



## The Office of Homeless Youth Services 2016 Annual Report

### Executive Summary

The Colorado Department of Local Affairs Division of Housing is pleased to present the 2016 Annual Report for the Office of Homeless Youth Services (OHYS).

OHYS believes no youth should experience homelessness and therefore aims to prevent homelessness for youth when possible, and when not possible to prevent, to make homelessness episodes rare, brief, and non-recurring. Towards this goal, OHYS has adopted the federal strategic plan, *Opening Doors*, and Colorado's statewide plan, *Pathways Home Colorado*. Since its inception in 2002, OHYS has been a resource for and a coordinator of the efforts of public and private entities serving Colorado's homeless youth.<sup>1</sup> In alignment with §C.R.S. 24-32-723, OHYS has worked towards the goal to end youth homelessness by following these steps:

1. "Identify and remove obstacles to the provision of services" OHYS aims to address and prevent youth homelessness by improving the quality, availability, and accessibility of housing and supportive services for youth across Colorado. OHYS strives to increase stable housing options, create permanent connections, and increase youth development options specifically for this vulnerable population.
2. "Improve the quality of services provided to homeless youth" by providing leadership to the Advisory Council on Homeless Youth (ACHY). ACHY coordinates youth service providers and stakeholders across the state and leads statewide policy regarding youth homelessness. These efforts aid in coordinating goals and building partnerships to prevent youth homelessness whenever possible, and when not possible, to ensure episodes are rare, brief, and non-recurring.
3. "Reduce needless expenditures caused by the provision of overlapping services" by participating in the development of coordinated systems, such as the Youth Coordinated Assessment & Housing Placement System (CAHPS). CAHPS prioritizes homeless youth based on their vulnerability for available housing resources in the Denver Metro Area and for the Pikes Peak Continuum of Care. This helps to efficiently utilize the limited resources available and ensure the appropriate housing intervention is used when serving homeless youth.
4. "Identify funding resources available to entities serving homeless youth by sharing resources as they become available." For example, OHYS has supported each Continuum of Care in the completion of the Homeless Youth Demonstration Project Notice of Funding Availability applications. If awarded, the grant would provide the community with funds and access to HUD technical assistance to develop a Coordinated Community Plan for creating innovative solutions to youth homelessness. Ten communities will be selected across the nation.

While progress has been made, youth homelessness continues to be a crisis across Colorado. Federal partners have made this a priority and have set the goal to end this epidemic by 2020. OHYS anticipates increased federal resources to be allocated for this purpose. In the coming year, OHYS will continue to align with *Opening Doors* and *Pathways Home Colorado* to reduce instances of youth homelessness.

Sincerely,

  
Alison George, Director

Department of Local Affairs, Division of Housing



## **OHYS Background**

Established in 2002, the Office of Homeless Youth Services (OHYS) was created by the Colorado State Legislature with the Homeless Youth Services Act, House Bill 02-1159 §25-20.5-11. OHYS was first administered by the Department of Public Health and Environment, moved to the Colorado Department of Human Services in 2004 with House Bill 04-1107 §26-5.9-101 and again moved to Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) in 2011 with House Bill 11-1230 §24-32-723, where it continues to reside today. The primary intent of the original legislation was to respond to the unique needs of homeless youth by providing statewide coordination for the sharing of best practices and technical assistance to those who serve homeless youth across the state. OHYS continues to fill that role.

## **Youth Homelessness**

Nationally, 83,358 youth between the ages of 14-24 experienced homelessness on a single night in January 2016 during the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) annual Point in Time (PIT) count.<sup>ii</sup> HUD's PIT is a national count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons on a single night in January. This number represents youth counted and classified as individuals, parenting youth, and youth. Communities across the country use data collected during PIT to identify gaps and prioritize resources for persons experiencing homelessness. Children and youth comprise just over thirty percent of the total number of homeless individuals. In Colorado, the 2016 PIT identified 653 unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness.

The chart below uses data from *The 2016 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress* to demonstrate the disparity between housing resources for youth compared to other populations. As cited in AHAR, there were 37,964 homeless individuals counted nationally under the age of 25 (this is included in the overall youth number of 83,358)

It has been an ongoing concern that youth homelessness is underrepresented in the PIT count; strides have been made across the state to better capture accurate youth data across systems, and OHYS is leading this effort in Colorado. PIT data is important and useful in determining instances of homelessness during one point in time, however, the data is lacking, especially for youth. Youth are often referred to as the 'hidden homeless' because of how difficult it is to identify youth experiencing housing instability. Some reasons youth data is unrepresentative include: youth are wary of systems, embarrassed about their housing situation and unlikely to seek services, afraid of county/police involvement, and/or possibly do not consider themselves homeless.

While Colorado's PIT counted 653 homeless unaccompanied youth, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) found that 24,685 students experienced homelessness, 2,052 of which were identified as unaccompanied in 2014-2015 school year. The number comparison between the PIT count data and McKinney Vento data differ due to two main reasons: data capture methodology and homeless definitions. CDE captures instances of homelessness for youth who are currently enrolled in school and compiles this data over the course of the entire school year. HUD's PIT survey reflects the number of homeless individuals on a single night, and may be more likely to capture older youth who are not enrolled in school. Secondly, CDE identifies students who are temporarily staying with family or friends as homeless, whereas the PIT regards literal homelessness as living in shelters or on the streets.

## **Impacts of Homelessness**

Homelessness has significant negative impacts on the current and future well-being of individuals, particularly those who experience it at a young age. *Opening Doors*, the federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness, explains

that youth often leave home as a result of a severe family conflict, which may include physical and/or sexual abuse.<sup>iii</sup> Many unaccompanied youth who experience homelessness have significant experience with trauma and higher than average Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). A high number of ACEs have been linked to risky health behaviors, such as drinking or using drugs, chronic health conditions, such as cancer and heart disease, and even early death.<sup>iv</sup> Research also shows a high prevalence of depression, suicide initiations, and other mental health disorders among youth who are homeless. Some groups of youth are particularly vulnerable and over-represented among youth who experience homelessness. These subpopulations include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth, pregnant and parenting youth, youth involved with juvenile justice and child welfare systems, children with disabilities, and victims of human trafficking and exploitation.

### **OHYS Initiatives**

In the past year, OHYS has led or participated in many initiatives with key partner agencies to provide varied interventions tailored to the unique needs of homeless youth. OHYS statutory requirements include:

- A. To provide information, coordination, and technical assistance as may be necessary to reduce needless expenditures associated with the provision of overlapping services and to improve the quality of services provided to homeless youth;
- B. To identify both procedural and substantive obstacles to the provision of services and to make recommendations to the entities specified in this section concerning procedural, regulatory, or statutory changes necessary to remove such obstacles;
- C. To obtain information from service providers concerning known services available for the homeless youth population in the state of Colorado and to post such information on a website on the internet;
- D. To develop, maintain, and make available a listing of all rights and organizations that may be relevant to the homeless youth population in the state of Colorado, including but not limited to a listing of legal, educational, and victims' rights and organizations related thereto;
- E. To obtain information concerning known funding sources available for the homeless youth population in the state of Colorado;
- F. To work with entities to identify issues concerning sharing of information in providing services to homeless youth and to facilitate resolution of such information-sharing issues; and

Please refer to Table 1 (below), which identifies ways in which OHYS's current initiatives directly satisfy the statutory requirements listed above. Additional information regarding each initiative is described after the table.

Table 1: OHYS Initiatives Which Satisfy Statutory Requirements						
Current Initiatives	House Bill 1230 Statutory Requirements					
	A	B	C	D	E	F
Advisory Council for Homeless Youth (ACHY)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Colorado Statewide Youth Development Plan	✓	✓				✓
DOH Next Step Tenant Based Rental Assistance Program	✓	✓			✓	
Family Unification Program (FUP)	✓	✓			✓	
Family Unification Program Family Self Sufficiency Demonstration (FUP FSS)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Pathways Home Permanent Supportive Housing Toolkit	✓				✓	
Pathways to Success Colorado	✓	✓				
Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) Youth Bonus Expansion	✓	✓			✓	✓
Point in Time (PIT) Youth Count	✓					
Rural Collaborative on Homeless Youth (Rural Collaborative)	✓	✓	✓			✓
State Fiscal Mapping	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Various Meeting Representation				✓		
Youth Coordinated Assessment and Housing Placement System	✓	✓				✓

**Advisory Council for Homeless Youth (ACHY):** Led by OHYS, ACHY was created to assist with the implementation of the Homeless Youth Services Act and is made up of key stakeholders who represent federal, state and local governments, non-profit service agencies, faith based organizations, foundations, and homeless/formerly homeless youth to coordinate youth services and drive statewide policies to end youth homelessness. This group meets quarterly to develop and implement the Colorado Homeless Youth Action Plan. On November 29, 2016, all ACHY stakeholders met to discuss group structure, missing partners, and goals. This time was valuable to reassess purpose, resources, and outcomes of the implementation of the Colorado Homeless Youth Action Plan. Specifically, during the 2016 retreat, an analysis of the group was completed and new partners were suggested to create a more robust representation for new resources and new communities.

**Colorado Statewide Youth Development Plan:** Created by the Colorado Office of Children, Youth and Families, Division of Child Welfare, Statewide Youth Development Plan is a guide for utilizing Positive Youth Development as an intervention for youth ages 9 to 25 to help them achieve their full potential.<sup>v</sup> The Statewide Youth Development Plan aims to improve systems and policies that impact youth through eleven recommendations ranging from ‘developing a sustainable funding source to support Colorado’s youth system’ to ‘strengthening strategies for a youth friendly health system’. Recommendation eight, is specifically focused on “improving the quality, availability, and accessibility of housing, services, supports, and relationships to provide solutions to youth who are experiencing or are at risk of experiencing homelessness statewide.” OHYS participates on the Planning Committee and provides expertise on issues surrounding youth homelessness.

**Division of Housing Next Step Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) Program:** TBRA is a rental subsidy that helps make up the difference between what a renter can afford to pay and the actual rent for a home. TBRA grantees provide rental assistance and supportive case management services for families with school-aged children identified as homeless by a McKinney Vento Liaison. Intensive case management for families in this program addresses the causes of their homelessness and leads toward a higher degree of self-sufficiency and academic stability with the goal of permanent housing at the end of the program. There are currently six Next Step programs across the state, which can provide housing assistance to 108 households.

**Family Unification Program (FUP):** FUP utilizes Housing Choice Vouchers to serve two target populations: 1) families for whom the lack of adequate housing is a primary factor in the imminent placement of the family's child or children in foster care, or the delay in the discharge of the child or children to the family from foster care; 2) youth at least 18 years old and not more than 24 years old who left foster care at age 16 or older and who lack adequate housing.<sup>vi</sup> Through OHYS, the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) administers up to 151 transitional housing vouchers annually for youth 18-24 years old who are transitioning out of foster care and lack adequate housing. Community partners provide supportive services to program participants to ensure successful transitions for homeless youth moving into independent living.

**Family Unification Program Family Self-Sufficiency Demonstration (FUP FSS):** The FUP FSS program launched in December 2016 and would allow anyone with a current FUP Youth voucher to voluntarily enroll, adding five years to their voucher and giving them the possibility to save money through a DOH escrow account. A deposit into the DOH escrow account would occur when the youth experienced an increase in earned income, providing a benefit for youth to keep and maintain employment, ensuring stability for when they reach their term limit.

**Pathways Home Permanent Supportive Housing Toolkit:** Created by Governor Hickenlooper's Office, the Colorado Division of Housing, LeBeau Development LLC, Colorado Housing and Finance Authority, and the Enterprise Community Foundation. The Toolkit provides participants the tools they need to develop permanent supportive housing in their community. Six youth focused or youth included projects have gone through the Toolkit, these communities include: Attention Homes, Karis Inc. (The House), La Plata County, Rural Collaborative, Urban Peak (Colorado Springs), and Urban Peak (Denver).

**Pathways to Success Colorado:** Pathways to success is a project funded through the Administration for Children and Families and is intended to eliminate homelessness among youth adults who have experienced foster care. The project is currently in the implementation phase and includes seven demonstration sites: Attention Homes, Boulder County, Denver County, Fremont County, Shiloh House, Urban Peak, and Weld County. During the implementation phase, a formative evaluation is being conducted, utilizing a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) phase to monitor and refine the model intervention to ensure desired outcomes are achieved. Pathways to Success is led by the Office of Children, Youth & Families, Division of Child Welfare, OHYS is a sub-recipient of this federal award and has taken the lead in creating the housing component of the program.

**Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) Bonus Expansion- Youth:** DOLA was awarded funding for a new youth expansion program through the annual HUD Continuum of Care (CoC) Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) process. The expansion is a scattered site tenant based voucher program that will serve 33 chronically homeless youth (ages 18-24). The program will include both supportive services and non-time limited housing subsidies for all project participants. The program utilizes the region's Youth Coordinated Assessment and Housing Placement System (Y-CAHPS) in order to identify and house the most vulnerable homeless youth.

**Point in Time (PIT) Count:** HUD's PIT is a national count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons on a single night in January.<sup>vii</sup> Communities across the country use data collected to identify gaps and prioritize resources for persons experiencing homelessness. OHYS has assisted with providing information and training to help communities develop key partnerships, reduce barriers to participation, and planning to develop efficient, accurate methods for counting homeless youth statewide.

**Rural Collaborative on Homeless Youth (Rural Collaborative):** The Rural Collaborative is a work group comprised of homeless service providers across the state that work to address the unique challenges faced by homeless youth in rural

communities. In addition, OHYS has partnered with the Rural Collaborative to share best practices and creatively work to better capture accurate PIT data in non-urban areas throughout the state.

*State Fiscal Mapping:* Created by the Colorado Office of Children, Youth and Families, Division of Child Welfare, the Fiscal Mapping Project captures all Statewide funding resources that provide a benefit to youth between the ages of 9-25. The Division of Housing has worked diligently to provide information on all housing programs eligible to youth over 18.

*Various Meeting Representations:* OHYS attends several meetings to ensure the specific needs of homeless youth are being considered and addressed. These meetings include Behavioral Health Transformation Council & Under 26 Group, SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR), and Federal Regional Council of Government for Region VIII.

*Youth Coordinated Assessment and Housing Placement System (Y-CAHPS):* OHYS participated in the development and ongoing roll out of Y-CAHPS. Y-CAHPS prioritizes homeless youth based on their vulnerability for available housing resources in the Denver Metro Area and Colorado Springs area. This helps to efficiently utilize the limited resources available and ensure appropriate housing intervention is used when serving homeless youth.

### **Current Youth Bed Inventory and Criteria**

*Attention Homes:* Attention Homes offers two programs for youth in crisis: Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) and Adolescent Residential Care (RES). The RHY program provides street outreach, day drop in, and overnight emergency shelter services. The RES program is a state licensed Residential Child Care Facility that offers emotional and behavioral support in a safe, structured, home-like setting to at-risk youth. Attention Homes serves youth between the ages of 12-24. In addition to the current programs offered, Attention Homes has been a participant of the Governor's Pathways Toolkit. Through this toolkit, Attention Homes is in the process of building Boulder's first non-time limited supportive housing community for transition aged youth. Construction is expected to begin in quarter four of 2017.

*Family Unification Program (FUP):* The Colorado Division of Housing contracts with seven agencies across Colorado to locally administer 151 Youth FUP Vouchers. These agencies cover twelve counties: Adams, Arapahoe, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, Fremont, El Paso, Jefferson, La Plata, Mesa, Pueblo, and Weld. To be enrolled, youth must have been in paid placement one day past their sixteenth birthday, undergo a Colorado background check and national sex offender registry search, and the required paperwork to apply. Youth cannot be over the age of 24 at time of HAP Contract signing.

*Hope House:* Hope House of Colorado has a residential program "offering safe, stable housing for single teen moms and their children who are homeless or living in an unsafe environment."<sup>viii</sup> Hope House's residential program is located in Arvada and can house six parenting teens.

*The House:* The House is managed in Mesa County by Karis, Inc. The House has the capacity to serve 8-16 teens at any given time. While staying at the facility teens will have access to medical care, counseling, and transition support. Teens are allowed to stay up to three weeks and must be between the ages of 15-21.

*Urban Peak Denver and Colorado Springs:* "Urban Peak owns three apartment complexes and operates multiple housing programs throughout Denver designed to meet the distinct needs of youth, including: treatment for substance abuse and mental illness, or independent living skills for youth who are exiting the streets or child welfare services. Altogether, Urban Peak manages approximately 120 housing units for youth annually"<sup>ix</sup>.

*Volunteers of America Bannock Youth and Family Center:* "The Youth and Young Families program provides case management and permanent housing support for homeless youth and their families. Single males, single male parents, LGBTQ welcome." <sup>x</sup> Eligibility requirements include: age (between 16-24 years old), income, vital documents, homeless verification, and referral from a local homeless shelter or direct service provider.

### Continued Progress

In the coming year, OHYS plans to continue with the initiatives listed above. In addition, OHYS will prioritize evaluation and implementation of improved processes to most accurately capture comprehensive data throughout the state, as the current methodology appears not to accurately capture instances of youth homelessness. The scope of the problem must be better established in order to end youth homelessness by 2020. OHYS is committed to continuing efforts to better coordinate services to ensure youth are connected with appropriate resources. This will include coordinating and integrating youth providers with the larger matrix of service providers across the state. OHYS will coordinate the effort to bring new resources to Colorado by expanding current initiatives and continuing to act as a community resource.

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<sup>i</sup> Colorado House Bill 02-1159, Colorado General Assembly,

[http://www.leg.state.co.us/2002a/inetcbill.nsf/billcontainers/DBCA307F8E06294187256B060070B355/\\$FILE/1159\\_enr.pdf](http://www.leg.state.co.us/2002a/inetcbill.nsf/billcontainers/DBCA307F8E06294187256B060070B355/$FILE/1159_enr.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> The 2016 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2016-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Opening Doors, Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness,

[https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset\\_library/USICH\\_OpeningDoors\\_Amendment2015\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/USICH_OpeningDoors_Amendment2015_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, About Adverse Childhood Experiences,

[https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about\\_ace.html](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about_ace.html)

<sup>v</sup> Colorado Statewide Youth Development Plan, <https://sites.google.com/a/state.co.us/cdhs-dcw/collaborations-initiatives/colorado-statewide-youth-development-plan>

<sup>vi</sup> Family Unification Program, HUD,

[http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/hcv/family](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/family)

<sup>vii</sup> PIT and HIC guides, HUD, [www.hudexchange.info/hdx/guides/pit-hic/](http://www.hudexchange.info/hdx/guides/pit-hic/)

<sup>viii</sup> <http://www.hopehouseofcolorado.org/index.cfm/id/14/Our-Programs/>

<sup>ix</sup> Urban Peak Impact Report 2015, October 1, 2014-September 30, 2015

<sup>x</sup> <https://www.voacolorado.org/gethelp-denvermetro-ryes-youth>