serving Category 3

YHDP communities can utilize 10% of their YHDP awarded funding to serve youth meeting Category 3 of the Final Definition of Homeless. In order to utilize the funds for this population the community must indicate the desire to do so in their Coordinated Community Plan **AND** submit, and have approved, a request to HUD, with their first project application, thoroughly documenting:

- That serving this population is of equal or greater priority, especially with respect to children and unaccompanied minors, than serving youth meeting Category 1, 2 or 4. This must be demonstrated by showing that serving Category 3 youth is equally or more cost effective than serving youth meeting Category 1, 2, or 4 in meeting the overall goals and objective of the plan submitted under Section 427(b)(1)(B) of the [HEARTH Act](#) (the plan submitted in response to the annual CoC Competition NOFA); **AND**
- That the community meets the requirements described in Section 427(b)(1)(F) of the HEARTH Act by providing a description of:
 - How serving this population will allow the community to prevent homelessness for a subset of youth who are the highest risk youth among category 3 to become literally homeless (Category 1); **OR**
 - How serving this population will allow the community to provide eligible assistance that directly contributes to category 3 youth achieve independent living in *permanent housing*, especially to those youth who (1) have a history of doubled-up and other temporary housing situation or (2) are living in temporary housing situation due to a lack of available and appropriate emergency shelter. This assistance should, especially focus on addressing:
 - chronic disabilities
 - chronic physical health or mental health conditions
 - substance abuse
 - histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse
 - multiple barriers to employment

A single project can serve multiple categories of homelessness, including Category 3, as long as the CoC tracks the eligibility of project participants and the amount of staff time/financial assistance provided to those participants meeting the Category 3 definition, to ensure no more than 10% of funds are used to serve this population.

Other Federal Definition of Homeless

Department of Education Definition

Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (per Title IX, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act) defines homeless as follows:

Individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes:

- i. Children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping ground due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;
- ii. Children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;

- iii. Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- iv. Migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in (i) and (iii) above.

Healthcare for the Homeless Definition

Section 330(h)(4)(A) of the Public Health Service Act defines a homeless individual as: "An individual who lacks housing (without regard to whether the individual is a member of a family), including an individual whose primary residence during the night is a supervised public or private facility (e.g., shelters) that provides temporary living accommodations, and an individual who is a resident in transitional housing."

This may include any person without permanent housing who may:

- live on the streets;
- stay in a shelter, mission, single room occupancy facilities, abandoned building or vehicle; **OR**
- be in any other unstable or non-permanent situation, including:
 - A person who is "doubled up," a term that refers to a situation where individuals are unable to maintain their housing situation and are forced to stay with a series of friends and/or extended family members; or
 - Previously homeless individuals who are to be released from a prison or a hospital may be considered homeless if they do not have a stable housing situation to which they can return

Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHY) Definition

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (Title III of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974) defines homeless youth as individuals who are "not more than 21 years of age...for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative and who have no other safe alternative living arrangement." This definition includes only those youth who are unaccompanied by families or caregivers.

Documenting the Homeless Status of Youth¹

When serving youth experiencing homelessness, it is the intake worker's responsibility to attempt to gather the highest level of documentation that can be safely obtained. Self-certification of status is **always** acceptable along with an intake worker's attempt to verify or documented reasoning for not attempting to verify based on a safety risk to the youth. In the guidance below, the documentation is listed from the highest to lowest level of documentation.

Category 1 – Literal Homelessness

- Third party documentation, such as:
 - HMIS or victim services provider database printed record; **OR**
 - Written statement by housing or services provider such as homeless liaison, street outreach worker, or shelter provider; **OR**
- Intake worker direct observation recorded in the file; **OR**
- Certification of homelessness by youth **AND** documentation of intake worker's attempts to verify information; **OR**
- If exiting institution –
 - Discharge paperwork or a written or oral statement from staff of the institution with beginning and end dates of the time the youth spent in the institution; **OR**
 - Certification by youth that they exited institution **AND** documentation of intake worker's **attempts** to verify information. **ALSO** documentation of shelter or place not meant for human habitation prior to entering institution.

NOTE: A youth asking for emergency shelter or street outreach can self-certify their homelessness. This could be a sign-in sheet for shelter with a certification on top that the people signing in are homeless. No further documentation or attempts to verify are required to access emergency shelter.

Category 2 – Imminent Risk of Homelessness

- Documentation that youth will lose their housing within 14 days, which may include:
 - Notice of eviction or equivalent legal document; **OR**
 - Proof of inability to continue to pay for hotel or motel; **OR**
 - Statement by youth that they cannot continue to stay at the place they have been; **AND** written or oral verification from owner or renter of housing obtained by intake worker **OR** documentation of intake worker's attempts to verify information;
- **And** documentation that the youth has no safe alternative housing, no financial or other resources, and no family or other support network which can be self-certified by the youth. This can be self-certification.

NOTE: If a youth is staying with friends or family the youth only needs to report to the intake worker that they cannot stay for more than 14 days. The youth should be assessed and enter into coordinated entry based on their self-certification. The intake worker may attempt to contact the friend or family, *if safe to do so*, and document verification or attempt to verify at a later date.

¹ Please note that the documentation requirements only apply to verifying homelessness for HUD programs. Other federal/state/local programs may apply different documentation rules.

Category 3 – Homeless under other Federal Statutes

- Certification of homeless status by the non-profit, or state or local government entity, responsible for administering homeless assistance under other federal statutes. Self-certification by the client is not sufficient; **AND**
- Certification by the youth that they have not had a lease or other agreement for housing in the last 60 days with written documentation (e.g., from an outreach worker or homeless liaison) **OR** documentation of intake worker's **attempts** to verify information; **AND**
- Certification by the youth that they have had two or more moves in the last 60 days with written documentation **OR** documentation of intake worker's **attempts** to verify information; **AND**
- Documentation of special needs (e.g., copy of SSI check, third party verification, direct observation) **OR** at least two barriers to employment

Category 4 – Fleeing Violence

For providers that are not victim service providers:

- Statement by youth that they are fleeing because of violence, or other unsafe situations; **AND**
- If the safety of the youth is not jeopardized, verification of the statement through written observation by the intake worker or staff at other organizations including law enforcement, housing or service provider, social worker, homeless liaison or legal assistance provider youth has sought assistance from **OR** documentation of intake worker's **attempts** to verify information and certification of the statement by the youth or intake worker; **AND**
- Youth's self-certification that the youth has no safe alternative housing, no financial or other resources, and no family or other support networks. The intake worker should obtain any available documentation or statements supporting the youth's certification.

For victim service providers:

- Statement by youth that they are fleeing domestic or other violence; **AND**
- Certification of the statement by the youth or intake worker; **AND**
- Youth's self-certification that the youth has no safe alternative housing, no financial or other resources, and no family or other support networks. The intake worker should obtain any available documentation or statements supporting the youth's certification.

NOTE: An intake worker should make **no attempt** to verify the unsafe situation if doing so would put the youth at any risk of harm – in these case the self-certification and a note in the file that verification would risk the youth's safety is all the documentation needed.

Also when documenting for category 4, the intake worker needs to ask only enough questions to know what is going on – they should rely on the youth's own statement about his or her feelings and concerns. If the youth indicates there is a safety risk then no further documentation of the safety risk is needed – the intake worker should simply document what the youth stated.