

**Southern Nevada Homelessness Continuum of Care  
Youth Working Group**

Tuesday, February 23, 2021 | 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

*Zoom Teleconference*

Champions: Arash Ghafoori and Melissa Jacobowitz, Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth

**I. Welcome & Introductions**

The following Youth Working Group Members were at the meeting and introduced themselves: Arash Ghafoori (NPHY); Melissa Jacobowitz (NPHY); Allison Steinzor (NPHY); Hassan Chaudhry (Foresight Housing Partners); Brenda Herbstman (CCSS); Catherine Huang Hara (CCSS); Danita Osborne (CCSS); Meg Pike (CCSD); Kim Moore (HELP) Celeste Williams (HELP); Denise Charles (St. Jude's Ranch); Ketra Johnson (St. Jude's Ranch); Dr. Ray MacFarlane (The Center/BrightStar Foundation); Nora Saldivar (BitFocus); Joseph Taylor (Step UP); Jaymie Junsay (Legal Aid); Taisacan Hall (Young Adults in Charge); Najea Rogers (City of Las Vegas); Andrea Martinez (Nevada 95); Felipe Silva (Nevada 95); Summer Thomas (UNLV student/DFS).

**II. Funding Opportunities**

Ms. Herbstman provided an overview of funding opportunities. First, she mentioned that the County is working with the Southern Nevada Housing Authority to set up a housing voucher program for former foster youth. Under the foster youth initiative, 25 housing vouchers would be reserved for former foster youth, ages 18 – 24. StepUP will monitor the process under this project and provide move-in assistance; however, agencies who refer youth to this program would be responsible for providing up to 36 months of case management support. Mr. Ghafoori asked whether coordinated entry would be a part of this process; Ms. Herbstman replied that referrals will go through the coordinated entry process with the most vulnerable youth prioritized for the program. The application for this program is expected to be submitted in April of 2021.

Ms. Herbstman also mentioned that Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) program applications are anticipated to open in late spring/early summer. Currently, Clark County manages RHY programs including TLP/MGH and SOP. In the future, pass-through grants will not be allowed for RHY projects and agencies will need to apply directly for assistance. However, Clark County may be able to assist by reviewing and/or writing proposal requests. She mentioned that generally projects must have a score of 99% or higher to be awarded RHY funding.

Lastly, she mentioned that the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project (YHDP) is anticipated to be released in the spring as well. This would be the fourth round of the YHDP grant, and it is expected that \$217M will be awarded to 150 communities. While our CoC has applied multiple times, receiving a high score, this opportunity is extremely competitive. It was suggested that YWG members attend CEWG meetings to discuss concerns with the youth coordinated entry system and that efforts to uplift youth voices be strengthened to assist our community in raising our application score. Mr. Ghafoori explained that NPHY is working on an approach to youth coordinated entry concerns. Ms. Herbstman also recommended that past

applications be reviewed so the community can determine how to best improve the next application.

### III. Young Adults in Charge (YAC) Updates

Ms. Hall informed the YWG that the Southern Nevada Homelessness Continuum of Care (CoC) youth action board, Young Adults in Charge (YAC), has been reviewing bill drafts for the 2021 legislative session regarding how to support youth experiencing homelessness, revising their membership handbook, and are working with Clark County on a compensation plan for YAC members. They have submitted spreadsheets to the CoC of activities they have participated in to receive retroactive payment and are working to develop a protocol on how the group may be compensated moving forward. Additionally, YAC is working with the NPHY Ambassadors youth leadership group on an educational campaign on how the community can respond to the needs of homeless youth during COVID-19. Ms. Jacobowitz suggested that Ms. Herbstman review the YAC compensation plan budget to discover how YAC activities could be included in the YHDP proposal. Ms. Herbstman replied that 3% of YHDP's budget can be used for planning efforts, which could be used to support YAC.

### IV. COVID-19 Provider Updates

Mr. Ghafoori stated that all programs at NPHY are operational but have adopted modifications. NPHY has discontinued in-person volunteer activities in favor of virtual/remote volunteering. NPHY is exploring post-vaccination plans in following recommendations from the Governor.

Ms. Moore explained that HELP's SWHYC experienced challenges but has made updates to their policies and procedures. If youth exhibit symptoms they are brought to a COVID testing site and while they await results they are housed in HELP's isolation unit and HELP performs contract tracing. Currently, HELP is working on an educational campaign to help youth reduce the chance of spreading illness and reduce hesitancy regarding vaccines. HELP is utilizing virtual volunteering as well. Ms. Williams mentioned that she oversees two programs at HELP, the Maternity Group Homes (MGH) program and the TH/RRH program under CCHIP (case managers have accepted referrals for the TH/RRH program but a peer support specialist needs to be hired.)

Ms. Charles explained that St. Jude's has made changes to how they are offering case management, scheduling appointments in the office, and doing virtual or in-person case management visits. They have recently opened their Drop-In Center, which is available to homeless youth between the ages of 18 – 25. Their Drop-In Center also has a care shop inside of the facility where basic needs resources are distributed to youth. St. Jude's is working on hiring case managers and the housing navigator for the CCHIP TH/RHH program and is accepting referrals.

Ms. Pike stated that the CCSD has developed plans for students in pre-K – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade returning to school two days per week; three cohorts will be launched under this initiative. Title I HOPE is working on providing transportation to youth (including RTC bus passes) and distributing

backpacks to students. Assistance League is helping with distributing clothing to students via attendance officers. CCSD has been performing focus groups and counselors are exploring means of how to make schooling more student-friendly.

Dr. MacFarlane explained that the BrightStar Foundation provides emergency youth services to young people ages 18 – 25. They are currently working on hiring a full-time entry-level specialist to do on-the-ground work. On March 1<sup>st</sup> BrightStar will be opening their third housing building and the fourth building is anticipated to open in the coming months. These housing facilities are affordable housing units that are LGBTQIA friendly. These housing units are not subsidized by vouchers but they rent out the units at a low-cost rate (\$400-500 per month) and have individual bedrooms. BrightStar also provides emergency services to youth (such as grocery cards, bus passes, and transportation to supportive family members).

Mr. Taylor mentioned that the Dept. of Family Services has started a partnership with MGM to employ current and former foster youth. He also explained that through the Supporting Foster Families through the Pandemic Act that there is greater flexibility for youth aging out of foster care, as during COVID they can stay in the foster care system beyond the age of 18 and/or re-enter the foster care system. Additionally, they have taken notice the majority of HIV cases are young adults so they are partnering in the Ending the HIV Epidemic Funding initiative; Clark County will be implementing the program, similar to StepUP, providing medical assistance and more through this program. The program is expected to launch this summer. Regarding COVID, the StepUP Drop-In Center remains closed, staff are working remotely, building modifications have been conducted, and they have undergone heightened cleaning.

Ms. Junsay stated that the Legal Aid Center's Children's Attorney Project is close to launching an app of resources for young people (RISE Las Vegas). They will be releasing educational materials shortly: the app is intended for youth aging out of foster care.

Ms. Huang Hara stated that Clark County Social Service offices are still closed with staff working from home remotely. The main hotline is available to assist individuals in obtaining benefits. Clark County is working on Operation Home efforts to assist people in getting into housing. Clark County will be launching the CCHIP program soon.

#### A. Vaccination Plan for Youth

Mr. Ghafouri mentioned that vaccination plans have been rolled out, and young people experiencing homelessness will take priority over the general youth population. NPHY is working to launch an educational campaign to share the benefits of being vaccinated with homeless young people, stating youth should be part of developing this campaign too. NPHY has provided educational materials and resources from HUD and the CDC to youth and staff. He explained that when youth become eligible for vaccinations the community should work to limit barriers for youth to obtain the vaccine (such as providing transportation, limited waiting times, etc.). A statewide policy could be helpful.

Mr. Ghafoori recommended that youth homelessness service providers collaborate on this effort, suggesting that youth providers bring concerns to the Health District and work towards scheduling a vaccination date and site for homeless youth to receive vaccinations. Ms. Jacobowitz emphasized that the vaccination site should be at a location in which youth already feel comfortable, such as a homeless youth provider site. Ms. Hall recommended that young people work with the Health District directly to present information, and/or arrange a focus group for youth on this effort with providers referring youth to take part. Ms. Martinez stated that N95 is eager to be part of this process. Ms. Moore stated that she will speak to a SNHD representative next week regarding a youth vaccination site. Ms. Pike expressed that schools could potentially serve as vaccination sites. Regarding the vaccines, Ms. Jacobowitz mentioned that different vaccines have different age requirements (Pfizer is 16 and older while Moderna is 18 and over). It was mentioned that youth over the age of 18 would be able to get vaccines on their own but minors obtaining vaccinations without parental consent could be a challenge as it would need to be figured out who could sign off (e.g. DFS, JJS, etc.). It was mentioned that this matter would need to be discussed with the Health District for clarification. The group discussed the possibility of Nevada 95 working with youth groups on a statewide education campaign on COVID-19 vaccinations for a variety of vulnerable youth populations to increase health outcomes.

#### V. CCHIP (Youth TH-RRH Project)

Mr. Ghafoori briefly mentioned that Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth, HELP of Southern Nevada, and St. Jude's Ranch for Children were selected as grantees to launch a transitional housing/rapid re-housing (TH-RRH) project for homeless young people. St. Jude's and HELP are currently housing youth under this new project, while NPHY is in the midst of implementation. Clark County is the project lead for this five-year program.

#### VI. Policy Update

This agenda topic was pended until the next YWG meeting.

#### VII. Training Opportunities

##### A. True Colors United: [True Colors Fellows Training](#) "Youth Collaboration"

1. Friday, March 12; 1-3 pm EST & Monday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2-4 pm EST

Ms. Hall stated that she is a member of True Colors United's True Colors Fellowship. So far, the True Colors fellows have hosted two training opportunities. Ms. Hall expressed that the Youth Collaboration training will incorporate an interactive format, explaining what works and doesn't work for collaborating with young people.

#### VIII. Open Discussion

Ms. Martinez and Mr. Silva introduced themselves stating they are the new project leads for the Nevada 95 (N95) project lead by the Guinn Center. The N95 project is dedicated to connecting

and strengthening youth leadership groups in Southern and Northern Nevada. They expressed they would be interested in connecting with youth in the future to work on efforts related to the N95 project, such as housing, mental health, and health access for young people.

#### IX. Adjournment

The YWG meeting was adjourned at 11:02 a.m.; the next YWG will take place on Tuesday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.