

6.04 Cutting Off the Pipeline to Youth Homelessness



June 30–July 2, 2025 🌞 Washington, D.C. 🌞 #NAEH2025

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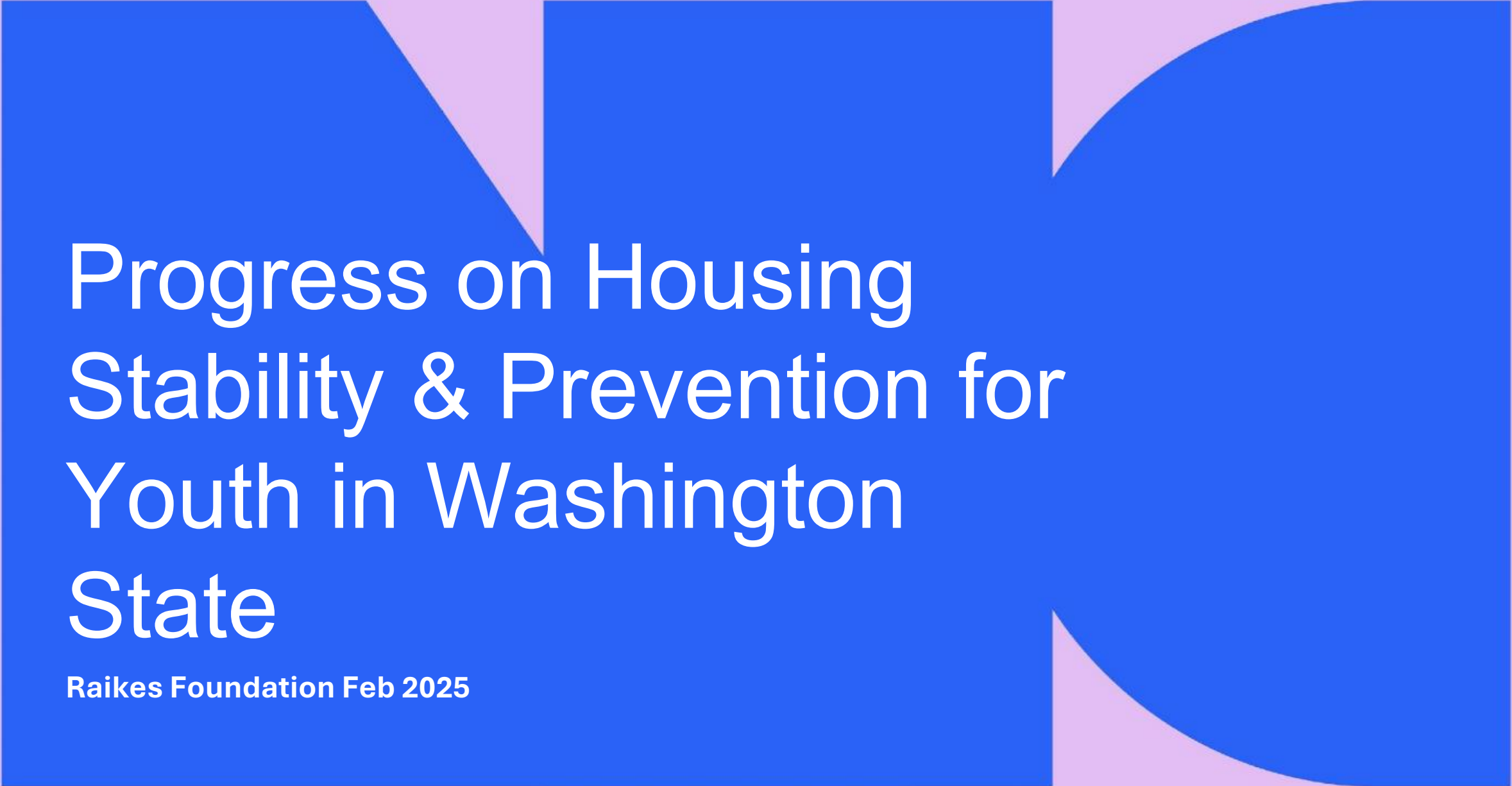
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What does it take to prevent youth homelessness before it starts? And when youth do become homeless, how can we prevent it from happening again? This session will dive into innovative, data-informed strategies communities are using to stabilize young people early and support their long-term self-sufficiency.





Progress on Housing Stability & Prevention for Youth in Washington State

Raikes Foundation Feb 2025

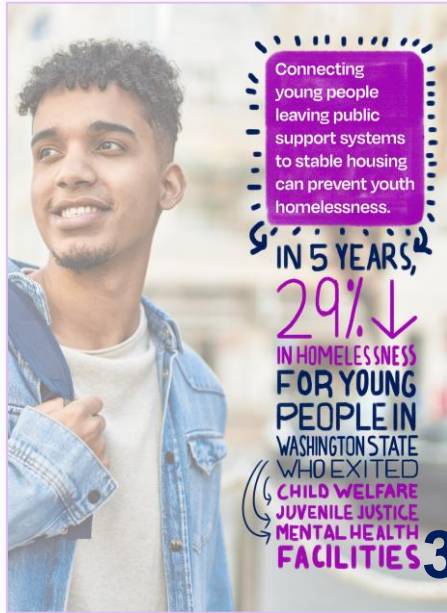
Prevention, Student Homelessness, & Crisis Response Showing “Staggering Results”



The Seattle Times

WA’s ‘one of a kind’ youth homelessness response shows big results

Over the last decade, Washington state has built from nearly nothing a uniquely robust youth homeless response system that is showing staggering results.



Overall Decline: Unaccompanied Youth Homelessness

Washington state's change efforts led to a 40% decline in the total number of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness.

The Office of Homeless Youth began operating in 2016, and numerous policies and funding allocations helped drive this progress between 2016 and 2022.

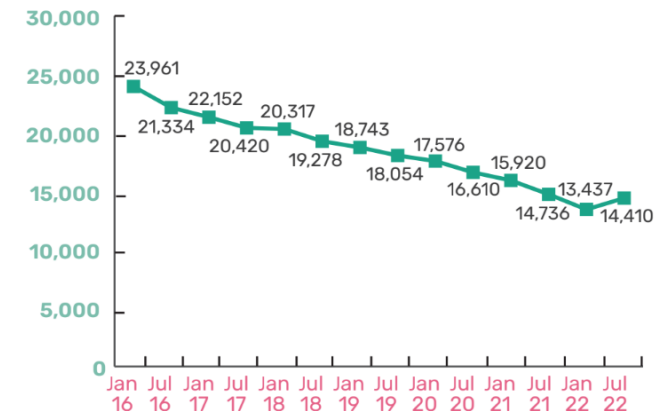
Source: [Yes to Yes Report](#) (February 2024)

Down 40%

Decrease in number of unaccompanied youth/young adults experiencing homelessness from 2016 to 2022. This means 10,000 fewer youth were experiencing homelessness in 2022.

Data Over Time

Number of Unaccompanied Youth and Young Adults Experiencing Homelessness and Housing Instability, 2016-2022



Data Source: Department of Commerce Snapshot of Homelessness Reports.

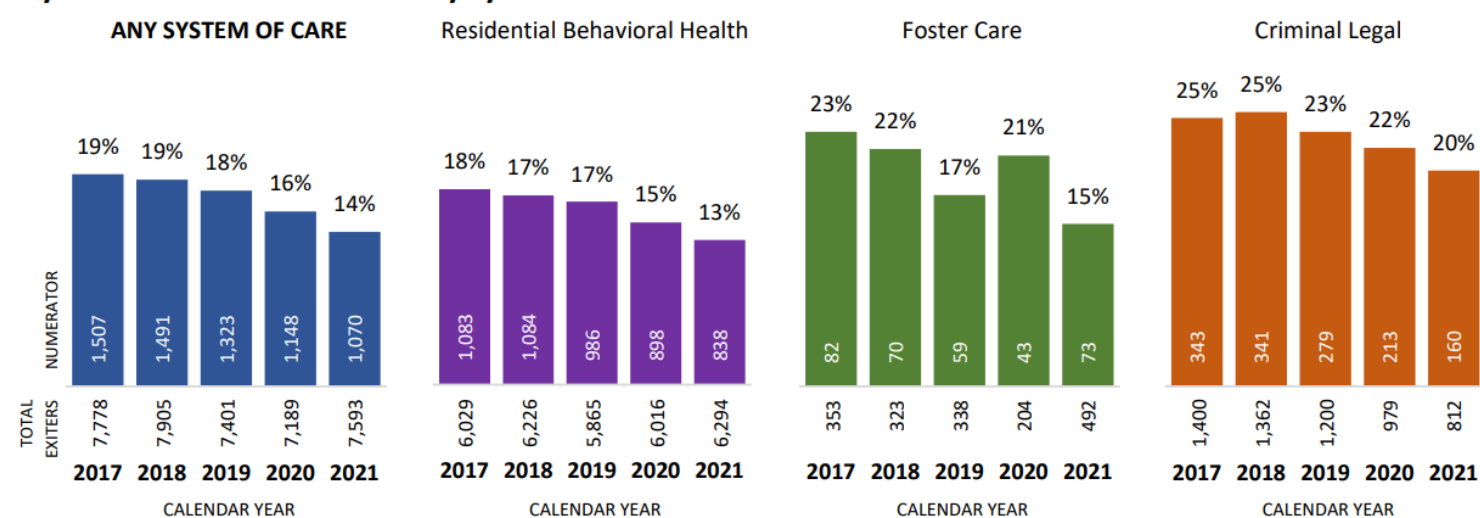
Prevention: Youth Exiting Systems of Care Experiencing More Housing Stability

Policies passed by the Washington State Legislature and new programs funded by the state and philanthropy helped lead to a massive decrease in the number and percentage of youth who experienced homelessness after exiting behavioral health, justice or foster care programs.

Down 29%

Decrease in # and % of unaccompanied youth/young adults experiencing homelessness after exiting a system of care from 2017 to 2021. All three systems saw declines.

5-year trend in homelessness by system of care . . .



Source:

<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/research-11-254.pdf>

Student Homelessness

The connections between academic success and effective efforts to address homelessness and housing instability are clear.

Washington state's change efforts led to a 37% increase in graduation rates for students experiencing homelessness.

Between 2014 and 2023, Washington narrowed the graduation gap between students experiencing homelessness and their housed peers by almost a third.

Source: Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) Report Card:
<https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/>

Up 37%

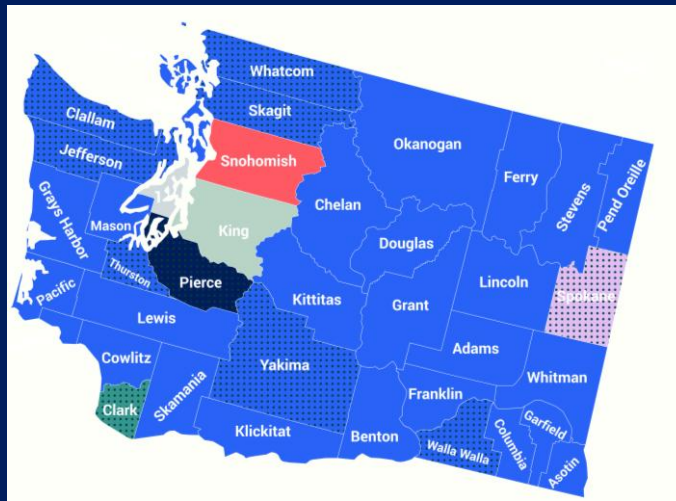
Increase in graduation rates for students experiencing homelessness from 2014 to 2023.

Gap decreased by 10 percentage pts

The graduation rate gap between students experiencing homelessness and their housed peers narrowed by 10 percentage points, from 33 points in 2014 to 23 points in 2023.

More Funding and Better Access to Services

Now, all but one county has access to federal or state funding for youth homelessness services. Federal and state funding dramatically increased through Office of Homeless Youth, Homeless Student Stability Program (state) and Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project (federal).



94% Coverage

All but one county now have services for youth experiencing homelessness. Prevention services have also dramatically increased.

Gap decreased by 10 percentage pts

The graduation rate gap between students experiencing homelessness and their housed peers narrowed by 10 percentage points, from 33 points in 2014 to 23 points in 2023.

Enabling Environments: *What we've learned*

Three main “ingredients” are necessary to make significant and sustained progress and to build “proof points” that can be scaled to meet the need



Inside-Outside Strategy

There is a clear public sector person or team, a unified external coalition, and a shared comprehensive plan/strategy to prevent and end youth homelessness.

Ex: WA Office of Homeless Youth & external partner advocate for a shared vision



Actionable Data

Reliable and useable data to identify those experiencing YYAH (*by name in local settings*), updated monthly, can be disaggregated, measures outcomes by intervention, and accounts for how and why young people become homeless.

Ex: WA state data shows number and trend of youth homelessness, by race, shows systems from which they exit, and points to successful interventions



Data-Driven Practices

Using data, multidisciplinary teams, including young people, targeted flexible resources to meet the individualized needs of youth, with racial and LGBTQ equity centered. Communities use data to learn and improve service delivery.

Ex: WA uses data, works with Youth Advisory Board, employs flexible funds to address youth homelessness, while providing community level data to adjust system.

More Learnings: *Four Different Approaches Key*

Community ownership matters, but communities can't make change alone – and neither can funders. Collaboration is needed between government, funders, providers, advocates, and young people.

Prevention Efforts Work

Preventing youth from experiencing homelessness by building supports within communities, schools, and public systems works.

Homelessness Intervention Raises Graduation Rates

Increased support for students experiencing homelessness leads to increased graduation rates.

Crisis Response is Essential

Ending youth homelessness starts with data-driven strategies and supports. To do this effectively, data must inform the response.

Field Building Leads to Systems Change

Organizing field leaders to support policy development and adequate funding results in proven solutions and the scaling of successful coordinated community systems.

State Prevention Policies

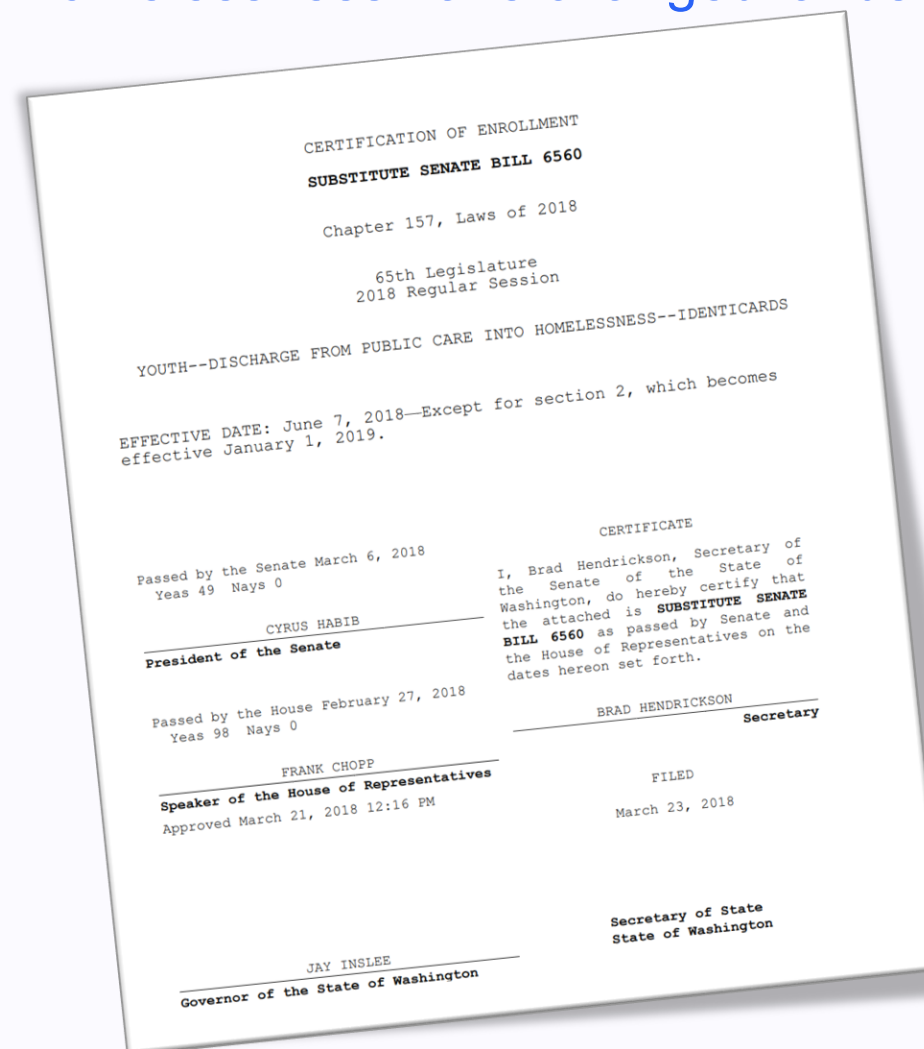
Bills/plans to prioritize prevention & eliminate exits to homelessness have changed landscape

Plans & Policies Transformed Focus

- Law prioritized eliminating exits from systems of care into homelessness (and later provided funding)
- Another law required development of prevention plans

State Planning/Coordination through OHY

- Community of Practice helping across the state
- Youth and Youth Adult Housing Response Team (YYAHRT), team of relevant state agencies working together on acute cases of young people leaving systems of care.
- OHY launching new prevention planning process



State Prevention Programs

Much of the Prevention Efforts Happening at the State Level

Expansion of prevention programs

- There are now [26 publicly funded prevention programs](#) throughout the state (41 if HSSP is included) in 17/39 counties.

Specific programs

- Flexible funding for youth & young adults exiting systems of care: Youth Diversion Infrastructure Project (YDIP)
 - Based on the Centralized Diversion Fund model
- Housing Stability for Youth in Courts (H-SYNC)
 - Intervention which proactively identifies juvenile court involved youth/families who may be at-risk of homeless
- Systems of Care (SOC)
 - Community-based services that prevent youth from exiting a publicly funded system of care into homelessness



State Prevention Programs, cont'd

More targeted programs

More data-driven programs

- Homelessness Prevention & Diversion Fund (HPDF)
 - No-wrong-door diversion flex fund that addresses financial barriers directly in the way of both traditional and creative housing solutions.
- Lifeline Support System
 - Central access point for young people, who are exiting or have recently exited from a system of care, seeking concrete resources and navigation to overcome life challenges that could escalate into crises if left unaddressed
- The Bridge
 - Two 6-10 bed 90-day residential programs focused on effectively transitioning young adults from inpatient care back into their communities
- Legal services
 - Legal services for young people are embedded within numerous programs

FIGURE 2 Housing Retention Rates of Young People Served by the HPDF, 2023-24

Almost all young people served by the HPDF stay housed.



\$2,659
HPDF



\$4,318
Emergency Shelter⁸

Source:
<https://northstaradvocates.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/HPDF-Report-Final-1-29-25.pdf>

\$10,114
Rapid Re-housing⁹

Local Prevention Efforts

King County approaching a full array of prevention interventions

School-Based

- *Upstream* launched with Freshman cohort at Seattle Public Schools (Rainier Beach High School) - will test for other outcomes beyond youth homelessness including violence reduction

Flexible funding and wraparound teams

- Prevention Youth Engagement Team (PYET wraparound team) now federally funded
- Youth and Young Adult Eviction Prevention and Rent Assistance Program.
- Foster Youth to Independence Vouchers (128 at Seattle and King County Housing Authorities).

Systems of Care

- H-SYNC (Housing Stability for Youth in Crisis program for youth exiting justice system)
- Youth Diversion Infrastructure Project expanding to King County – flexible funding and diversion for systems-involved youth
- Youth Villages (YV) Lifeset. Enhanced case management for youth in foster care system

Coordinated Prevention Effort

- Fortifying Futures for Our Youth Project intended to build system without youth incarceration or homelessness.

Making the Case For Scaling

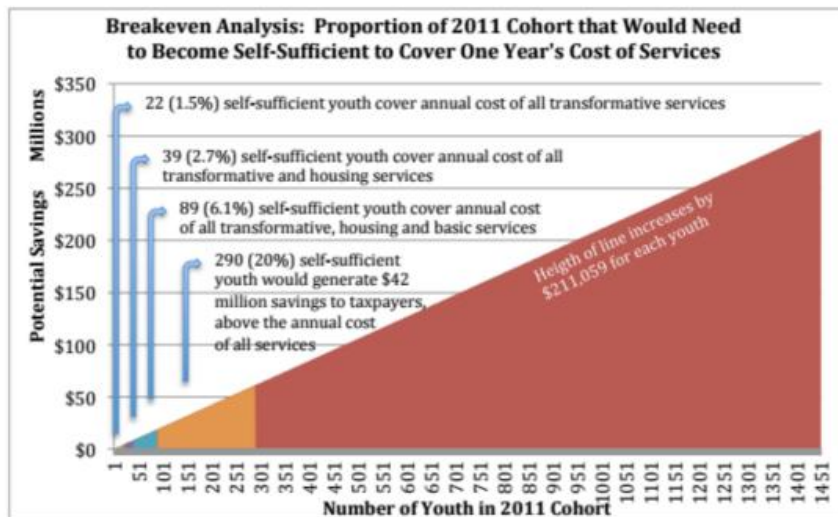
What Arguments Will Resonate With Policymakers?

Return on Investment

MINNPOST

Investing in prevention and transition of homeless youth pays off

By Heather Huseby and Andrea Lubov | 05/05/16



Minnesota study found lifetime net savings of \$861k/young person by ending their experience of homelessness. Applied to WA, that's \$8.61 billion lifetime (gross) savings for each cohort of 10k youth whose homelessness was prevented/ended.

Youth homelessness is the single most common pathway into adult homelessness, pointing to the importance of early intervention with youth at risk of or currently experiencing homelessness (Chamberlain & Johnson, 2013).

Preventing Adult Homelessness

Pathways into adult homelessness

[Chris Chamberlain](#) and [Guy Johnson](#) [View all authors and affiliations](#)

[Volume 49, Issue 1](#) | <https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783311422458>

This article uses information from a large administrative database ($N = 3941$) to outline five ideal typical pathways into adult homelessness. The pathways are called 'housing crisis', 'family breakdown', 'substance abuse', 'mental health' and 'youth to adult'. Then we explain why people on some pathways remain homeless for longer than others. People on a housing crisis or family breakdown pathway do not form strong friendships in the homeless subculture or accept homelessness as a way of life. Their homelessness is shorter. In contrast, people on the substance abuse and youth to adult pathways often become involved in the homeless subculture and engage in social practices that make it difficult to exit from homelessness. Their homelessness is longer. People on the mental health pathway also experience long-term homelessness, but they do not endorse homelessness as a way of life. They remain homeless because they have few exit options.

Key Recommendations for supporting youth reentry and ending the pipeline to homelessness



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Federal Partners

- Department of Education
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Labor
- Americorps
- United States interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH)

National partners

- Coalition for Juvenile Justice
- National Network for youth

National Youth Advisory Group Members

- Kalyn Garcia (CA)
- Malik Rivers (DC)
- Amara Santos (CA)
- Dane Valentine (OK)
- Zoryna Lealai (AK)



How did we come up with these recommendations?

- Housing instability is connected to all aspects of our health and well being
- If a young person does not have strong, healthy relationships with a network of support, it will be hard for them to get and keep housing.
- If a young person does not have adequate health and mental health care, then it will be challenging to secure an income that is required to maintain housing – We could go on and on
- **This is why, we decided to highlight reentry recommendations in each domain or area of wellbeing for young people. These domains include:**
 - (1) Housing
 - (2) Health and mental health
 - (3) Social Connection and Relationships
 - (4) Education
 - (5) Workforce and Income
 - (6) Legal Support
 - (7) Childcare and support (if applicable)
 - (8) Transportation
 - (9) Resources to manage unanticipated crises
 - (10) Family reunification

We must pay attention to young people as whole people, recognizing the interconnectedness of their lives.

All youth are different. They have different needs, desires, goals and circumstances.

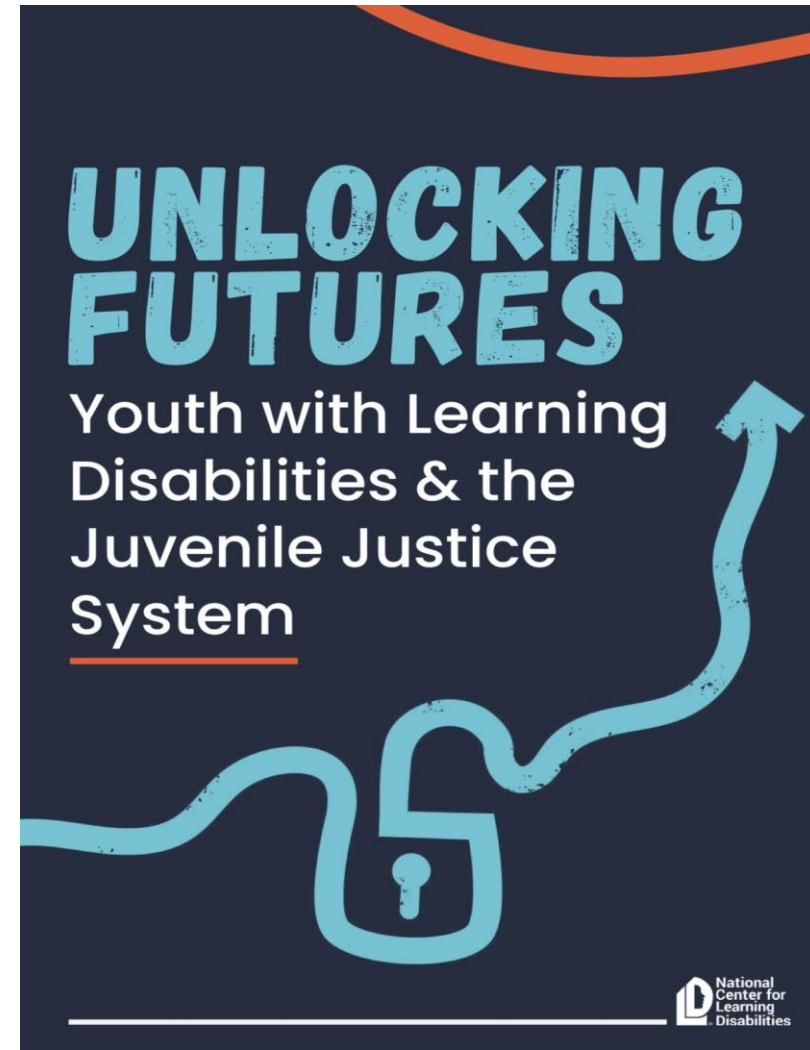
Recommendation #1: Start Reentry Planning at System Entry

- **Early planning leads to smoother transitions**
- **We need to start building plans when youth first enter the system, this includes identifying their needs or interests in education, employment, and providing mental health support right away**
- **We should be asking youth questions like:**
 - "What are you interested in doing once you leave?"
 - "What would you like to do with this time?"
 - "What can I do or who can connect you with to get you there?"



Why is this recommendation important?

- The National Center for Learning Disabilities reported a study that said 65-70% of youth involved with the Juvenile Justice system has a disability.
- Have your youth's educational and support needs screened as early as possible
- Help them get the support they **should have been** receiving before it is too late or recidivism/homelessness occurs



Ending Homelessness is Possible.



Recommendation #2: Alleviate and remove barriers to Housing, Education, and Employment

- Emphasis on **Alleviate**
- Continue to work around the barriers and systems we have been given
- **What would continuing to work around alleviate barriers look like?**
 - continuously being aware of little things that may slip through the cracks. Ask your young person: What are we missing? What should we be anticipating once you leave? What should we be preparing for once you leave?
- Actively try to think of **considerations or things to remember or stay on top of when working with youth in reentry.**
- In summary, it was really things to look out for that some providers may forget
- Here are a few things we decided to take a look at as things to consider or remember when working **through and against barriers for young people** in reentry :



Considerations to remember when working with youth & a sneak peek to some of our recommendations made by the Youth Reentry work group through the National Youth Homelessness Partnership

HOUSING	EDUCATION	EMPLOYMENT
• Consider housing options, autonomy, and agency of your young person • Be mindful of legal restrictions such as restraining orders, criminal records, and limitations on public housing • Consider the impact of past gang affiliation for some youth • Consider the impact of returning to unsafe locations for LGBTQIA+ and/or gang affiliated youth	• Youth often have negative experiences with education → Make it engaging and accessible • What does your young person want to learn? Not what you think they should learn • Consider screening your young people for special education needs, disabilities, and/or language barriers • START THEIR EDUCATION JOURNEY EARLY DURING INCARCERATION IF YOU CAN → Alternative schooling options, night school options, Trade, GED, Dual enrollment with local community colleges	• Identify skills and long-term goals early • Recognize that lack of employment options can lead to exploitation or exploitative jobs (Examples: Selling drugs and/or Sex work) • Harm reduction strategies are necessary • Adapt to their changing needs when it comes to jobs, they won't have everything figured out the first time • Adapt to changing job markets- Provide certifications, Trainings on job readiness, resume workshops, workforce development, computer classes

Ending Homelessness is Possible.



This timeline is what priorities should look like at that time to keep yourself and young person organized, motivated, and encouraged on their plan to successfully leave . They are numbered by priority and urgency of what we recommend however, every young person is different, they may have their priorities listed differently when going over their reentry timeline.

The example we have used is what it would look like working with a young person who has just been sentenced for 2 years.

REENTRY TIMELINE

AT ENTRY

1. **Mental Health Support** -Are they receiving mental health counseling?Do they have they have health insurance? How do we get them medicaid?
2. **Assist with needs assessment screenings** - Where are their documents? IDs? Are they or were they in school?
3. **What is their support system outside?** Will they be able to come see them? Family? Friends? -Thinking ahead ALWAYS: Can they be considered as future housing options?

In Summary, at entry, start screening and asking questions about all the umbrellas we listed in our recommendations : Physical and Mental health, Housing, previous Social Connections and Community Support, screen for Educational needs, Develop an employment and income plan together, Screen for legal barriers like probation, Provide access to pro bono lawyers in community or access to expungement or even diversion

YEAR ONE

DURING REENTRY

1. **Housing plan** - Where do they plan to live now that they know they are officially and when they are leaving?
2. **Transportation** - Do they have an ID? Driver's License? How do we get that before they leave? - If a car is not an option, will they have transit access? How do they get transit access in the local community they are returning to? Do they need to learn and research local routes they will use once they leave?
3. **Education on Legal Rights** - Are they eligible for expungement? How do we get them assistance with that? Consider if they are a parent, Do they need custody and care planning or assistance? What do they need to be prepared for in terms of barriers due to their incarcerated past ?
4. **Continuous mental health support**

4. Continuous mental health support

5. Healthcare + Coverage

6. Schooling

7. Employment + Income Plan

8. Childcare/custody support plan - if applicable

1. **EXIT PLANNING**-Who is going to be honest supports outside? Who and where can they go to? Siblings? Cousins? Mom? Aunts? Grandma? Friends? Dad?

2. **Continuous Mental Health Support**

AFTER REENTRY

1. **Stay connected** and if not, find who they can connect to out in community that you trust to be their supports outside
2. **Find out what the barriers they are in experiencing in community are** - is there lack of coordination between the folks supporting your young person- even if you don't have capacity, find who does.
3. **What did you guys miss in your time inside together?How can you help the young person?**
4. **Continued mental health support with a smooth transition**

YEAR TWO

Recommendation #3: Promote Community wide coordination

- Work towards improving collaboration between service providers and agencies both local and state to have consistent, organized, and wraparound support for young people
- Address inconsistent definitions and measures of success in community collaboration
- Whenever and wherever you can, push for longer term reentry programs that go beyond 6 months



Recommendation #4: Provide individualized reentry case plans

- **Approach your youth as whole individuals with unique needs**
- **Address, Name, and Fight Against** root causes of this issue like poverty, systemic racism, and trauma
- **Health and Mental health:** Ensure continuity of care, reduce stigma – especially for BIPOC youth, and promote peer support
- **Social support :** Try to maintain strong connections with family, mentors, and community networks tailored to their identity and interests and what that young person tells you they need.



THANK YOU AND A FEW REMINDERS!

- Reentry isn't a check list, it is a critical turning point in someone's life
- We have a responsibility to support youth with dignity, equity, and real opportunities
- Together and with some of these recommendations in mind, we can shift from systems that punish to systems that heal !



Cutting Off the Pipeline to Youth Homelessness

July 2, 2025



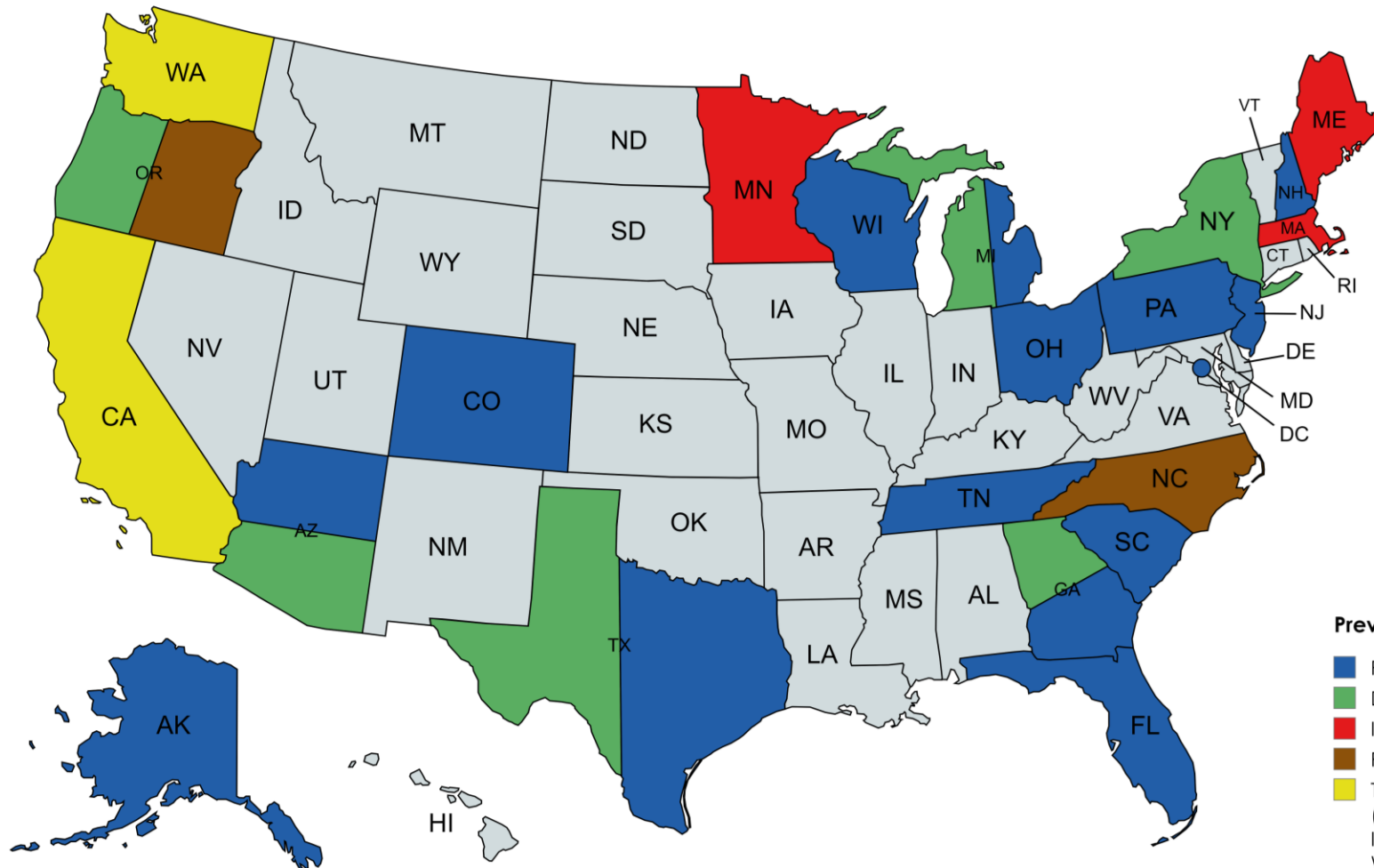
Who is PSY?



We are a national organization working to prevent and end youth homelessness by putting **power and resources in the hands of young people.**



Nationally, Prevention is Being Embraced



37 Prevention Initiatives In 22 States & DC

More info:

- [Prevention Demo Projects](#)
- [Direct Cash Transfer – Prevention](#)
- 100 Day Prevention Challenge
- “Independent” includes: [Upstream](#) (MN+CA+WA); State level efforts in [WA](#), [MA](#), ME, [MN](#).
- Also, see [USICH’s Spotlight on Youth Homelessness Prevention](#).

Prevention Program

- PDP
- DCTP
- INDEPENDENT
- PREVENTION 100DC
- THREE PROGRAMS
(CA=PDP, DCTP,
INDEPENDENT;
WA=PDP,
INDEPENDENT,
100DC)

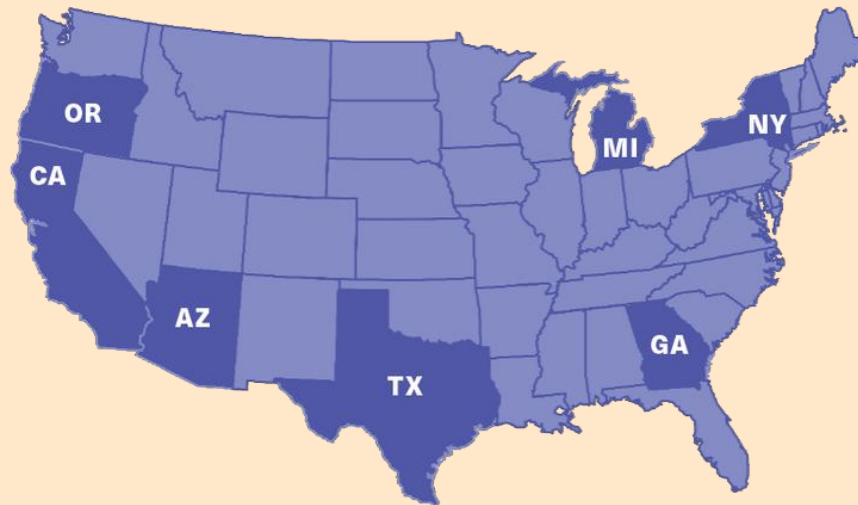
National Movement for Prevention

- PSY has been facilitating the National Prevention Learning Collaborative and we've been able to highlight different programs and practices making an impact on youth homelessness prevention:
 - Housing vouchers like Foster Youth Initiative (FYI)
 - Housing supports targeted to youth who are exiting state systems of care
 - Stabilizing family and other natural supports
 - Understanding data and facilitating data sharing practices



PSY's model

- Our model is based on WA's [Homelessness Prevention and Diversion Fund](#), which has been operating since 2020, with enormous success
 - **93%** of young people who accessed the fund stayed stably housed 1 year later
- In 2024, we launched across seven communities



How it Works

- Our model requires that communities think of all of the youth in that community as its collective responsibility and all of the cash resources are considered to be for all of the community, not just the lead community-based organization (CBO)
- The program design addresses these key issues identified by system leaders and young people:
 - Young people often interact with safe adults in partner systems of care when they have a housing crisis, but they are their trusted adults may not be able to access the homelessness system
 - There are limited housing support services for young people who are not yet considered literally homeless
 - Smaller, community-led orgs are not always seen as “homeless youth providers” in a community and are oftentimes not accessing traditional sources of funding



A Community Example

In this example in Grand Rapids, MI, where AYA Youth Collective is the lead agency, they have trained providers who were specifically identified because of their community connections to BIPOC and LGBTQ youth at risk of experiencing a housing crisis.



Program Model

Cash Payments

One time: Clients can access one payment to stabilize their housing crisis.

Variable: The amount each client receives will be equitably distributed based on their individual situation and the budget they create during their housing conversation. There is no hard cap on the amount of funds a client can receive.

Unconditional: Clients do not need to participate in services beyond the housing conversation to receive their payment, and no restrictions are put on how they can use their funds.

Immediate: CBOs must be able to distribute funds as close to immediately as possible, at least within 24-48 hours, following the young person's plan.

Supportive Services

3-6 months of optional supportive services:

- Case Management
- Relationship Mediation
- Housing Navigation
- Financial Empowerment



Community Examples

- **Austin, TX** – A young mother of four had been evicted from an apartment due to a lapse in her husband's income and was now couch surfing. The Targeted Housing Assistance Program helped them pay for all of the needed move-in costs and essential items, specifically 2 months of rent, groceries for the entire household, and mattresses for the children. Through supportive services, she was connected to General Education Development (GED) classes, Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), and back pay.
- **Tucson, AZ** — A recent university graduate's lease was going to be up the month after graduation. Their family lived in Mexico. With the end of their financial aid, they were at risk of becoming homeless, and their family was not there to help them. The young person had received an offer for a paid internship, but they would not receive their first paycheck until it was too late. The Targeted Housing Assistance Program helped this young person renew their lease in the same apartment complex but in a more affordable unit. The Program also provided funds for essential items during the month they would be without income, such as utility bills and food.



Our Report is Out!



Overview

\$3,700

Average cash per household served

345

Total youth households served

623

Total people served



Housing

90%

Remained stably housed at 1-month

95%

Stabilized current housing or created new opportunity

52%

Of funds used for housing, relocation, and utilities

Demographics

83%

BIPOC

40%

LGBTQIA2S+

33%

Were involved with 1+ other systems

Other Factors

31%

Had a mental and/or physical disability

27%

Pregnant and/or living with dependents

88%

18-24 year-olds

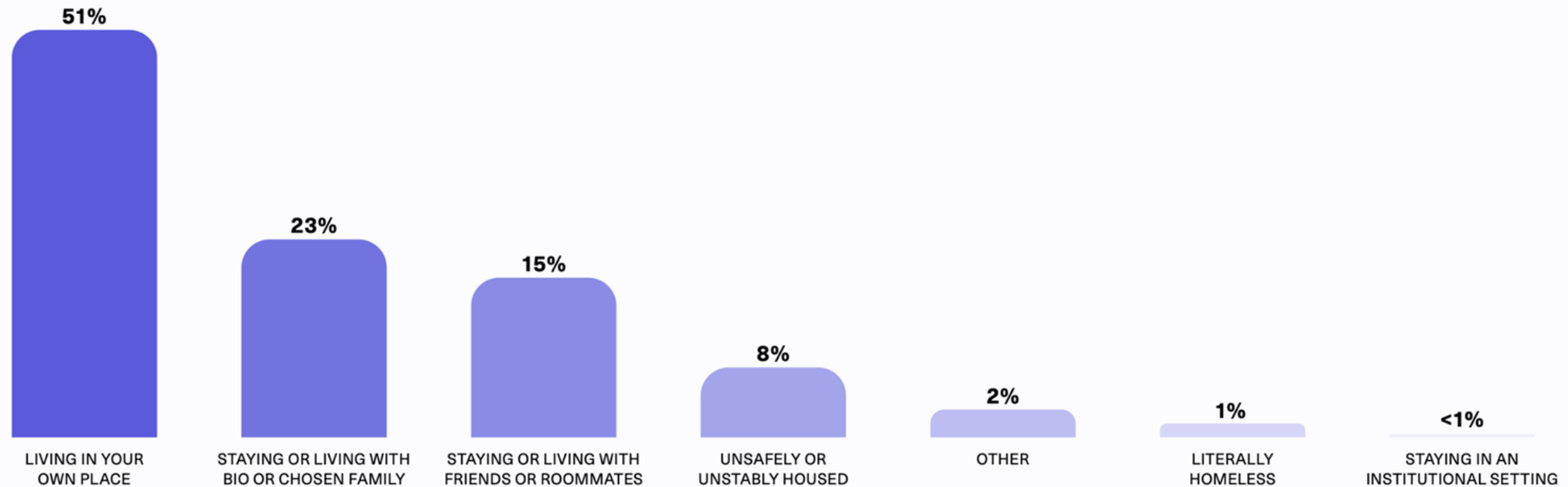


Additional Findings

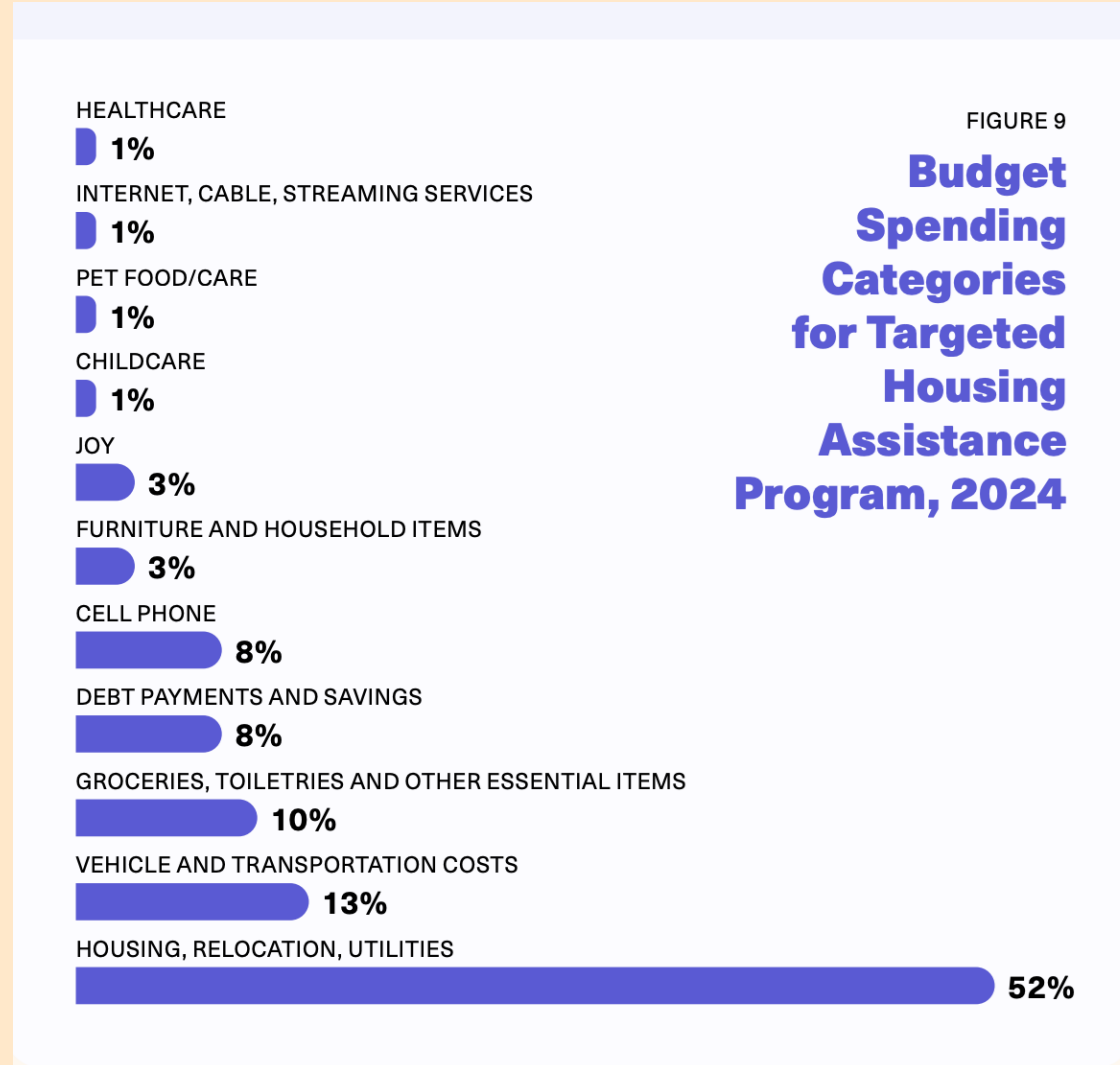
FIGURE 2

Clients' Living Situation at 1 Month Post-Cash, Targeted Housing Assistance Program, 2024

(N=229)



Additional Findings



Launching our Video Series



Reflections

1. Homelessness prevention is **achievable**.
2. There are **important downstream benefits** of preventing homelessness among young people beyond immediate housing stabilization.
3. Tailor plans and **trust young people**.



“Imagination is one of the spoils of colonization, which in many ways is claiming who gets to imagine the future for a given geography. Losing our imagination is a symptom of trauma. Reclaiming the right to dream the future, strengthening the muscle to imagine together..., is a revolutionary decolonizing activity.”

— **Adrienne Maree Brown, Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds**



Get in Touch

Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions. My email address is lauren@pointsourceyouth.org

