



Assessing Whether Your Community Has Achieved the Goal of Ending Youth Homelessness

The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness and its member agencies have adopted [specific criteria and benchmarks for ending youth¹ homelessness](#), in order to guide communities as they take action to achieve the goal through a [coordinated community response](#). The following questions can help you begin to assess your community's progress. As we develop a process for communities who seek federal confirmation of their achievements, our interagency review team will also ask for documentation that addresses these questions.

Please consult with one of your local federal representatives for guidance prior to submitting your responses.

- Your [HUD Field Office or Regional Office](#)
- Your [USICH Regional Coordinator](#)
- Your [Runaway and Homeless Youth Regional Program Manager](#)

As we continue to refine the criteria and benchmarks over time, we will refine these questions as needed. Revised guidance will be posted to the [Youth Criteria and Benchmarks webpage](#) on the USICH website.

Questions that Assess Whether Your Community Has Achieved the Criteria

1. Has your community identified all unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness?

- a. Has your community literally identified every unaccompanied youth who is unsheltered, in shelter, or in transitional housing settings or other residential programs for youth experiencing homelessness?
- b. Can you describe how your community coordinates a comprehensive set of strategies, spanning schools, the child welfare system, including child protective services, the justice system, drop-in centers, hotlines and 2-1-1, and other youth-serving agencies and programs to identify unaccompanied youth who are doubled up or couch-surfing and considered to be experiencing homelessness under any federal definition?
- c. Does your community use coordinated, comprehensive outreach, in-reach, multiple data sources, and other methods to identify and enumerate all unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness, spanning the community's entire geographical area?
- d. Does your community conduct outreach and in-reach on a regular basis, including at least weekly outreach to known locations or other areas where youth who are unsheltered may be located, and at least weekly in-reach to drop-in centers, shelters, and other homelessness assistance programs?
- e. Does your community's outreach and in-reach strategy involve proactively looking for youth that are newly experiencing homelessness or new to your area?
- f. Are your outreach and in-reach efforts tailored to the unique needs of particularly vulnerable youth, including pregnant and parenting youth and their families, LGBTQ youth, minors under the age of 18, youth involved with

¹ The federal criteria, and the accompanying benchmarks, apply to all youth and young adults under the age of 25 who are unaccompanied by a parent, legal guardian, or caretaker and who meet any federal definition of homelessness.

juvenile justice and foster care systems, victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation, and youth with disabilities?

- g. Are your providers across the multiple systems and mainstream resource staff², as well as outreach and in-reach efforts, connected to the coordinated entry process?
- h. How are key partners (e.g., child welfare agencies, schools, youth providers, Runaway and Homeless Youth providers, family services programs, juvenile justice agencies, primary care and behavioral health providers, hospitals, free clinics, community health centers, and other community human services and homelessness service providers) involved in identifying youth experiencing homelessness in your community?
- i. Does your community have a single data system (i.e., HMIS, active list) that identifies and tracks all unaccompanied youth known to be experiencing homelessness? How does the data system comply with confidentiality requirements for youth under 18 years of age and victim services providers?
- j. Do all entities responsible for identifying youth experiencing homelessness in your community collect data on all youth they encounter? Is that data entered into HMIS or another comparable data system so that relevant data can be included on an active list?
- k. Does your community maintain an active list of youth experiencing homelessness? Is the active list updated on at least a biweekly basis and reviewed to make prioritization decisions?
- l. Can you describe how your community uses existing data to provide a real-time assessment of youth experiencing homelessness? What are the primary data sources to support this effort?
- m. Can you describe the written procedures or workflow for the active list that ensure that confidentiality of personal information is protected, including compliance with confidentiality laws for youth under 18 years of age and victim service providers?
- n. Is your community able to provide comprehensive and current responses to the following questions for unaccompanied youth under 18 and those 18-24 years of age?
 - i. How many youth are experiencing homelessness in your community?
 - ii. Of those youth experiencing homelessness, how many are unsheltered; in emergency shelter; in transitional settings; or doubled up or otherwise identified as experiencing homelessness under any federal definition?
 - iii. How many youth experiencing homelessness, sheltered and unsheltered, were identified in your two most recent Point-in-Time counts?
 - iv. How many youth were identified in any other counts, either more recent counts or counts that specifically target youth?
 - v. How many youth were identified as experiencing homelessness by local education agencies (LEAs) during the most recent school year? How is information about changes in a youth's homelessness status updated throughout the school year?

² For the purposes of this guidance, mainstream programs and partners include but are not limited to Local Education Agencies (LEAs), Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) grantees, workforce systems, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) agencies, physical health care providers, behavioral health care providers, early childhood and child care providers, victim service providers, law enforcement, prisons, jails, and hospitals.

2. Does your community use prevention and diversion strategies whenever possible, and provide immediate access to low-barrier shelter to any youth who needs and wants it?

- a. Are you implementing comprehensive prevention and diversion strategies to help youth experiencing homelessness avoid the need to enter shelter whenever possible?
- b. What strategies does your community use to connect and/or reunify youth with family members or other natural supports (as defined by each young person) to help them stay or return home, when appropriate?
- c. Are providers across the multiple systems and mainstream resource staff in your community familiar with the prevention and diversion strategies and protocols?
- d. Does your community have adequate capacity to immediately provide access to developmentally appropriate safety services, emergency shelters, host homes, or other temporary housing settings, as well as other forms of emergency assistance to any youth or young adult who is unsheltered, fleeing an unsafe situation, or experiencing a housing crisis?
 - i. Does this capacity include an adequate supply and range of options that are not contingent on family or household structure, school attendance, sobriety, minimum income requirements, absence of a criminal record, or other unnecessary conditions, including options appropriate for particularly vulnerable youth?
- e. Does your community's youth crisis response system reflect a positive youth development framework and a trauma-informed approach to service delivery?
- f. Can you describe how your community continues to offer assistance, including connections to low-barrier crisis housing and services, to any youth identified as experiencing unsheltered homelessness who has not yet accepted assistance?
- g. Can you describe the policies and protocols in place, including partnerships with law enforcement and strategies to address encampments, to ensure the community does not criminalize behaviors associated with homelessness, particularly among youth who may be identified as experiencing unsheltered homelessness?

3. Does your community use coordinated entry processes to link all youth experiencing homelessness to housing and services that are tailored to their needs?

- a. Can you describe how your community has implemented coordinated entry processes that:
 - i. Operate in close coordination with mainstream systems and include the full array of youth-serving systems and programs;
 - ii. Use assessment tools that are adapted for youth and appropriate for their circumstances;
 - iii. Streamline access and referrals to a range of tailored housing and services solutions aligned with individual needs and strengths, and driven by youth choice; and
 - iv. Support multiple points of access to ensure youth can engage in assessment processes with trusted persons with whom they have a relationship?
- b. Can you describe how coordinated entry processes, housing options, and services are trauma-informed, age and developmentally appropriate, and culturally and linguistically responsive for youth?
- c. Does the community have processes and partnerships in place to address the needs of subpopulations of youth experiencing homelessness that are particularly vulnerable, including pregnant and parenting youth and their families, LGBTQ youth, minors under the age of 18, youth involved with juvenile justice and foster care systems, victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation, and youth with disabilities?

- d. Do coordinated entry processes provide fair and equitable access to housing options and services, reflecting a positive youth development framework?
- e. Can you describe what the full array of youth-serving systems and programs entails?
- f. Does your community have adequate capacity to link all youth to the full array of housing options and services, tailored to their individual needs and strengths?
 - i. Does this include an adequate supply of housing and services programs that use screening and selection practices that affirm the acceptance of youth regardless of their sobriety or use of substances, completion of treatment, and participation in services?

4. Does your community act with urgency to swiftly assist youth to move into permanent or non-time-limited housing options with appropriate services and supports?

- a. How does your community use Housing First and low-barrier approaches that ensure youth safety (as defined by each youth) to efficiently connect youth experiencing homelessness to permanent or non-time-limited housing and services aligned, whenever possible, with youth choice?
- b. Do solutions include appropriate strategies for addressing the safety concerns and service needs of youth in unsafe situations, such as those fleeing child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual violence, or trafficking, or those with other significant risk factors or vulnerabilities?
- c. How does your community support youth, including those in unsafe situations, who choose to enter time-limited safe and stable housing options before securing a permanent or non-time-limited housing opportunity?
- d. How does your community connect youth living in time-limited safe and stable housing options, such as transitional living programs, to a permanent or non-time-limited housing opportunity when that youth expresses a desire to do so?
- e. What processes and protocols are in place to prevent unnecessary delays in connecting youth to housing and services?
- f. How are youth experiencing homelessness connected to education supports, health and behavioral health care, social supports, job or vocational training, employment opportunities, workforce programs, life skills training, positive community organizations, mentors, peer groups, and/or other supportive services that promote self-sufficiency and long-term housing stability?
- g. How is your community tracking and evaluating outcomes (stable housing, permanent connections, education and employment, and well-being) for youth in time-limited safe and stable housing options as well as permanent or non-time-limited housing options?
- h. How is youth feedback, including self-assessment of success in each outcome area, solicited and incorporated as part of the process for tracking and evaluating outcomes?

5. Does your community have resources, plans, and system capacity in place to continue to prevent and quickly end future experiences of homelessness among youth?

- a. Has your community projected the number of youth who may need shelter and services, and dedicated sufficient resources to ensure those needs are met and that future experiences of homelessness among youth are rare and brief?
- b. Does your community have comprehensive plans and partnerships in place, as well as the system capacity to continue to:

- i. Whenever possible, prevent or divert youth from experiencing homelessness? This includes substantial partnerships with schools (including post-secondary educational institutions), the child welfare and justice systems, employment, physical and mental health services, and other youth-serving programs to support coordinated solutions to prevent and reduce the likelihood of risk of homelessness;
 - ii. Connect youth experiencing homelessness to appropriate and choice-driven crisis housing and services options;
 - iii. Connect pregnant and parenting youth to early care and education programs such as Early Head Start/Head Start and child care centers; and
 - iv. Swiftly move youth into permanent or non-time-limited housing options with the appropriate services and supports?
- c. Are there sufficient permanent or non-time-limited housing assistance options that are currently available or will become available over the next 12 months to ensure that youth experiencing homelessness in the future can be swiftly connected to permanent or non-time-limited housing assistance?
- d. For those youth who may choose to enter a time-limited safe and stable housing program or access another residential placement, are there sufficient housing options that are currently available or will become available over the next 12 months to ensure swift connections to such assistance?
- e. What strategies does your community implement to promote long-term housing stability of all youth that have exited homelessness?
- f. Does your community have capacity to provide non-housing crisis response options to youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness? These options should include, but are not limited to, emergency financial assistance, safety services, transportation, health and oral health services, behavioral health, and legal services.
- g. How does your community leverage connections to, and engage with, the following community partners:
- i. Local education agencies, GED providers, and institutions of higher learning
 - ii. Child welfare system
 - iii. Justice system
 - iv. Legal services providers
 - v. Safety services
 - vi. Workforce systems (such as local Workforce Development Boards and American Job Centers)
 - vii. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) agencies
 - viii. Physical health care providers
 - ix. Behavioral health care providers
 - x. Early childhood programs
 - xi. Child care providers
 - xii. Victim services providers
 - xiii. Affordable housing providers
 - xiv. Family preservation/reunification service providers
 - xv. Transportation
 - xvi. Food assistance programs

Specifications to Measure Whether Your Community Has Achieved the Benchmarks

Federal partners will be working with a select number of communities to pilot the criteria and benchmarks over the coming months. Revised guidance will be posted to the [Youth Criteria and Benchmarks webpage](#) on the USICH website. We will continue to review and clarify the questions to assess and specifications, as needed.