

# **REACHing for New Heights**

Cuyahoga County's Coordinated Community Plan to Prevent and End Youth and Young Adult Homelessness

# Acknowledgments

The Cuyahoga County Coordinated Community Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness represents the vision, ideals, and hopes of the REACH Youth Action Board, supported by the Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services (CoC Lead), A Place 4 Me Collaborative (YHDP Lead), and the Sisters of Charity Foundation (Community Partner).

We thank the REACH YAB for the countless hours spent developing and refining this plan and for their leadership and advocacy in this work. Additionally, we recognize and thank all members of the Coordinated Community Planning Committee, which represents the diverse, cross-sector array of partners needed to achieve our vision of a community where youth and young adult homelessness does not exist. Additionally, we are grateful to the young adults who participated in listening sessions hosted by the REACH YAB to inform the needs and solutions outlined in this plan. We are committed to ensuring the voices of young people are continuously amplified and uplifted!

Finally, we are grateful to the members of the YHDP Core Team and HUD technical assistance providers for shepherding this process forward and ensuring a high-quality, youth-led plan. Specifically, we thank Ebony Clayton, she/her, from A Place 4 Me, for her leadership and coordination of the plan.

## **REACH Youth Action Board**

Kai Cotton, chair  
Christian Anderson  
Hannah Gates  
Kourtney Morgan  
Hannah Leszyeski  
Kristine Lewanski  
Jay Randle  
Alonzo West  
Natasha Wynn

## **YHDP Core Planning Team**

Christian Anderson  
Nick Butina  
Ebony Clayton  
Angela D’Orazio  
Hannah Gates  
Allison Gill  
Hannah Leszyeski  
Kate Lodge  
Kourtney Morgan  
Erin Rearden  
Melissa Sirak  
Christie Sozio

## **HUD TA Providers**

Tee Baker  
Dee Balliet  
Lisa Brooks  
Tiffany Hart

## **Consultant**

Matt Aronson

## **Coordinated Community Planning Committee**

A Place 4 Me Collaborative  
ADAMHS Board of Cuyahoga County  
Bellefaire JCB  
Case Western Reserve University  
The Collaborative to End Human Trafficking  
Community of Hope  
City of Cleveland Office of Prevention, Intervention & Opportunity for YYA  
Cuyahoga County Division of Children & Family Services

Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services  
CHN Housing Partners  
EDEN, Inc.  
Educational Services Center  
Enterprise Community Partners  
Family Promise of Greater Cleveland  
Frontline Services  
LGBT Center of Greater Cleveland  
The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland  
Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry  
Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless  
Ohio Healthy Transitions Project  
Ohio Means Jobs Project ACT  
REACH Youth Action  
Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland  
Towards Employment  
YWCA of Greater Cleveland

# Welcome Letter

Dear READER,

Meet REACH, Cleveland's Youth Action Board!

REACH is a dynamic group of young adults collaborating to enhance the lives of their peers through impactful projects. Our collaboration with community partners and agencies amplifies our unwavering commitment to advocating for the delivery of exceptional care to young people experiencing homelessness or housing instability and championing key initiatives to prevent and end youth and young adult homelessness.

## REACH's Mission & Vision:

To work collaboratively with the Cuyahoga County community to raise awareness and advocate for the necessary intervention for youth homelessness prevention. We empower youth voices and educate the community about the experiences of youth and young adults in transition.

Cleveland/Cuyahoga County will be a safe haven for young people, where systems have been redesigned to be youth-friendly and not feel like systems, young people have the knowledge, education, resources, and supports to transition into adulthood, and where everyone helps and respects each other regardless of age.

REACH has played an integral role in developing the content, ideas, and strategies on the pages that follow, and will continue to partner with the community to upgrade this living document for years to come! As you read along, REACH would like you to keep the following thoughts in mind:

*“When it rains, wait for the **rainbow**. Sometimes, a storm can unexpectedly rain on our parade, disrupting our plans and dampening our spirits. It can feel discouraging and overwhelming. However, amidst the dark clouds, if we have the patience and resilience to wait, a rainbow will eventually appear. The rainbow symbolizes hope, renewal, and the promise of brighter days ahead. It reminds us that even in the face of adversity, there is always an opportunity for a fresh start. By embracing the beauty and optimism of the rainbow, we can find the strength to persevere, adapt, and embark on a new journey with renewed energy and determination.”*

This plan is the direct result of that kind of perseverance (this was our community's fifth time applying for YHDP!) and we hope that you, dear reader, will accompany us in forging ahead on the journey!

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# Executive Summary

**REACHING for New Heights** details our strategy to prevent and end youth and young adult (YYA) homelessness in Cuyahoga County over the next three years. It is the result of several years of hard work, an eight-month shared-ownership planning process, and the combined effort of 28 core partners from across our community. We designed the Plan in close partnership with YYA leaders from our REACH Youth Action Board (YAB), and prioritized their needs, perspectives, and preferences in decision-making.

In October 2022, HUD selected Cuyahoga County to participate in the prestigious Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP). HUD provided a generous grant of \$3.9 Million and direct technical assistance and required that we create a coordinated community plan that followed strict federal guidelines. Those requirements included key plan structural elements (e.g., a vision, goals, objectives, and actions), needs and actions directed to required subpopulations (e.g., unaccompanied YYA, minors, parenting YYA, BIPOC YYA, LGBTQIA+ YYA), and adherence to emerging best practices (e.g., Housing First principles, Trauma Informed Care, Positive Youth Development). We submitted our plan for threshold approval in May 2023 and requested our YHDP project funding in June 2023.

*We envision a compassionate, culturally coordinated community response to homelessness, where systemic barriers to resources are removed, and supports are known, accessible, and low-barrier.*

*We envision a community that centers equity and uplifts YYA with diverse lived experience through love and empathy, combating the misconception that homelessness is a personal failure rather than a system failure at the intersection of racism, poverty, homophobia, transphobia, institutional dysfunction, and unaffordable housing.*

*When working in collaboration with YYA, adult partners across all sectors provide crisis support using a trauma-informed approach supporting the YYA to show up authentically and shifting the narrative and response around YYA homelessness in Cuyahoga County.*

*Our community promotes connection and healing rather than segregation and separation.*

**REACHing** imagines a future where we have ended YYA homelessness in Cuyahoga County. It explores in detail how we can get there using a framework of eight goals:

1. Authentic Youth Leadership
2. Equity
3. Safe and Stable Housing
4. Permanent Connections
5. Education, Employment, and Employment Training
6. Social-Emotional Wellbeing
7. Cross-Systems Partnership
8. Continuous Quality Improvement

Within each Goal area, we provide concise statements of need and then a series of objectives and action steps that address those needs. There are 12 objectives overall and 99 action steps that we believe are both actionable and achievable over the next three years.

## KEY ACTIONS

- ★ Executing a REACH YAB strategy to increase and diversify membership, reserve YYA positions with full membership on critical community committees and workgroups, include members in data collection and research, and provide them with robust training and support.
- ★ Addressing the root cause of inequity by investing in existing racial equity efforts, improving data collection related to race, sexual orientation, and gender identity, increasing legal support for historically oppressed populations, removing specific barriers to support for YYA with disabilities, and advocating for equity-focused language in our system rules and policies.
- ★ Implementing mobile, low-barrier access points and new TH-RRH and PSH housing units, while removing barriers to housing supports, better training providers, and ensuring a transparent and equitable rental calculations system.
- ★ Better connecting YYA to family and community supports by improving coordination with other systems of care, training navigators and partners in restorative justice and family reunification, providing opportunities for YYA to gather and build their networks, and empowering them to explore, sharpen, and celebrate their strengths.
- ★ Providing incentives and support for college students, supporting school district liaisons to better respond to the needs of pre K-12 students, and coordinating with system partners to share learning and better embed best and promising education and workforce development practices throughout the community.
- ★ Increasing recruitment and retention of staff who reflect the population experiencing homelessness, training them in YHDP principles, imbedding somatic trauma informed approaches system-wide, implementing a new navigator program, and directly addressing the experience and effects of incarceration on YYA at intake
- ★ Creating authentic partnerships across YYA providers, implementing a new multi-sector YYA homelessness governance structure, expanding community outreach and education, creating peer mentorship and learning opportunities between YYA from multiple systems, standardizing multi-system data collection and program entry, and establishing protocols to prevent transitions from systems into homelessness.
- ★ Establishing the capacity for continuous quality improvements, incorporating regular feedback methods from primary stakeholders, focusing evaluation and improvement on overrepresented and under-resourced populations, and providing safe and robust pathways for YYA with lived experience to share knowledge and improve our community response.

Our strategy is built and relies on **YYA leadership**. It trusts **YYA choices** and the local **communities and families** they come from. It directly addresses issues of **equity** and the **intersections** of our identities and experiences, **centers data** and **best practices** such as **Trauma Informed Care** and **Positive Youth Development**, while establishing **housing as a human right** and incorporating **Housing First principles**. It looks towards **partnership and coordination** to ensure fairness and high standards of support for YYA no matter where they are in the community, all in service of **shifting the narrative** of how we engage in this work.

Our plan will take funding above and beyond our YHDP award, but the following two innovative projects that the community has prioritized for our YHDP funds will jumpstart our efforts:

**The Navigation and Housing (NH) Team + Targeted Prevention Problem-Solving** will support six navigators equipped with flexible funding resources to work with YYA across the system to quickly end housing crises and connect YYA to critical resources. Total project funding equals \$869,320 over 2-years.

**Project Keys** will house 18-24 year olds experiencing or at risk of homelessness using an innovative Transitional Housing to Rapid Rehousing model. YYA can start where they need and seamlessly transition between housing types. It will provide 30 TH units and 32 RRH units for up to 36 months. Total project funding equals \$3,106,480 over 2-years.



**REACHing for New Heights** establishes a new governance structure. It builds on the framework of shared ownership, trust, and radical imagination that we used during planning. A new **Knowledge and Impact Manager** will lead day to day plan management. An **Implementation Team** will provide support, oversight, and formal recommendations to the community regarding plan improvement. **Workgroups** will support the Implementation Team in key action areas, and **YHDP Subrecipients** will regularly report on the status of their innovative projects. **REACH YAB**, **OHS**, and **A Place 4 Me** will provide final decision-making regarding major plan decisions.

The success of **REACHing for New Heights** depends on the commitment of our partners and engagement of our community. We urge you to join us, from whatever chair you sit in. There is room at the table and work to be done. Contact us and find out how you can help!

**REACHing Planning Partners**

A Place 4 Me Collaborative	Alcohol Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board	Bellefaire JCB - Homeless and Missing Youth Program	Case Western Reserve University Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development	CHN Housing Partners	City of Cleveland Office of Prevention, Intervention and Opportunity for YYA
Cleveland Metropolitan School District - Project ACT	Community of Hope	Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services	Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services	EDEN, Inc.	Educational Services Center
Enterprise Community Partners	Family Promise of Greater Cleveland	FrontLine Services	LGBT Center of Greater Cleveland	Luthern Metropolitan Ministry	Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless
Ohio Health Transitions Project (OTHP)	Ohio Means Jobs - Cleveland/Cuyahoga	REACH YAB	Sisters of Charity Cleveland Foundation	The Collaborative to End Human Trafficking	The Identification Crisis Collaborative
	The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland	Towards Employment	Youth Opportunities Unlimited	YWCA of Greater Cleveland	

# Introduction

Over 500 young people engage the homelessness services system<sup>1</sup> in Cuyahoga County each year. We estimate that many hundreds more experience some form of homelessness outside this system, either interacting with a variety of non-homelessness-focused agencies and organizations, or surviving on their own on the streets, moving from home to home, or living in places not designed for them to sleep safely, live stably, or thrive. Many confront the persistent and omnipresent challenges of racism, homophobia, and transphobia, and many deal with the collateral consequences of involvement with child welfare, juvenile, and adult legal systems. Their outcomes in education, employment, and health are far behind their peers in stable housing, and we don't currently have the dedicated housing or support to meet their needs. This document is our community's shared response to that tragedy.

*REACHing for New Heights* is our plan to prevent and end youth and young adult (YYA) homelessness in Cuyahoga County. It represents the culmination of 8 months of intensive planning by a broad range of community partners and many years of dedication by providers, YYA, research institutions, funders, and local and county government agencies. The document begins with a vision for what our community will look like once we have completed our plan. This offers the reader a glimpse of the future that we are all committed to creating, even if we do not yet have the tools to make it so. The plan then divides into eight aspirational goals that help us focus our efforts into key areas required to achieve our vision while still allowing us to dream big. Finally, we lay out a strategy under each goal with concrete objectives and clear action steps that community members have agreed to take on over the next two years in service of our vision.

Together, we will use this document as ***a blueprint to transform how we work together***. We describe in our plan how we will share ownership of the work and think comprehensively about what it really takes to ensure that no young person has to worry about where they will sleep tonight or how they will ensure long-term stable housing into the future. This requires new partnerships, asking difficult questions, and a willingness to take risks and think creatively. The plan also commits us to regularly reviewing our progress, engaging the community in serious conversations about impact, and evolving our strategies to meet changing needs.

This work is also a part of a national movement toward building comprehensive, coordinated community plans to end YYA homelessness. In October, 2022, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) selected the Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Continuum of Care (CoC), as represented by the Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services (OHS), to participate in its Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP). Through YHDP, HUD acknowledged the incredible work that our community has done over the past several years, supported us through a required planning process and awarded us \$3.9 Million over two years

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<sup>1</sup> The County's Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) collects data on individuals who access the community's homelessness housing and services at any time during the year. Data in HMIS only captures young people who approach the system for support, skew older (18-24), and skew towards young people with longer periods of homelessness and more serious conditions (e.g., severe and persistent behavioral health challenges).



to jump-start our implementation efforts. This plan not only meets our community needs and values but also complies with the requirements of YHDP and both the best practices and promising strategies that it promotes.<sup>2</sup>

Most importantly, this plan is a product of and for our YYA. The community has worked hard to partner with YYA as peers in the design, development, and decision-making for ***REACHing for New Heights***. YYA with lived experience of homelessness are voting members of our planning committee, participated in brainstorming and idea generation, engaged in challenging conversations about system resources, and participated in all plan decisions. We hope that, as you read this document, you can easily see their voice in the vision, goals, and action steps, as well as the quotes and graphic design. The solutions it offers are theirs, and our plan commits us to elevate their perspectives and opinions on how to evaluate, change, and transform the plan in the future. It is our collective aspiration, both YYA and older adult members, to use this document as the baseline for YYA partnership in Cuyahoga County and to increase our trust in and authentic partnership with YYA in every engagement moving forward. Our plan and YYA depend on it.

Following is a brief section on our Vision, Goals, and Values, then moves straight into our action plan. We include brief statements of need, measurable objectives, and specific actions for each goal we have identified. *REACHing for New Heights* concludes with a strategy for implementation and continuous quality improvement and signatures from each entity required by HUD. We have included our planning governance and decision-making structure in the Appendices, along with other useful background data to lend context to who and how we developed this plan.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on YHDP, see <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/yhdp/>

# Our Vision, Goals, and Values

To place our strategy for *REACHing for New Heights* in context, we invite you to share our ambitious vision for the future, the audacious goals we need to meet to achieve that vision, and the values that must guide our work. Preventing and ending YYA homelessness in Cuyahoga County requires us to imagine a different world than the one we live in. We might not have the tools to create it today, but we can collectively commit to working towards it every day from this day forward. We describe this future in Cuyahoga County in the following **Vision**:

***We envision a compassionate, culturally coordinated community response to homelessness, where systemic barriers to resources are removed, and supports are known, accessible, and low-barrier.***

***We envision a community that centers equity and uplifts YYA with diverse lived experiences through love and empathy, combating the misconception that homelessness is a personal failure rather than a system failure at the intersection of racism, poverty, homophobia, transphobia, institutional dysfunction, and unaffordable housing.***

***When working in collaboration with YYA, adult partners across all sectors provide crisis support using a trauma-informed approach supporting the YYA to show up authentically and shifting the narrative and response around YYA homelessness in Cuyahoga County.***

***Our community promotes connection and healing rather than segregation and separation.***

Our vision describes a world in which we think about homelessness in far broader terms than systems have in the past. It requires us to consider multiple sectors beyond traditional housing and homelessness services, to address long-standing institutional rules, processes, and procedures, and interrogate root causes. To help focus our work, we have divided our efforts across eight aspirational **Goals**:

1. Authentic Youth Leadership	2. Equity	3. Safe and Stable Housing
4. Permanent Connections	5. Education, Employment, and Employment Training	6. Social-Emotional Wellbeing
7. Cross-Systems Partnership	8. Continuous Quality Improvement	

Finally, each element of the plan is guided by community **Values**. We believe they are required for a successful implementation and use them as the standard to guide our decision-making:

**YYA Leadership:** We acknowledge that YYA are the experts in their lives and experiences. We will treat and compensate them accordingly, root all decisions regarding the CCP in YYA shared expertise and experiences, and amplify the diverse perspectives of YYA with lived expertise while respecting the wisdom of those who went through the system as YYA but are now older.

**Racial LGBTQIA+ Equity:** We acknowledge that Black YYAs disproportionately experience homelessness and housing instability in our community. We understand this is by design and will intentionally prioritize strategies that redress structural racism and discrimination.

**LGBTQIA+ Equity:** We acknowledge that gender non-conforming YYAs disproportionately experience homelessness and housing instability in our community. We understand this is by design and will intentionally prioritize strategies that redress structural racism and discrimination.

**Housing First:** We believe that every YYA deserves a safe and stable place to call home. They deserve it without conditions or the need to prove they are deserving. We will uplift solutions that prevent homelessness, quickly restore housing when lost, and ensure homelessness is nonrecurring. Solutions will prioritize YYA's strengths and choices, and trust them to make decisions in their best interest.

**Highly Relational:** We believe humans are interdependent and thrive in healthy relationships. The CCP will include strategies for building permanent, supportive relationships with YYA and a hospitable, relational approach to services and housing so YYAs feel encouraged and supported.

**Data-informed:** We will use qualitative and quantitative data to drive decision-making. We believe that data reveals important gaps and opportunities for growth, and will work to understand the limitations of our data so we can correct gaps in data collection. We will use data to get to the deeper truth and inform relevant strategies for the coordinated community plan.

**Intersectionality:** We will focus on the uniqueness of various groups of YYA with lived expertise. We will accept and respect the intersections of their identities, roles, and experiences, including but not limited to young women, pregnant or parenting YYA, YYA with disabilities, students, etc.

**Trauma-informed Care (TIC):** We will uphold the model of TIC, acknowledging that people may have a trauma history and ensuring that practices and services do not seek to re-traumatize them. The TIC principles of safety, choice, collaboration, trustworthiness, and empowerment will frame the provision of YHDP programming.

**Positive Youth Development (PYD):** We will uphold the model of PYD by supporting the development of agency and purpose and creating supportive networks and opportunities to build positive connections among young people within their communities.

**Cross-system collaboration:** We will work across systems to collaborate and holistically support our YYA experiencing homelessness. All service providers working with our YYA must complete anti-racism and LGBTQ+ inclusion, and cultural humility training.

**Differing Abilities:** We acknowledge and celebrate the intricacies of our individual strengths. We will create a sustainable and affirming working environment that ensures people feel engaged, supported, and accommodated whenever possible to participate in the fullest capacity.

**Low Barrier:** We want to avoid barriers preventing YYAs from meeting their basic needs. We commit to offering flexibility and adaptability in YHDP programming.

**Shift Narratives:** We will acknowledge the strengths, courage, and resilience of YYA experiencing homelessness. We will validate their actions, thoughts, and feelings, even when they challenge our own beliefs. We commit to shifting our narratives, imagining what could be, and amplifying YYA dreams. We will strive to provide the radical support they envision for their well-being and think beyond the bare necessities to truly transform systems with our plan.

**Family Engagement:** When directed, we want to support youth and young adults (YYA) in developing, repairing, and rebuilding healthy bonds and relationships with family. Prioritizing family engagement begins with ensuring YYA lead in identifying their family and their families needs. We can champion reunification strategies by providing earlier intervention or connection to culturally relevant resources at the first interaction with systems.

**Unsheltered Homelessness:** We are committed to challenging the narrative of what constitutes homelessness, and we will advocate for reducing barriers imposed by specific definitions of homelessness, especially for unsheltered YYA. We will champion strategies that provide easy access to resources and meet immediate needs (e.g., tents, water, food, clothing, etc.), including but not limited to drop-in centers and non-congregate crisis housing, ensuring unsheltered YYA can meet their needs and engage at the pace of their trust.

**Youth Choice:** We will support and champion youth choice, ensuring YYA are empowered to say what they want in housing, employment, education, etc. We want to ensure program and system partners collaborate with YYA to meet their needs and influence change (e.g., peer support opportunities, feedback loops, and YYAs monitoring/evaluating). To uphold this principle, we will develop strategies to implement system-wide training on authentic youth engagement, adolescent brain development, adulthood, and other relevant activities.

**Individualized client-driven support:** Whenever possible, we will strive to tailor our services program and system-wide to meet YYAs where they are and not offer a "one-size fits all" approach when helping YYAs navigate complex systems and resources. We will develop strategies that emphasize YYA's strengths, preferences, and priorities aiming to promote their independence, autonomy, and self-determination.

**Social and Community Integration:** We will promote opportunities for YYAs experiencing homelessness to build community or get involved in their communities to foster a sense of belonging and purpose through resources and support, helping YYA to achieve stable and fulfilling lives. Additionally, we will seek to educate community members (e.g., landlords or property owners) on youth homelessness so they are better equipped to flexibly aid YYAs.

**Coordinated Entry:** Ensuring a youth-specific Coordinated Entry system will involve strategies that are expansive, flexible, adaptive, and not overwhelming. We want to ensure the "front door" of the homeless services is responsive to YYAs in a manner that facilitates connection and trust without requiring an overshare at the first interaction.

# The Plan

The following represents our strategic plan for preventing and ending YYA homelessness over the next three years. It reflects the collective work of our CCP Committee members, REACH YAB, and additional community partners conducted over 8 months. It includes actions that we believe are necessary to make a difference and are possible, given our deeply shared community understanding, while pushing us to challenge boundaries and innovate.

This section is separated by goal area and includes a brief statement of need, a series of objectives, and specific action steps that will help us to meet those objectives.

<h2>1. AUTHENTIC YYA LEADERSHIP</h2> <h3><u>STATEMENT OF NEED</u></h3> <p><b>We need to increase authentic YYA leadership throughout the system.</b> YYA experiencing homelessness in Cuyahoga County “want to be listened to and have their input taken seriously.” They want to be involved in every stage of the work and not simply when there is a major prize or challenge that requires their participation or when older adults need their stories to sell a narrative (i.e., tokenism).YYA experiencing homelessness should not be, but often are, overlooked for opportunities to lead, contribute to, or affect decision-making and systems change. Engaging with systems as a YYA often involves navigating attitudes rooted in adultism or paternalism, which can leave YYA feeling disempowered and managed. YYAs require a sense of agency and control over their lives in addition to adequate support and guidance for successful personal development, thriving in the community, and social-emotional well-being, and embedding authentic YYA leadership throughout the system will ensure the system works for YYAs experiencing homelessness.</p> <p><b>We need to improve trust in the system.</b> YYAs experiencing homelessness have experienced countless instances of broken trust. Those have come from individuals and systems, both well meaning and not. YYA report that some “resources are not what they project to be, [which] is one of the reasons youth in that age group stay on the streets or are transient.” Building trust throughout our system is critical authentic YYA leadership. We need YYA to trust that adult allies will value them and their perspectives, prioritize their priorities, treat them like true partners, and ensure that the system and its resources operate like we advertise and promote.</p>		
<p><b>Goal 1: EMBED AUTHENTIC YYA LEADERSHIP INTO THE COC</b></p>		
<p><b>OBJECTIVE 1a</b> <i>Expand and sustain a REACH YAB that represents the Cuyahoga County CoC</i></p>		
<p><b>Action Steps</b></p>	<p><b>Responsible Party</b></p>	<p><b>Timeframe</b></p>
<p><b>Action 1.a.1</b> Co-create strategies alongside REACH YAB to increase staffing support capacity and funding to compensate REACH YAB</p>	<p>REACH YAB, A Place 4 Me (AP4M)</p>	<p>June 2023 (ongoing)</p>

<b>Action 1.a.2</b> Co-create a strategy and increase capacity for increasing REACH YAB meeting frequency to weekly, bi-weekly, or frequency and structure identified by REACH YAB to support increased engagement across CoC	REACH YAB, AP4M	July 2023
<b>Action 1.a.3</b> Develop and implement REACH YAB recruitment, sustainability, and action plans led by REACH YAB with support from the CoC. Host and invest in events, partnership meetings, strategy sessions, or other YAB-identified convenings to support recruitment and accomplishment of goals. Ensure recruitment engagements are inclusive to promote and maintain a diverse group of youth leaders rooted in intersectional equity, empowering the leadership of BIPOC, queer, disabled, and neurodivergent young people.	REACH YAB, AP4M, OHS Services (CoC), Youth Leadership Bodies	Quarterly
<b>Action 1.a.4</b> Ensure that at least two REACH YAB members ages 16-24 are voting members to the OHS Advisory Board (the CoC Board)	REACH YAB, AP4M, OHS Advisory Board	Ongoing (2 year terms for YYA)
<b>Action 1.a.5</b> Establish a process for REACH YAB to join and form additional workgroups within the CoC governance structure	REACH YAB, AP4M, CoC	Ongoing
<b>Action 1.a.6</b> Invest in a group of YAB members to conduct follow-up surveys with YYA after exiting support and their former providers. YAB, CWRU, and the CoC will co-design the frequency (such as at exit, 30, 60, and 90 days, and beyond), format, and content, as well as supervise, and integrate the work into other information collection efforts	REACH YAB, AP4M, Case Western Reserve University (CWRU), CoC	Biannually starting FY 2024
<b>Action 1.a.7</b> Support REACH YAB in the development of formal partnerships with other community YYA leadership bodies to conduct listening sessions, share data, collect insights, and co-develop creative solutions to improve the broader Cuyahoga County community for all young people. Consider engaging the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council and CMSD class presidents, among others.	REACH YAB, AP4M, Youth Leadership Bodies	Ongoing
<b>OBJECTIVE 1b</b> <i>Establish a “nothing about young people without young people” culture at the system and program level</i>		
<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
<b>Action 1.b.1</b> Examine current meeting structures, work groups, and processes for identifying and making changes in systems and programs to co-develop and implement strategies that would improve YYA and	AP4M, REACH YAB, CoC, YYA Providers	Ongoing

REACH YAB engagement and participation.		
<b>Action 1.b.2</b> Create and invest in a strategy to support the YAB’s continued learning through training, conferences, and other learning opportunities	AP4M, CoC, National & Community Partners	June 2023, Ongoing
<b>Action 1.b.3</b> Require wide participation in training around YYA partnership, adultism, and other YAB-identified training needs to foster the desired culture.	AP4M, REACH YAB, CoC, YHDP Providers	Ongoing
<b>Action 1.b.4</b> Establish pathways from REACH YAB members to staff members, coordinators, leaders at the program and system levels	CoC, AP4M, YYA Providers, Community Partners	Ongoing
<b>Action 1.b.5</b> Ensure mechanisms for REACH YAB and YYA to have decision-making and evaluating power for YYA-serving programs	AP4M, REACH YAB, YYA Providers, CoC	Ongoing

## 2. EQUITY

### STATEMENTS OF NEED

**We need to address the overrepresentation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) YYA among YYA experiencing homelessness.** BIPOC YYA are more than twice as likely to engage homelessness assistance than our demographics would suggest (84% of HMIS cases compared to 41% of our county’s population) and three times more likely than their white YYA peers. Systemic racism and current discrimination play a central role in these disparities. The legacy of redlining in access to housing, zoning laws that perpetuate segregation, and the lack and extraction of generational wealth for families of color, mean that many BIPOC YYA don’t receive the same familial safety net as their white peers. What’s more, they describe facing daily discrimination that prevents them from fully benefiting from resources that they have available to them today. For example, YYA people report racist experiences in foster care that have profound and possibly traumatic implications, “In foster care, (we had a) difficult time with a white family; a controlling foster father and submissive foster mother who dictated that they should have an abortion and decided to abandon them at school.”

When looking at existing data for those who present for support, we do not currently see racial disparities in who then accesses high level system resources (e.g., permanent housing vouchers) or other outcomes. While this appears to be a system strength, and therefore suggest a need to focus on racial equity upstream on prevention and early intervention, we believe that our data needs further scrutiny and improvement. We must further assess data

collection, program components, and outcomes for disparities among historically underserved groups.

**We need to better serve young members of the LGBTQIA+ community.** Community members report that “there are gigantic gaps for LGBTQ folks.” LGBTQIA+ YYA do not consider emergency shelters and other system resources safe, and have discussed the need to create “queer-specific” spaces for their safety. 25% of system YYA identified as LGB (3% as gay, 7% as lesbian, and 15% as bisexual) and lesbian YYA experienced a longer length of stay in ES/SH/TH on average (281 days) compared to all other groups: 262 days for Bisexual YYA, 198 days for heterosexual YYA, and 81 days for gay YYA. Transgender and gender nonconforming YYA accounted for 2% of the total ES/TH/SH YYA population. On average, transgender and gender-nonconforming YYA stayed in ES/TH/SH about 10 days longer than cisgender YYA.

**We need more immigration related resources available for eligible YYA.** While we do not have much quantitative data at the intersection of immigration status and homelessness, community members identified unique challenges faced by immigrant YYA. In particular, they called out the “issue of not having case workers or [a] liaison that is competent in immigrant YYA.”

**Goal 2: IMPROVE AND ENHANCE SYSTEM AND PROGRAM WIDE INTERACTIONS, EXPERIENCES, AND OUTCOMES FOR BIPOC AND LGBTQIA+ YYA**

**OBJECTIVE 2a.** *Cultivate an anti-racist community response to YYA homelessness*

Action Steps	Responsible Party	Timeframe
<p><b>Action 2.a.1</b> Champion and invest in the ongoing work and recommendations of the Racial and Ethnic Equity and Inclusion (REEI) Design Lab and its 3 subcommittees: 1) Policy around Black young people entering the homeless system. (REEI Entry) 2) Policy around Black young people exiting the homeless system (REEI Exit). 3) Internal leadership at the organizational and systems level (REEI Leadership).</p>	<p>REEI Design Lab Steering Committee and Subcommittees, AP4M, OHS (CoC), YYA Providers</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Action 2.a.2</b> Expand relationships with legal services and grassroots groups to co-create a strategy and accountability response to racist and non-affirming Fair Housing violations across the CoC.</p>	<p>REEI Exit Subcommittee, CoC, partner organizations such as Fair Housing Center and Legal Aid</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Action 2.a.3</b> Partner with existing efforts to advocate for source of income protections, pay to stay legislation, access to legal representation for evictions, and other identified policies to support housing stability and</p>	<p>Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless, Enterprise, REEI</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>



promote equity across Cuyahoga County.	Exit Subcommittee, Advocacy organizations	
<b>Action 2.a.4</b> Partner with feeder systems including schools, child welfare, and juvenile justice, to develop and implement an indicator checklist to identify young people who are more likely to experience homelessness, in recognition of the racial disparities at the front door of the homeless system.	REEI Entry Subcommittee Cross-system partners	Ongoing, in process beginning in summer 2022
<b>Action 2.a.5</b> Develop a process and resources, in coordination with feeder systems, to prevent young people identified by the indicator checklist from experiencing homelessness.	REEI Entry Subcommittee, CoC, AP4M, Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services, Cuyahoga County Juvenile Justice system, Cleveland Metropolitan School District	Ongoing
<b>Action 2.a.6</b> Increase the pool of property owners willing to rent to young adults and work with housing programs, especially property owners with units in areas that young people would like to live in.	REEI Exit Subcommittee, CoC, AP4M Property owners	Ongoing
<b>Action 2.a.7</b> Increase strategies such as aftercare and access to flexible funding to support young people once they enter housing, especially Black young people, young people who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community, and young people who belong to historically marginalized communities.	REEI Exit Subcommittee, REACH YAB, CoC, AP4M	Ongoing
<b>Action 2.a.8</b> Obtain data using a racial equity lens (such as through focus groups, interviews, or surveys) from young people who return to homelessness after being in housing to learn and implement what could have helped them to maintain housing.	Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Workgroup, REEI Exit Subcommittee	Quarterly beginning October 2023
<b>Action 2.a.9</b> Expand the marketing of resources available across systems to reach marginalized communities. Ensure marketing is targeted to underserved and underrepresented groups (e.g., to undocumented people in their language)	CoC, YYA Providers, AP4M	Ongoing
<b>Action 2.a.10</b> Create equitable compensation protocols for all YYA with lived expertise of homelessness that support system implementation and provide feedback	CoC, A Place 4 Me (AP4M), REACH YAB, SOC	Ongoing

<p><b>Action 2.a.11</b> Map all available resources across systems and identify ways to ensure more geographic equity in where resources, including housing units, are available across the community. (especially in East Cleveland)</p>	<p>CQI Workgroup, Case Western Reserve University (NEOCANDO), REEI Exit Subcommittee</p>	<p>Pilot November 2023</p>
<p><b>Action 2.a.12</b> Develop a legal handbook designed for YYA and allies who support them to better navigate systems and fight for their rights</p>	<p>Tenant Rights Groups such as Legal Aid and Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless, Youth Leadership Bodies, REACH YAB</p>	<p>Pilot in Mar 2024</p>
<p><b>Action 2.a.13</b> Champion the enacting of local and state policy that names and addresses poverty, racism and others isms as the root cause of YYA homelessness in Ohio</p>	<p>Advocacy Groups such as Cuyahoga Affordable Housing Alliance, Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless, AP4M, REACH YAB, COHHIO</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Action 2.a.14</b> Work with local and county governments to enact a declaration of housing as a human right in Cuyahoga County and work towards a statewide declaration</p>	<p>Advocacy Groups, City and Local government Entities, OHS COHHIO</p>	<p>Operationalize by FY 2025</p>
<p><b>Action 2.a.15</b> Increase representation across the CoC so that those working in and leading agencies are more representative of those being served. Especially Black young people, young people who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community, and young people who belong to historically marginalized communities.</p>	<p>CoC, REEI Leadership Subcommittee</p>	<p>Operationalize by FY 2025</p>
<p><b>Action 2.a.16</b> Create a guide of HR policies and practices that are trauma-informed, with a focus on racial equity in reduction of barriers for employment for all people of color, to increase the number of Black and Brown leaders across the CoC.</p>	<p>REEI Leadership Subcommittee, YHDP Providers</p>	<p>In process beginning summer 2022, finalize for release by December 2023</p>
<p><b>Action 2.a.17</b> Leverage requests for proposals and other funding opportunities to promote racial and LGBTQIA+ equity.</p>	<p>CoC, REEI Leadership Subcommittee, Cuyahoga County</p>	<p>Ongoing, recommendations included in</p>

	foundations	guide released in December 2023
<b>Objective 2b.</b> <i>Ensure care provided system- and program-wide is rooted in dignity, and safety, and is affirming of all intersectional identities, including disability, gender, sexual orientation, culture, race, and ethnicity</i>		
<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
<b>Action 2.b.1</b> Review and remove system practices that are harmful to YYA (especially the LGBTQIA+ community and BIPOC YYA) and replace them with practices that are affirming and do no harm to YYA. Example: Remove YYA roommate assignments and replace them with YYA matching options and practices that infuse youth choice, remove practices that don't hold staff accountable for assuming gender identity, misgendering and deadnaming LGBTQIA+ YYA in alignment with the Equal Access Rule.	LGBTQIA+ Partners, CQI Workgroup, YYA providers, AP4M	Ongoing
<b>Action 2.b.2</b> Review and remove program and system practices that do not acknowledge or accommodate YYA with disabilities and replace them with equitable practices	Disability service providers, CQI Workgroup, YYA providers, AP4M	Ongoing
<b>Action 2.b.3</b> Create a strategy to improve transparent and equitable unit inspections system- and program-wide. Train providers system-wide to unlearn old practices and trust new compliant approaches. Ensure YYA are residing in clean, safe housing of their choice. Establish responsive protocols to support YYAs in reporting and addressing safety and structural issues that arise over time. Example: All Housing units are in a neighborhood the YYA has chosen, the unit has no infestations or mold and passes habitability standards.	OHS (CoC), Housing providers, YHDP Providers, REEI Exit subcommittee, AP4M, REACH YAB	Ongoing
<b>Action 2.b.4</b> Hire staff members and leadership at the program- and system-level that reflect the diverse identities of the YYA being served, especially BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ identities	YYA Providers, YHDP Providers, REEI Leadership subcommittee	Operationalize by FY 2025
<b>Action 2.b.5</b> Require training on working with LGBTQIA+ young people, working with transgender and gender non-conforming young people, and other LGBTQIA+ training needs to ensure young people of all identities receive safe and affirming services across the system.	YYA Providers, CoC, AP4M, LGBT Center, YHDP Providers, NEOCH	Starting October 2023 Ongoing triannually
<b>Action 2.b.6</b> Encourage CoC members to participate in	CoC, AP4M, REACH	Ongoing

REACH Ohio (COHHIO's state-wide racial equity work groups) and align racial equity strategies with REACH Ohio's work where possible.	YAB, COHHIO	
<b>Action 2.b.7</b> Collaborate with the CoC and housing partners to establish a just eligibility criterion for permanent housing for young adults, allowing them to have an equal opportunity to access resources as older adults. It may be beneficial to decrease the duration of homelessness required for YYA to be eligible, and work with HUD to eliminate stringent requirements for chronic homelessness.	CoC, Coordinated Entry, Housing Providers, AP4M	Ongoing
<b>Action 2.b.8</b> Ensure a follow-up to the analysis of 2017-2021 data on racial equity to develop key indicators and system behaviors that the CoC can track regularly and dashboard in an effort to increase transparency and support more diversity and equitable outcomes	Case Western Reserve University, AP4M, REACH YAB, CoC-HMIS	2024-2028
<b>Action 2.b.9</b> Ensure an analysis of the overrepresentation and adverse experiences of LGBTQIA+ YYA in the homelessness and adjacent systems. Consider developing key indicators and system behaviors that the CoC can track regularly and dashboard in an effort to increase transparency and support more equitable outcomes for queer YYA	Case Western Reserve University, AP4M, REACH YAB, CoC-HMIS	2024-2028

### 3. SAFE & STABLE HOUSING

#### STATEMENTS OF NEED

**We need more YYA-specific housing.** Over 500 YYA engage the homelessness system each year and 118 YYA are currently experiencing HUD-defined literal homelessness. Based on national averages (1/30 13-17 year olds and 1/10 18-24 year olds) many times more experience homelessness in Cuyahoga County each year. The CoC has only one scattered-site PSH project with 23 YYA-dedicated units and 2 PSH site-based projects with 34 YYA-dedicated units. YYA currently occupy 80 non-dedicated PSH units through prioritization, 20% of whom are parenting YYA. In 2021, RRH served 202 YYA households (74 parenting) and there are 20 units of TLP.

The local PHA houses ~187 YYA aged out of foster care and provides 64 FUP vouchers for scattered site units. In the housing market, stakeholders are seeing “skyrocketing rent prices,” a “lack of affordable housing,” and subsidized vouchers (e.g., RRH) “that are not paying a competitive rent rate.” What’s more, YA’s must fit under HUD’s chronic homelessness definition to be eligible for the current stock of PSH, limiting their options and “YYA housing units are often in neighborhoods that lack job opportunities.” As a result, YA’s report that it is

difficult to find and maintain housing, and providers are frustrated when they have “to send referrals out of the county.” They simply don’t have the tools like, “flexible rental assistance, YYA-specific master leasing options,” or the “after care capacity dedicated staffing” to help YYA thrive.

**We need more crisis beds and drop in service capacity.** The County recorded 92 unaccompanied YYA, 20 parenting YYA, and 27 children of those parenting YYA experiencing homelessness on the night of the PIT count in 2022. 71 of the unaccompanied young adults (18-24) and 15 of the parenting YYA with 21 young children were in emergency shelter. All 7 unaccompanied youth (under 18) were in TH. Adult oriented resources are not safe for YYA according to partners and “don’t provide any [relevant] resources.” They observe that “many organizations are full, at capacity,” they often “can’t find assistance,” and some are “denied access to a shelter because they didn’t have an ID.” They are frustrated that the community does not yet have a YYA-specific drop-in center, despite the high number of YYA experiencing homelessness on any given night in the County; but they acknowledge that finding a safe, accessible, and welcoming location with community buy-in would be a challenge.

Our housing programs need to better prepare YYA for independence. Partners identified that current YYA housing “didn’t prepare young folks for adulthood.” More specifically, they identified a need to better train YYA in how to save, do taxes, complete applications, access transportation; and understand independent living skills. “Where do young people go to build their safety net, secure long-term support?” This leaves “YYA lacking [the] skills and habits to maintain housing once housed.”

**We need to help YYA navigate the housing system.** YYA frequently report not understanding housing and related system navigation steps critical to finding and maintaining housing. “I don’t understand my voucher, it’s unclear who can help me, no one seems to have answers.” “I need help and I need to know what I need to do differently to be successful.” Partners report that “many programs don’t help young people identify housing” and report that there is incredible stress in “not knowing what to do next.” For many, the application processes are challenging, “especially for young people who’ve never done this before.” In some cases, when YYA do not trust a program, they will hold back important information critical to eligibility or an appropriate placement, endangering their safety and housing stability. YYA with histories of eviction really struggle to locate housing, although for some a simple “list of housing leads would be really helpful!”

**We need more effective landlord engagement.** Partners have identified difficulty using vouchers and finding affordable places to stay. Providers believe that they do not have enough relationships with property owners in the community to house the YYA who need it, and YYA report “a lack of housing leads.” It is just too “hard to find ways to connect with places that take assistance.” They report, “not a lot of decent places that accept vouchers, [and that] landlords feel burned from previous tenants.” Landlords do not trust YYA with their “limited rental histories” and often use credit or other proxies (e.g., 3x rent income) to discriminate against young people. When they do accept a YYA, “many landlords only want permanent vouchers because they don’t trust [RRH] anymore,” making it challenging to use a

popular and otherwise impactful housing model. What’s worse, partners report landlords not accepting fair market rent offers. Some “property managers are requesting cosigners, even when clients have RRH or permanent vouchers,” and others charge \$50 for late fees despite a Pay to Stay ordinance in CLE that caps late fees at \$25 community members identified that YA who are still in high school face the highest barriers locating landlords who are willing to rent to them.

**We need to hold landlords and housing authorities accountable for housing quality and help YYA fight for their housing rights.** YYA report living in unsafe environments, including mold and critter infestations, but with little support to do anything about it. “[I] didn’t want to stay and felt uncomfortable; workers [were] causing harm and [I was] not being believed by older adults. [There was] no accountability until the court was involved.” Partners report that system staff are missing poor housing conditions, that YYA “may not know their rights or how to advocate,” and that issues that start small are allowed to fester and become serious. One partner observed that inspections for families “seem to be faster than single YA RRH inspections,” suggesting that the “CoC is prioritizing families due to low shelter availability.” Regarding discrimination, partners report rampant age discrimination and little to help YYA fight it.

**Goal 3: CONTINUE EXPANDING THE CUYAHOGA COUNTY YOUTH-DEDICATED HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE SYSTEM**

**OBJECTIVE 3a.** *Increase homelessness crisis response coordination effectiveness and improve on-going coordination throughout response system engagement achieving independent permanent housing*

Action Steps	Responsible Party	Timeframe
<p><b>Action 3.a.1</b> Ensure a YYA dedicated coordinated entry system with 24-hour, mobile, low barrier access points and capacity to work with the coordinated entry committee to review program participants system processing, investigate delays, and issue recommendations for reducing the time it takes for resources to be available for eligible YYA</p>	<p>Coordinated Entry, YHDP Providers, AP4M</p>	<p>September 2024</p>
<p><b>Action 3.a.2</b> Establish a YYA dedicated targeted prevention program that provides financial assistance, transportation and supportive services (including LL mediation, LL incentives and LL supports) to YYA</p>	<p>YHDP Providers, REACH YAB</p>	<p>September 2024</p>
<p><b>Action 3.a.3</b> Develop and implement a TH-RRH program (30 TH units and 32 RRH units) that supports crisis site-based transitional and scattered-site rapid rehousing for young adults using a housing first approach, including shared housing options when YYA want and need them. This project is specifically designed to support the needs of LGBTQIA+ and survivors of violence and trafficking.</p>	<p>YHDP Providers, REACH YAB</p>	<p>September 2024</p>

<p><b>Action 3.a.4</b> Develop a strategy to create and maintain a community-wide landlord database that tracks relationships, points of contacts, and available resources and leverages the landlord engagement work of partners across the system</p>	<p>RRH/PSH Providers, PHA, Housing Navigators</p>	<p>September 2024</p>
<p><b>OBJECTIVE 3b</b> <i>Increase the availability of safe, affordable, quality, long-term housing options for young adults experiencing homelessness.</i></p>		
<p><b>Action Steps</b></p>	<p><b>Responsible Party</b></p>	<p><b>Timeframe</b></p>
<p><b>Action 3.b.1</b> Champion investment in 50 units of PSH for YYA with severe chronic disabilities including robust and meaningful supports to address physical and behavioral health challenges, while maintaining with a focus on equity and affirming care for YYA who identify as BIPOC and members of the LGBTQIA+ communities</p>	<p>Transition Aged Youth (TAY) Workgroup, REACH YAB, AP4M, Enterprise Community Partners, EDEN, Inc., CHN Housing Partners</p>	<p>Summer 2024</p>
<p><b>Action 3.b.2</b> Remove and replace practices that create barriers to access such as proof of income, 3rd party homelessness verifications, required services and life skills. Establish system and program-wide practices that are rooted in housing first principles with a focus on equity, affirmation and meaningful supports that meet individual YYA needs (especially for YYA who identify as members of the BIPOC or LGBTQIA+ communities)</p>	<p>OHS (CoC), Advocacy Groups, AP4M, YYA Providers</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Action 3.b.3</b> Expand program models using special activities to calibrate length of stay with the individual needs of YYA. Establish a TH-RRH project with a minimum lease term of one month and an average length of stay of 6-8 months maximum length of stay of 36 months to better meet YYA where they are and onto their best next.</p>	<p>REACH YAB, YHDP Providers</p>	<p>September 2024</p>
<p><b>Action 3.b.4</b> Remove and replace the across the board practice that limits YYA to one-bedroom units regardless of Fair Market Rent Rate and replace them with practices that seek to rule in housing units not rule them out. Train providers system wide to unlearn old practices and trust new approaches.</p>	<p>AP4M, CoC, Housing Providers</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Action 3.b.5</b> Hire 2 housing locators tasked with creating strategies for establishing landlord (LL) lists, LL engagement, LL retention, LL tenant matching &amp; relationship development and LL CQI. Create a housing locator and housing navigator team wherein the housing locator is responsible for walking alongside YYA in their</p>	<p>YHDP Providers, CQI Workgroup , REACH YAB</p>	<p>September 2024</p>

housing search and tenant journey.		
<b>Action 3.b.6</b> Remove and replace system level and program level practices of housing YYA in units with no furniture or household supplies and replace them with system and program wide practices of rehousing YYA with dignity and tools to develop independence. Utilize a special activity to provide up-to \$300 of assistance. Create a system and program wide strategy for coordinating across partners that provide dignity supplies and furniture.	YHDP Providers, Housing Providers, AP4M	September 2024
<b>Action 3.b.7</b> Create a strategy to improve transparent and equitable rental calculations system and program wide. Train providers system wide to unlearn old practices and trust new compliant approaches with YHDP principles as a cornerstone.	CoC, AP4M, Housing Providers, CQI Workgroup	Ongoing
<b>Action 3.b.8</b> Identifying additional funding to meet the permanent housing stock needs	CoC, AP4M, CCP Committee	1-5 years range

## 4. PERMANENT CONNECTIONS

### STATEMENT OF NEED

**We need supports that build healthy and stable community connections.** Community is essential for all of us, and critical for YYA experiencing or at risk of homelessness. We each rely on family, friends, neighbors, professional networks, fellow congregants, peers, and teammates, to meet our daily needs for safety, social and emotional connection, advice, small non-clinical support, and that feeling of connectedness. Unfortunately, YYA do not always have trusted people in their lives to satisfy those needs; “it’s just me, there’s not a family of trusted people around me. It’s on me.” That often means leaning on unsafe connections, and “staying in a situation that’s harmful [and] not safe.” It means being forced to go it alone, which is something that no well-resourced person has to do: “Getting out if it is not “running away” you know what you need...listening to myself more, trusting myself and my own judgment.”

### **Goal 4: HARNESS THE POWER OF CHOSEN CONNECTIONS IN THE RESPONSE TO ENDING YYA HOMELESSNESS**

**OBJECTIVE 4a.** *Cultivate buy-in and establish a culture at the system and program-level that recognizes, embraces and seeks to connect, reconnect and enhance YYA chosen connections.*

Action Steps	Responsible Party	Timeframe
<b>Action 4.a.1</b> Review and replace unjust program and	Youth Leadership	Starting



system practices that require YYA to choose their housing over their chosen connections/loved ones and replace them with affirming services that promote connections to chosen family.	Bodies, REACH YAB, OHS (CoC), CQI workgroup	October 2023, Ongoing
<b>Action 4.a.2</b> Ensure the safety and protection of YYA in foster care by enhancing policies and procedures to support chosen connections where possible	Division of Children and Family Services, AP4M, CoC	Starting Jan 2024, Ongoing
<b>Action 4.a.3</b> Train Navigators and child welfare/Bridges partners to refer all eligible YYA (foster/former foster) including minors to Community of Hope to ensure YYA have access to the open table model	Health & Human Services Consultant, DCFS (Bev Torres), AP4M (Project Transition), CoC, REEI Entry Subcommittee	Operationalize by FY 2025
<b>Action 4.a.4</b> Partner with supportive services agencies and other partners to operationalize reunification strategies such as transportation (bus tickets, plane tickets, etc.). This strategy will support minors.	Chief Probation Officer, JJ Court Advocate/Social Worker, CoC, Collaborative for Juvenile Justice	Operationalize by FY 2025
<b>Action 4.a.5</b> Research, develop, and implement a restorative justice framework in helping LGBTQIA+ YYA including those who are minors reunify with estranged families directed by youth choice	Community of Hope, YHDP Providers, YYA providers	Ongoing
<b>Action 4.a.6</b> YYA will be encouraged to share information about their children during intake, specifically to assist with reunification when requested (if children are not in their care). The CoC and DCFS will work together utilizing a release of information as needed. Supportive services staff will be trained in the importance and priority of reunification. The CQI team will assess intake information during reviews to ensure this process is happening.	CoC, Child Welfare, AP4M, CQI Workgroup, Coordinated Entry, Division of Children and Family Services	Operationalize by FY 2024
<b>Action 4.a.7</b> Formalize and embed opportunities that empower YYA to explore, sharpen, and celebrate their strengths and skills in alignment with YHDP principles.	REACH YAB, AP4M	Biannually
<b>Action 4.a.8</b> Co-organize system-wide YYA social events rooted in inclusivity and respect that encourages young people to connect, share, learn, and heal.	REACH YAB, AP4M	Quarterly

## 5. EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT/EMPLOYMENT TRAINING

### STATEMENTS OF NEED

**We need to better resource our public pre K-12 schools to support YYA experiencing homelessness.** For some of our YYA, high school offered “no resources” when they were experiencing housing instability. When considering all students experiencing homelessness in our system (including accompanied and unaccompanied students) a study from Case Western revealed that 36.3% repeated a grade at some point in their schooling and 80% of YYA experiencing homelessness were chronically absent from school. The authors noted that negative educational outcomes are important indicators of need for YYA experiencing homelessness (Heerde et al., 2020), with difficulties with learning often beginning early for young people living in poverty, even if they have not experienced homelessness. Additionally, state level McKinney-Vento data indicates that over 97% of all students experiencing homelessness in the Cuyahoga county districts are doubled up, 1.93% are in shelter and 0.96% are experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Statewide Ohio students make up approximately 2.5% of the youth homelessness population. We can improve school success rates for YYA experiencing homelessness through increased coordination and provision of resources.

The majority of YYA who later experience homelessness start kindergarten unprepared for the educational environment in which they find themselves. Their parents from families of origin are young and roughly half have graduated high school. Analysis from Case Western highlights the importance of early intervention for YYA who later experience homelessness. Along with a series of negative poverty related statistics, the majority of YYA observed in the system are unprepared for kindergarten and a third had to repeat a grade during their time in public education.

**We need to better resource our colleges and universities to support YYA experiencing homelessness.** Partners identified a lack of resources at local colleges and universities for students experiencing homelessness: “[They] had no resources for folks experiencing homelessness.” When the resources do exist, some observed that “they were kept quiet” and that it was “difficult to get the word out.” Students are often asked “to self-advocate” when it is very difficult to talk about housing instability and homelessness as a result of trauma, fear of social stigma and isolation, and the risk to their school enrollment and academic standing.

We need to reduce stigma in the workplace and better support YYA to navigate their careers. As reported by one partner , “I can feel the tension and judgment from my workers, I feel unheard and unsupported in the things I’m asking for, and can see the gossip happening behind the scenes.” Workplaces frequently include strict hierarchies that make it difficult for YYA in the workforce to talk about their housing instability, to ask for reasonable accommodations that do not make them less effective at their work, and to find them the support and mentorship they need to thrive. “What am I to do when I need help and the person assigned to help me can’t, how to elevate in life when someone is holding power over

me?”

**We need more career track and living wage opportunities for our YYA.** The high cost of rent that YYA are forced to pay requires an income that allows them to pay it. “Many YYA aren’t paid a living wage,” which is \$15.61 per hour with no children and \$34.70 per hour with one child in the County. With a state minimum wage of \$10.10 per hour and the low-paying jobs that partners report having access to, YYA cannot pay rent or, in many cases, access a lease in the first place. Many YYA experiencing homelessness lack any source of income.

**Goal 5: CULTIVATE EDUCATION/EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS ALONGSIDE YYA TO EQUIP THEM WITH LIFE SKILLS TO MANIFEST THEIR DESIRED FUTURES**

**OBJECTIVE 5a.** *Increase the capacity of current programs to champion YYA in achieving education and career goals.*

Action Steps	Responsible Party	Timeframe
<p><b>Action 5.a.1</b> Develop a strategy to expand the Opportunity Passport model (3-1 match on costs that increase access to education) and create a homelessness specific pilot of the College Bound model (targeted investment of \$300-\$600 monthly cash incentive per YYA enrolled in college.)</p>	<p>AP4M (Opportunity Passport Coordinator) YHDP providers</p>	<p>Strategy developed June 2024 Funds &amp; capacity to fully operationalize 2028</p>
<p><b>Action 5.a.2</b> Convene McKinney-Vento Liaisons quarterly for round table discussions and upskilling alongside YYA to share updates/learnings and co-create approaches to walking alongside minor YYA in their individualized approach using a housing first model.</p>	<p>CMSD, McKinney-Vento Coordinators, REACH YAB, AP4M, Youth Leadership Bodies, YHDP providers</p>	<p>Quarterly beginning 2024</p>
<p><b>Action 5.a.3</b> Invest in a systems-wide financial coaching initiative that works in collaboration with other system programs. Example: Financial literacy initiatives like those championed by the Annie E Casey Foundation <a href="https://www.aecf.org/blog/financial-literacy-for-youth">https://www.aecf.org/blog/financial-literacy-for-youth</a></p>	<p>Financial Literacy Programs, Annie E. Casey</p>	<p>Starting June 2024, Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Action 5.a.4</b> Invest in and champion the development of life skills programming that explore psycho-social-emotional themes that impact educational and professional attainment and longevity. Support YYA in establishing fulfilling personal and professional networks.</p>	<p>Life Skills Program Providers, LGBT Center, REACH YAB</p>	<p>Starting October 2023, Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Action 5.a.5</b> Explore universal basic income for young</p>	<p>Advocacy Groups,</p>	<p>Pilot</p>

people experiencing homelessness (or targeted subpopulations of young people experiencing homelessness) to support them in meeting their basic needs while pursuing education and/or employment goals with the dignity of choice.	REEI Exit Subcommittee, Cuyahoga County funding community	strategy FY 2025
<b>Action 5.a.6</b> Working in concert with the OHS Strategic Plan, create a referral and navigation system for YYA experiencing homelessness to strengthen cross-sector connections and resources between the workforce and homeless sectors and support young people to quickly link with employment supports and permanent exit homelessness.	Enterprise, CoC, Job and Family Services, Ohio Means Jobs, AP4M, REACH YAB	Operationalize by FY 2025
<b>OBJECTIVE 5b.</b> <i>Develop cross-system learning that promotes a coordinated shared-value response that serves as a launch pad and support to YYA's in their education and career goals.</i>		
<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
<b>Action 5.b.1</b> Review and replace unjust program and system practices that require YYA to choose their housing over their education with affirming services that promote career and education independence.	CQI workgroup, AP4M, OHS (CoC), Housing Providers	Starting October 2023, Ongoing
<b>Action 5.b.2</b> Establish a strategy for creating, maintaining and improving pre-k, k-12, higher ed and trade school educational partnerships and coordination efforts system and program wide. This strategy will support minors.	Ohio Means Jobs, Workforce Providers, Education Institutions	Pilot March 2024
<b>Action 5.b.3</b> Establish a strategy for creating, maintaining and improving employment and career training partnerships system and program wide.	Ohio Means Jobs, Workforce Providers	Pilot March 2024
<b>Action 5.b.4</b> Convene 3 listening sessions with pre-k, k-12, higher ed and trade school educational partners to better understand needs, barriers and solutions. This strategy will support minors.	Education Institutions, Early Childcare and Prevention Agencies	Starting July 2023
<b>Action 5.b.5</b> Develop funding sources, recommendations, incentives, and supports for system providers to hire YYA with lived experience that are representative of the population, including former clients and those who identify as BIPOC and LGBTQIA+, to career track positions that are well supported, well paid, and include professional development	AP4M, REEI Leadership Subcommittee, CoC	Operationalize by FY 2025

## 6. SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

### STATEMENTS OF NEED

**We need to better support YYA living on the street, in cars, and in other places not meant for sleeping, and helping YYA meet their basic needs.** YYA living unsheltered are at significant risk of trauma, negative health outcomes, and continued homelessness. While the 2022 PIT count only identified 5 YYA living unsheltered, all of whom were unaccompanied young adults, national research is clear that unsheltered YYA are difficult to count and PIT counts are likely to undercount the prevalence of unsheltered homelessness. Unsheltered partners reported surviving despite numerous daily struggles, including “navigating unpredictable weather while sleeping in a car,” and a significant lack of support. It is a challenge simply “keeping hope alive while navigating homelessness” and “not receiving adequate support from workers while experiencing homelessness.” Partners also report significant gaps in meeting their basic needs. One partner described the difficulty in accessing “clothes and basic needs,” and being forced “to steal clothing,” to get by. Providers pointed to a more recent “increased need for client assistance funding for YA's” to cover these basic needs.

**We need to better support YYA parents.** The PIT Count identified 20 young parents (all female identified) with 27 young children in emergency shelters and TH. Partners described being forced into impossible situations, experiencing homelessness with a toddler in another state, losing documentation and being forced to give up a child, the family system viewing them as a problem, and trying to survive in a shelter with their young kids. One partner described never receiving the counseling and support they needed, and being forced to go “back to my baby's father where I was in the same situation again.” Parenting YYA lack access to child care, and we know that many YYA in our systems were born to very young parents (25% of all YYA served who have a record we can match [62%] have birth mothers between 15 and 19). Supporting young parents comprehensively may not only end the homelessness of the parent, but also prevent homelessness for their young children generationally.

**We need to improve awareness of support for survivors of violence, including trafficking.** Survivors of intimate partner violence and trafficking face unique risks and often need specialized resources and support. One partner explains that survivors of violence “have to experience more trauma by the lack of resources.” Others point to the “lack of knowledge of programming and resources” as a critical gap for the system. Among YYA who interact with the homelessness system, ~5% of unaccompanied minors, ~22% of unaccompanied 18-24 year olds, and ~40% of parenting 18-24 year olds report DV experiences. Based on available research, we expect 19% of YYA experiencing homelessness will also be survivors of human trafficking and exploitation. In 2021 alone, the Salvation Army's human trafficking unit served 45 survivors of trafficking with shelter respite and other supportive services.

**We must prioritize and better support YYA with disabilities, especially those with**

**mental health needs, for housing and services.** In 2021, 21% of YYA households in HMIS with a disability returned to homelessness within 12 months of exiting to permanent housing. These YYA do not meet the chronic homelessness definition or qualify for most PSH. We see significant annual demand for new YYA units with supportive services to ensure YYA do not return to shelter. Overall, YYA who experienced homelessness with a disability stayed in shelter, TH or SH 22 days more compared to nondisabled YYA, and led specifically by those suffering from mental illness, drug use disorder or both drug and alcohol disorders. Interestingly, HIV/AIDS positive YYA stayed in shelter, TH, or SH about 21 days less than those without HIV/AIDS. Partners have uplifted difficulties housing clients that struggle with severe mental health, and that YYA are not able “to choose what’s best for them.” Other challenges that community members have identified include anti-abortion Laws that are likely to negatively impact YA, difficulty linking clients to MH services, and long wait times for assessment and assignment to case management. Some providers have noticed that “some young people are not interested in mental health services or assessments” and that there is “some stigma around those.”

**We need to be better prepared for health emergencies and to finish the fight against COVID.** COVID exposed an important gap in our community’s public health response. We continue to experience “ongoing issues with COVID spiking.” Some partners have pointed to “Monkeypox showing up in the homeless system” noting that there are “not clear protocols, [which] will impact admissions to shelter.” They are concerned about the safety of staff as well as program participants, particularly when targeted funding during the pandemic has now ended.

**We need to support YYA to obtain documentation.** Documentation places an important role in health and wellbeing (as well as other outcomes). This is particularly true when signing up for state and federal benefits like SSI/SSDI. Young people and providers report difficulty in obtaining out of state birth certificates. “[The] process is lengthy to try to support youth in getting birth certificates and social security cards. Long wait times for Social Security Cards. [This] takes longer for young people who are 18.”

**Goal 6: ESTABLISH A YYA HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE SYSTEM THAT OPERATES AS A COMMUNITY OF CARE**

**OBJECTIVE 6a.** *Increase the capacity of current system response and staffing to support YYA’s social and emotional well-being.*

Action Steps	Responsible Party	Timeframe
<p><b>Action 6.a.1</b> Develop a strategy for systems-wide in-depth on-going training for supportive services staff and supervisors in embedding YHDP principles. Formalize, publish and make widely available the training schedule, strongly encourage system and program wide attendance and engagement</p>	<p>REACH YAB, AP4M, CoC, YHDP Providers, CQI Workgroup, TA</p>	<p>Starting June 2023, Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Action 6.a.2</b> Develop a strategy to increase the</p>	<p>YYA Providers, CoC,</p>	<p>Operationali</p>

recruitment, retention, prioritization and support of system and program staff with lived experiences of homelessness, BIPOC staff, LGBTQIA+ staff and staff with other foster care and juvenile justice system involvement.	AP4M, REEI Leadership Subcommittee, TA	ze by FY 2025
<b>Action 6.a.3</b> Imbed somatic trauma informed approaches system and program-wide. Embrace collective calm, and center community healing practices on an individual, team and system-level. Example: Enhance staff-care and build micro regulation techniques into all spaces such as meditation and sensory regulation, promote self-awareness/self-reflection, unlearn shame & embrace empathy	Cross-system Partnerships, CoC, TA	Operationali ze by FY 2026
<b>Action 6.a.4</b> Expand the A Place For Me Youth System Navigator model system-wide by establishing a YHDP Youth Navigation Project. Hire 6 staff with lived experience of homelessness and or staff that represent the diverse identities of the YYA being served, especially BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ identities.	AP4M, YYA Providers, CoC	December 2023
<b>Action 6.a.5</b> Develop system-wide recommended practices for supporting staff, including living wages, professional development, vicarious trauma prevention, and other mental health protective initiatives, and embed these recommendations into community funding opportunities	CoC, CCP Committee, REACH YAB, TA, YHDP Providers	September 2024
<b>Action 6.a.6</b> Develop a standard protocol at intake for asking about carceral system engagement that is safe, builds trust, and leverages positive youth development and trauma informed care principles	CoC-HMIS, AP4M, CQI Workgroup, TA	Operationali ze by FY 2025

## 7. CROSS SYSTEM PARTNERSHIP

### STATEMENTS OF NEED

**We need to better connect housing resources.** How do other systems connect to housing resources? We are rich in resources but often fall short with coordination.

**We need to streamline the access process and align system values, goals, and priorities.** Partners describe a system that is “rich in resources but often falls short with coordination.” Providers and YYA are fatigued engaging with many many different organizations, intake personnel, and processes. As one partner put it, “multiple calls to multiple organizations is discouraging.” Community members are not comfortable with many different agencies having access to certain records and having to consistently reupload

specific documents when seeking resources. There appear to be many organizations and agencies that control housing resources, but YYA and direct service providers do not have the knowledge or protocols in place to access them. One barrier to better coordination is an agency mindset that “often looks at how we got here but not where we’re going from here.” It takes too long to make cross system placements, and some systems are seriously underutilized by YYA experiencing homelessness. For example, some partners describe the connection with Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) as limited, with roughly one-third (32.3%) receiving housing assistance. Of this group, 77.3% were living in the city of Cleveland.

**We are not connecting system data.** Partners feel that we don’t understand the impact of other system data on the inflow of YYA into the homelessness system. Some of those systems collect data on housing, (for example, the Ohio juvenile justice risk assessment score includes housing factors) but we are not incorporating this data. Similarly, the YYA homelessness system is not incorporating data on truancy, attendance, child welfare FINs case data, etc. The system is also missing neighborhood and community information that can inform program location needs and employment and income data that might help us better understand stable income for YYA, job access, and access to a living wage. While we have begun basic systems data matching with Case Western, there is far more that we need to do to more efficiently support YYA to thrive.

**We need to address system cliff effect policies and better prepare and support YYA at risk of homelessness when they leave systems.** We are setting YYA up to fail by ending benefits and program participation early and abruptly, often for reasons of bureaucracy and not individualized care. In one example, a YYA described spending two months on their own, “[I] wanted to return to my previous foster home but couldn’t, but my foster mom wanted me to return.” Eventually that YYA did get to return, but it was not easy. Emancipation presents its own challenges, where YYA report being immediately disconnected from resources and protection at 21. Other partners report that “YYA age out of foster care and juvenile justice without housing support.” YYA need knowledge when they age out of systems and institutions, they lack connections to people and resources, and may even have lost the important personal belongings that they entered with.

**We must work upstream by developing targeted strategies for subpopulations of YYA at risk of homelessness and expanding collaboration with child welfare and justice systems to improve discharge plans and prevent homelessness.** According to system matching work completed by Case Western, 18% of females and 25% of males who experienced homelessness had a juvenile court filing. 25% of Black YYA experiencing homelessness and 13% of White YYA had filings in juvenile court. Black YYA experiencing homelessness were prevalent across all public assistance types (e.g., SNAP, TANF, and daycare subsidy). 61% of all participants were involved with child welfare services with a mean age of child welfare involvement of 11. YYA had an average of five DCFS incidents and an average of one substantiated incident. Just under 13% of the total study population had been placed in foster care, roughly 34% of whom aged out of the foster care system. 30% had contact with the juvenile justice system, 17.4% of which were for violent crimes, 1.7% drug related, 13.1% property related, and 19.9% for other crime types. The Case Western



study found that YYA who interact with juvenile justice prior to the age of 25 experience literal homelessness earlier in the life course and for longer periods of time, particularly for female-identified youth. Unfortunately, partners identified little funding for prevention, despite the apparent advantages. They “should be preventing us from reaching the lowest of the low.” YYA find themselves “not poor enough” for services until it is too late and they are experiencing the consequences of homelessness.

**Goal 7: ENSURE THAT ALL YYA RECEIVE HIGHLY COORDINATED AFFIRMING CARE ACROSS SYSTEMS**

**OBJECTIVE 7a. Establish a collaborative network of partnerships to better support YYA**

Action Steps	Responsible Party	Timeframe
<p><b>Action 7.a.1</b> Establish authentic relationships and increase coordination with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-K-12 education system</li> <li>• Higher Education</li> <li>• Child Welfare system</li> <li>• Juvenile Justice &amp; DYS system</li> <li>• Mutual-Aid Organizations</li> <li>• Government &amp; Civic engagement orgs</li> <li>• Faith-based communities</li> </ul> <p>This strategy will support minors.</p>	<p>Project ACT, Say YES to Cleveland, CSU, Tri-C, BOE (local and state), ADAMHS Board, Office of Prevention, Intervention, Opportunity for YYA, Department of Public Health, Collaborative for Juvenile Justice, Juvenile Justice, DCFS + Metro, AP4M, CoC</p>	<p>Operationalize by 2025</p>
<p><b>Action 7.a.2</b> Co-create on-going governance and development of the YHDP CCP. Produce a report that is included in an annual update to this plan to end YYA homelessness and used to update our understanding of needs, the success of existing interventions, and our strategy for the next year of work</p>	<p>CQI Workgroup</p>	<p>July 2023 Ongoing annually</p>
<p><b>Action 7.a.3</b> Start work with the CCP Committee, YHDP Core Team, REACH YAB to identify additional partners who can collaborate to develop an implementation team and workgroups to organize and operationalize the YHDP action plan.</p>	<p>CCP Committee, YHDP Core Team, REACH YAB, TA</p>	<p>July 2023</p>
<p><b>Action 7.a.4</b> Co-Create marketing resources across systems. Ensure marketing is targeted to underserved and underrepresented groups (e.g., to undocumented people in their language)</p>	<p>CQI Workgroup, OHS, YYA providers, AP4M, REACH YAB</p>	<p>July 2023 Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Action 7.a.5</b> Co-create training and community education strategies with cross-system partners focused on core YHDP principles, including</p>	<p>Frontline Services, Eden, Cleveland Mediation Center</p>	<p>October 2023, Ongoing</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authentic youth collaboration</li> <li>• Housing First</li> <li>• Trauma-Informed practices</li> <li>• Harm Reduction</li> <li>• Critical Time Intervention</li> <li>• Racial and LGBTQIA+ social identities, and intersectionality</li> </ul>	(continued education on diversion), NEOCH, LGBT Center, YWCA, AP4M, TA	quarterly
<b>Action 7.a.6</b> Identify opportunities for and operationalize peer mentorship and YYA leaders/REACH YAB members per learning between people with lived experiences of homelessness and interaction with other systems.	Youth Leadership Bodies, REACH YAB, AP4M	Ongoing
<b>Action 7.a.7</b> Develop universal standards for data entry across a broad range of YYA-serving providers (beyond those participating in HMIS) that meets a community needs for YYA-specific data and evaluation while reducing the burden for front line staff and program data team. Consider standardization across program types and more relevant and information exit destination data. This strategy will support minors.	HMIS System Administrators, YHDP Coordinator, OHS, YHDP Providers, AP4M, CQI workgroup	October 2023
<b>Action 7.a.8</b> Identify, recruit, and integrate YYA serving providers who are not currently participating in HMIS	AP4M, CoC, CQI Workgroup	January 2024 Ongoing
<b>Action 7.a.9</b> Work with the CoC and across systems to better integrate YYA into coordinated entry-based case conferencing and by-name-lists, with the goal of more equitable access to non-YYA specific resources (including older adult providers)	CoC, REACH YAB, AP4M, Youth Leadership Bodies, YYA Providers, Coordinated Entry, TA	Jan 2024
<b>Action 7.a.10</b> Partner with local hospitals, clinics, and healthcare organizations to ensure access to primary care (specialists when needed), sexual health resources, and vaccines to YYA experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The partnership should clarify and standardize access and protocols for housing programs while ensuring that YYAs who need to meet eligibility criteria have immediate access to resources. Include Central Outreach in Cleveland Heights. Consider biannual convenings to share best practices and assess needs among young people using YYA services.	Healthcare Providers and Clinics, YYA Providers, CoC, AP4M, MetroHealth, AIDS Taskforce	Starting October 2023 Ongoing
<b>Action 7.a.11</b> Publish and maintain a public web-based community calendar of listening sessions, round tables, coordination meetings, etc.	AP4M, CoC, YYA Providers, REACH YAB	October 2023 Ongoing

<p><b>Action 7.a.12</b> Develop protocol to ensure seamless easy access between the homeless services system and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Housing Authorities (mainstream vouchers, FYI, Section 8)</li> <li>• Mental health system (and affirming mental health/ substance use supports)</li> <li>• Developmental disabilities system</li> <li>• Social security and other mainstream benefits ( i.e.Medicaid)</li> <li>• Workforce (WIOVA, CCMEP)</li> <li>• Education (i.e. McKinney-Vento)</li> <li>• Child Care (Head Start, ODJFS licensed providers)</li> </ul> <p>This strategy will support minors.</p>	<p>Cross-system Partnerships, CoC</p>	<p>Operationali ze by FY 2026</p>
<p><b>Action 7.a.13</b> Develop coordination protocols and strategies to ensure foster youth do not exit care to homelessness (i.e. cross system case conferencing, data sharing, cost-sharing/braiding funds)</p>	<p>Health &amp; Human Services Consultant, DCFS (Bev Torres), AP4M (Project Transition), CoC, REEI Entry Subcommittee</p>	<p>Operationali ze by FY 2025</p>
<p><b>Action 7.a.14</b> Develop coordination protocols and strategies to ensure justice/legal system youth do not exit care to homelessness (i.e. cross system case conferencing, data sharing, cost-sharing/braiding funds)</p>	<p>Chief Probation Officer, JJ Court Advocate/Social Worker, CoC, Collaborative for Juvenile Justice</p>	<p>Operationali ze by FY 2025</p>

## 8. CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

### STATEMENTS OF NEED

**We need to build our homelessness data capacity, make it more accessible, and better educate YYA and the public on its importance.** According to system leaders, we don't fully understand the complete picture of inflow, beds, and utilization for YYA. Some beds are not included in HMIS and so we need to recruit and maintain those providers. We need to better update information in HMIS and use standardized forms at exit to improve exit destination data. With better data that tell a coherent public story, we then need to educate clients on the use and importance of those data. Better data will improve trust, awareness, and buy in that will be critical for the success of our coordinated community response.

**We need to better understand our housing inventory for YYA.** We currently have gaps in our understanding of YYA accessed units and the area that surrounds them. This kind of detailed information, including access to retail grocery, and transportation, may be critical to the success of a given YYA. These data will also help us better understand where YYA are

housed using our system resources and why some are more successful than others for future planning and quality improvement.

**We need better data on special populations.** We have significant gaps in our understanding of certain key special populations. For example, we need data on violent or unstable relationships resulting in Category 4 homelessness, trafficking and domestic violence data. We need MH illness-specific data and to understand why a significantly higher number of YYA females are experiencing homelessness. 200 more females experienced homelessness than males, but it's unclear what is driving this disparity. Similarly with regard to minors, over 50% of YYA in HMIS between 12-24 are under 18, but only a small fraction of YYA served by our system are unaccompanied minors (7.3%).

**We don't understand aftercare support or housing stability.** We know little about what happens when YYA leave our programs. This makes it difficult to understand how our programs may have failed YYA who later experience instability or a return to homelessness. We know similarly little about what worked well for those who are successful. Better understanding what could have prevented returners from needing services again, where dignity was and was not present in their experience, is critical for us to create the system that will end YYA homelessness with equity in our community. That understanding likely includes measuring housing stability, for which the system currently does not have a standardized metric. We need to regularly identify and incorporate available protective and risk factor data and standardize the practice of collection and interpretation across our system. Additionally, we need to establish supportive services that include aftercare.

**Goal 8: ENSURE CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AT THE PROGRAM AND SYSTEM LEVEL**

**OBJECTIVE 8a.** *Imbed authentic and transparent continuous quality improvement system-wide.*

Action Steps	Responsible Party	Timeframe
<b>Action 8.a.1</b> Create a systemwide youth homelessness dedicated CQI workgroup focused on establishing, enhancing and maintaining improvement system wide	REACH YAB, YYA Providers, JJ, Child Welfare, RHY Providers, Education and Early Intervention Services, TA	October 2023
<b>Action 8.a.2</b> Develop capacity and promote CQI dedicated staffing at the program and system level	CQI Workgroup, YHDP providers	Jan 2024
<b>Action 8.a.3</b> Co-create, establish and maintain system-wide program standards, policies and procedures alongside YYA with lived experience & the CoC	CoC, YHDP Core Team, REACH YAB, YHDP providers	Jan 2024

<p><b>Action 8.a.4</b> Provide ongoing training, coaching and experiential learning to embed and cultivate buy-in on standards system wide</p>	<p>Case Western Reserve University Office of Evidence Based Practices hired consultants, Housing Innovations, NEOCH, TA, YHDP providers</p>	<p>March 2024 Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Action 8.a.5</b> Establish an on-going process for measuring, tracking and transparently communicating YYA outcomes in HMIS, disaggregated by race, gender and sexual orientation on a regular basis</p>	<p>HMIS System Administrator, CQI Workgroup, YHDP providers</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Action 8.a.6</b> Expand and formalize existing cross system data matching and data sharing partnerships to better understand the complexities of cross system YYA experiences and respond to them</p>	<p>Case Western Reserve University, CoC, Juvenile Justice, Child Welfare, CMSD</p>	<p>Operationalize by FY 2025</p>
<p><b>Action 8.a.7</b> Establish feedback methods in addition to convening quarterly listening sessions to collect routine feedback from YYA and ensure that YYA experiences with the system at large and within each program aligns with YHDP principles especially racial and LGBTQIA+ equity</p>	<p>REACH YAB, AP4M, CQI Workgroup, TA</p>	<p>Starting January 2024 Quarterly</p>
<p><b>Action 8.a.8</b> Expand the collection and maintenance of sexual orientation and gender identity data (SOGI). Develop a robust informed consent model that ensures youth understand how and why their data will be shared; create and respect opportunities to opt out of data collection, especially when it comes to sexual-orientation and gender identity data Develop robust data protection policies to ensure that only client-facing staff in the continuum of care can view individualized data</p>	<p>CQI Workgroup, HMIS System Administrator, CWRU, LGBT Center</p>	<p>Operationalize by FY 2025</p>
<p><b>Action 8.a.9</b> Develop a YYA data strategy that identifies gaps in our information collection, recommends new elements, informs the design of a transparent data dashboard, and establishes a protocol for annual review of data collection. Include data elements for front door outcomes and follow up for those who do not enter homelessness programs (i.e., diversion)</p>	<p>CQI Workgroup, HMIS System Administrator, YHDP providers, TA</p>	<p>Operationalize by FY 2025</p>
<p><b>Action 8.a.10</b> Set up an ombudsman protocol and staff to support YYA who experience harm or other failures in the coordinated community response. Ensure that the</p>	<p>CoC, REACH YAB, AP4M</p>	<p>Starting October 2023</p>

person(s) establish trust with YYA, that they are safe and independent, and that they have the authority and support to respond to YYA's immediate issue in a way that brings appropriate resolution		
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# Solution Strategy

To successfully implement *REACHing for New Heights*, the YHDP Core Team, CoC leadership, REACH YAB, YHDP Subrecipients, and CCP Committee will lead a transition of our process from planning to implementation. We will follow the structure, values, and principles that we established during our planning process (see [Appendix A](#)), confirm the commitment of existing partners, and identify additional partners to join our efforts using the following framework:

***The Knowledge and Impact Manager (The KIM)*** will oversee day-to-day Plan implementation supported by the CoC Youth System Monitor and REACH YAB - Youth System Planning Coordinator. They will coordinate among partners, build community relationships, track implementation progress, and present progress updates and critical decisions to REACH YAB, the OHS Advisory Board, YHDP Subrecipients, and A Place 4 Me Collaborative membership. A Place 4 Me will employ and support the KIM who will work closely with HUD TA to chair the Implementation Team, support workgroups, and coordinate with REACH YAB.

***The Implementation Team*** will be responsible for organizing workgroups, tracking progress, and ensuring Plan outcomes. They approve final recommendations to REACH YAB, the OHS Advisory Board, and A Place 4 Me Collaborative membership and work closely with the KIM and HUD TA to support Responsible Parties in the execution of their individual action steps. The Implementation Team will include representatives from YHDP Subrecipients, the CoC, REACH YAB, the former CCP Committee, and other cross-system partners.

***Workgroups*** will focus on key challenges identified by the Implementation Team (e.g., CQI). They will include representatives REACH YAB, YHDP Subrecipients, the CoC, and other cross-system partners, and will provide recommendations to the Implementation Team. While the KIM will not necessarily chair each Workgroup, they will work with HUD TA to identify a lead, provide support, and help them complete their work.

***YHDP Subrecipients*** will be responsible for CCP Committee participation and must ensure a minimum of one staff person to serve on the Implementation Team including the CQI workgroup. YHDP Subrecipients will be supported and evaluated by the KIM, a monitor hired by A Place 4 Me, and REACH YAB to ensure fidelity to the YHDP project design and our Plan values. YHDP Subrecipients will be responsible for recruiting at minimum one REACH YAB member annually. REACH YAB members will be compensated at a rate of \$25 per hour. Plans are also in place to increase REACH YAB capacity by hiring REACH YAB members as staff.

***REACH YAB*** will review the performance of YHDP Subrecipients and all decisions presented to the OHS Advisory Board and A Place 4 Me Collaborative membership. REACH YAB will be involved in all decisions, such as finalizing the nomination to the Implementation Team and Workgroup representatives, provide ongoing feedback on the plan and its action steps, and propose formal recommendations. REACH YAB will prioritize recruiting and uplifting a diverse group of YYA, including but not limited to BIPOC YYA, LGBTQIA+ YYA, YYA living with behavioral health challenges or disabilities, neurodivergent YYA, YYA with system experiences, parenting YYA, and minors. REACH YAB will be supported by dedicated A Place 4 Me professional youth system staff.

# Signature Page

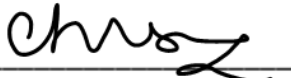
We, the signatories, approve “REACHing for New Heights” Cuyahoga County’s coordinated community plan to prevent and end youth and young adult homelessness. We have carefully reviewed this plan, both individually and in dialogue with one another, and believe it is aligned with our shared values and vision for ending homelessness among young people.

We commit to ensuring that this plan comes to life in real and meaningful ways in our community. We will use our voices, our time, and our resources to activate the plan and make progress toward our shared goals. We will hold each other accountable to our values, goals, and action steps and will ensure that young leaders are at the core of our continuous quality improvement efforts.

We believe that this plan is a strong foundation for our continued efforts to prevent and end youth and young adult homelessness in Cuyahoga County.



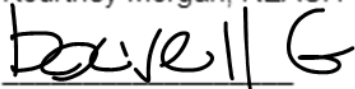
Kai Cotton, REACH YAB Chair



Christian Anderson, REACH YAB Member



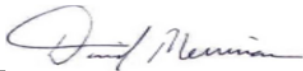
Kourtney Morgan, REACH YAB Member



Davell Gibson, REACH YAB Member



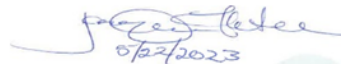
Hannah Gates, REACH YAB Member



David Merriman, Director - Cuyahoga County Department of Health and Human Services (Government Office)



Melissa Sirak, Program Director - Office of Homeless Services (CoC)



07/22/2023

Jacqueline Fletcher, Director - Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services (Child Welfare Agency)



Jeffrey A. Lox, Executive Director - Bellefaire JCB (RHY Provider)



Lisa Smith, Vice President of Resiliency Services - Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry (RHY Provider)



# Appendix A: Planning Governance and Decision-Making

During the application process for YHDP, leadership at OHS committed to a shared-ownership model of decision-making with full YYA partnership. They recruited a “Core Team” of stakeholders, including OHS staff, partners at A Place 4 Me [non-profit working to end/prevent youth homelessness], REACH [Youth Action Board], and the Sisters of Charity Cleveland Foundation [funding partner], with consulting and technical assistance from Matthew Aronson Consulting and HUD provided TA. A larger group of partners from across the community supported the application effort by providing application responses, and reviewing content. After HUD announced the selection of Cuyahoga County to participate in YHDP, the Core Team agreed to continue this model leadership of OHS brought together a group of stakeholders to form a Core Team of partners.

## Partner Groups and Roles

**The YHDP Core Team** The Core Team completed and submitted the YHDP application in June 2022. The Cuyahoga County Continuum of Care received an award of \$3,977,869 to participate in HUD’s Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program. The Core Team includes the OHS [the CoC lead agency], A Place 4 Me [non-profit working to end/prevent youth homelessness], REACH [Youth Action Board], and the Sisters of Charity Cleveland Foundation [funding partner], including consultation and technical assistance from Matthew Aronson Consulting and Abt Associates, True Colors United, and National Center on Homeless Education. Members of this team are responsible for assembling the CCP Committee, coordinating planning efforts, and keeping partners engaged throughout the planning process through implementation. The Core Team will coordinate planning efforts by setting agendas, facilitating planning meetings, and keeping track of the YHDP timeline. The Core Team will be responsible for daily operations, meeting weekly for 90 minutes, and adjusting meeting frequency as needed. A subset of the Core Team will also serve as a **Writing Team**. The Writing Team will draft the plan and its components for the CCP Committee to review and endorse.

**The CCP Committee** *Primary decision-making body.* The Ending Youth Homelessness (EYH) Leadership Committee membership has been repurposed and expanded to make up the Coordinated Community Planning Committee. The Core Team sent an invitation letter asking members of the EYH Leadership Committee and other collaborative partners to nominate representatives from their organizations to join the CCP Committee. Various organizations across several sectors (homeless services, child welfare, juvenile justice, mental and behavioral health, education, etc.) and levels of leadership make up the CCP Committee. Three YAB members participate in the CCP Committee.

Committee members will review the Youth Homelessness Needs Assessment, develop objectives to address needs, and develop action steps to meet those objectives. Members will be encouraged to participate in special events throughout the planning process (see *Subject Matter Expert convenings* below). Members will attend monthly meetings between 90 minutes and 2 hours, allowing follow-up and debriefing meetings as needed. Meetings will occur virtually and in person as permitted by current health guidelines. The planning period is expected to last six to eight months. The Committee will finalize and endorse the Coordinated Community Plan (CCP) and recommend it for final approval by REACH Youth Action Board. At the

recommendation of the REACH board, OHS will assess the plan and conduct a consistency review, capacity analysis, and evaluation of alignment with CoC system standards. With the endorsement of OHS, the OHS Advisory Board will adopt the plan before submitting it to HUD. Once HUD accepts the CCP, the Planning Committee will be involved in designing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to implement the CCP. Planning committee members may need to abstain from the design process.

**REACH Youth Action Board** will play an integral role throughout the planning process. Three REACH members serve on the CCP Committee, at least two on the Writing Team, and at least two members will serve on the RFP Team. REACH participation will be supported by A Place 4 Me. Participating members will be responsible for regularly briefing the full YAB, including inviting non-YAB allies to speak with the YAB as necessary. They will represent REACH when engaged in decision-making on the various YHDP-related committees to the best of their ability. YAB members will be encouraged to participate in special information-gathering efforts during planning outside committee meetings (see *Subject Matter Expert Convenings* below). The full REACH board must approve the Coordinated Community Plan (CCP) and recommend it to the OHS Advisory Board for adoption.

**The RFP Team** will be a subset of the CCP Committee, including agencies ineligible for funding and REACH YAB members. Under Cuyahoga County requirements, the OHS will use a competitive RFP process to solicit proposals and make awards for needed services. OHS will designate a subgroup to complete a threshold review of applications to weed out proposals that do not qualify and another subgroup to train reviewers in assessing qualified applications. The team will deliberate on the best candidates and announce their selections.

**Subject Matter Expert Convenings** A subset of the Core Team and CCP Committee may hold focus groups with sector experts to inform the planning process. At least 4-6 convenings are proposed to draw out expert advice from community stakeholders. The Core Team will be responsible for synthesizing experts' advice for the full CCP Committee to review, analyze, and make decisions.

### Proposed Decision-Making Structure

This proposed structure follows a shared ownership model of decision-making and governance. Shared ownership models bring in diverse groups of stakeholders, offer equal power to traditionally powerless populations, and encourage creative and challenging conversations that lead to the following four impactful outcomes:

1. New and innovative ideas that would otherwise not be considered
2. Robust and long-lasting relationships between participating stakeholders
3. Participating stakeholders and their constituents strongly support the plan and its actions from participating stakeholders and their constituents
4. A strong sense of legitimacy for external stakeholders.

*The primary decision-making body will be the CCP Committee.* The CCP Committee will use a **consensus approach**, meaning we will strive to make decisions through open dialogue to which all planning members agree. Our consensus approach will observe the following rules:

- **Participation.** 80% of CCP Committee members, including REACH YAB members, must be present to reach a decision.
- **Sequencing.** CCP Committee members will propose elements of the CCP for discussion and approval following a sequential process to achieve consensus. Meeting

- facilitators will establish a set amount of time for discussion and allow for no more than five tries for consensus.
- **Engagement.** Members commit to asking questions, clarifying specific needs, suggesting strategies to meet needs, allowing open discussion on suggested strategies, generating a clear proposal, and testing the proposal for agreement.
- **Determination.** Members will issue a determination with either a *thumbs up* (Agree), *pointer finger* (Agree with concerns), *thumb sideways* (Will stand aside), or *thumbs down* (Want to change). Members that want to change a proposal will commit to presenting an alternative, which the group will take up and test for agreement once again.
- **Back-Up.** If 100% consensus is not attainable after repeated attempts, the goal is for 80% of members to agree with a proposed strategy or step aside. The CCP Committee will include member concerns with the approved strategy to enable the community to revisit those concerns during advanced planning, implementation, and continuous quality improvement.
- **Veto.** REACH YAB members reserve the right to halt or stop a proposal at any time to support further deliberation among the full board or to discard a problematic proposal/strategy. If REACH YAB members are not on board with a proposed plan element, the planning committee will not advance until measures have been taken to resolve the issue or concern, including further deliberation among the planning committee, REACH YAB, or both.

Values and Community Agreements

Our Coordinated Community Plan will reflect the following **values**.

<p><b>Youth Leadership:</b> We acknowledge that young adults are the experts in their lives and experiences. They will be treated as such and compensated accordingly. All decisions regarding the CCP will be rooted in young people's shared expertise and experiences. We will amplify the diverse perspectives of all youth and young adults with lived expertise, including the wisdom of those who went through the system as young adults but are now older.</p> <p><b>Racial and LGBTQ+ Equity:</b> We acknowledge that Black and LGBTQ+ youth and young adults (YYA) disproportionately experience homelessness and housing instability in our community, and we understand that this is by design. The CCP will intentionally prioritize strategies for Black and LGBTQ+ YYA and outline solutions to redress structural racism and discrimination.</p>	<p><b>Intersectionality:</b> We will focus on the uniqueness of various subgroups of young people with lived expertise, striving to accept and respect the intersections of their identities/roles/experiences, including but not limited to young women, pregnant or parenting youth, and young adults, young people with disabilities, students, etc.</p> <p><b>Trauma-informed:</b> We will ensure our coordinated community plan upholds the model of trauma-informed care, which acknowledges that people may likely have a trauma history and ensures that practices and services do not seek to re-traumatize them. The Five Guiding Principles of Trauma-Informed Care will serve as a framework for the provision of YHDP programming. The Five Guiding Principles are safety, choice, collaboration, trustworthiness, and empowerment.</p> <p><b>Positive youth development:</b> We will ensure our coordinated community plan upholds the model of positive youth development, which seeks to create supportive networks and</p>
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<p><b>Housing First:</b> We believe that every young person deserves a safe and stable place to call home, without condition. Young people should not need to prove they deserve housing. The CCP will uplift solutions to prevent homelessness and quickly restore housing when lost, ensuring the experience is brief, rare, and nonrecurring. Services will prioritize the YYA's strengths, choice, and agency to make decisions in their best interest.</p> <p><b>Highly Relational:</b> We believe humans are interdependent and thrive in healthy relationships. The CCP will include strategies for building permanent, supportive relationships with youth and young adults and a hospitable, relational approach to services and housing so young people feel encouraged and supported.</p> <p><b>Data-informed:</b> We will use qualitative and quantitative (e.g., HMIS) data to drive decision-making. We believe that data reveals important gaps and opportunities for growth, but data is often limited. We will work to understand the limitations of our data so we can correct gaps in data collection. We will use quantitative and qualitative data as a foundation to get to the deeper truth and inform relevant strategies for the coordinated community plan.</p>	<p>opportunities to build positive connections among young people within their surrounding environment.</p> <p><b>Cross-system collaboration:</b> We commit to working across systems to collaborate in the interest of holistically supporting our youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. All service providers working with youth and young adults experiencing housing instability or homelessness must complete anti-racism and LGBTQ+ inclusion and cultural humility training.</p> <p><b>Differing abilities:</b> We will acknowledge and celebrate the intricacies of our individual strengths, developing skill sets and capacities as we move through this work. We will ensure people feel engaged, supported, and accommodated whenever possible to create a sustainable and affirming working environment.</p> <p><b>Low barrier:</b> We want to avoid barriers preventing YYA from meeting their basic needs. We commit to offering flexibility/adaptability in YHDP programming.</p> <p><b>Shift Narratives:</b> We will acknowledge the strengths, courage, and resilience of young people experiencing homelessness, validating their actions, thoughts, and feelings whenever possible. We commit to shifting our narratives to include imagining what could be, amplifying young people's dreams and how they envision radical support of their well-being—thinking beyond the necessity to transform systems with our plan.</p>
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During meetings, participants will adhere to the following **agreements** to ensure our work together upholds our values, honors the existing strategies we have championed, adequately addresses systemic racism and inequities, and demonstrates our commitment to long-term and impactful solutions.

<p><b>Let's understand our common goal:</b> We are working together to end and prevent youth and young adult homelessness.</p> <p><b>Be mindful, not mind full:</b> Our time and space</p>	<p><b>WAIT (Why Am I Talking?):</b> Give space for others to speak or initiate conversation, etc. Whenever possible, practice brevity, aiming to maintain the balance between processing information and sharing perspectives. (It is</p>
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together are important. Be as present and engaged as humanly possible. Whatever your best is, own it!

**Positive communication:** Practice constructive and supportive feedback, empathetic listening, and adaptation.

**Call in, not out:** Holding ourselves accountable means seeing each other and seeing the problem so we can address the issues together.

**Trust the process:** Let's work to build trust with one another, welcome change as part of the process, and be willing to adapt the process as needed.

**Work happens between meetings, so communication is vital:** Let's challenge ourselves to do the work by organizing into workgroups.

**Respectful disagreement is respectful:** We want to foster an environment where everyone can share their perspective.

**Ask the hard questions**

**Stay curious**

**Have fun!**

especially important for white folks and people with privilege/power to keep this top of mind).

**Be mindful of nonverbal gestures and cues** (especially on Zoom)

**Don't rush the process**

**Spirit of creativity and innovation:** Dream of something that's not been done or might have been done and wasn't successful. Respect and trust the creativity and dreams of others. What we are doing isn't working. We need to change.

**Commitment to nonviolence:** Ensure the social and psychological safety to share ideas without fear of repercussions or retaliation. Creating a safe space to voice concerns and ideas. Be respectful of others' thoughts, opinions, and feelings

**Display pronouns:** Maintain a practice of including pronouns on name tags in both virtual and physical spaces.

**Be comfortable with being uncomfortable:** Collaboration can be messy, but permitting ourselves to step outside our comfort zones makes room for great things to happen.

## Appendix B: Partners List

Partner	Partner's Name	Organization	Involvement
Youth Action Board	Christian Anderson Kai Cotton Hannah Gates Davell Gibson Kourtney Morgan Hannah Lesyeski	REACH Youth Action Board	YHDP Core Team  Coordinated Community Planning Committee (CCPC)
Public Child Welfare Agencies	Beverly Torres	Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services	CCPC
Continuum of Care and Emergency Solution Grant Program Recipients	Caleb Dixon Ashely Pope Treveya Franklin Nicole Eggert  Michaela DeAlexandro  Jessie Beck Khaz Ra'el  Jerome Baker	FrontLine Services  Family Promise of Greater Cleveland  EDEN, Inc.  YWCA of Greater Cleveland	CCPC
Local and State Government	Eugenia Cash-Kirkland Anthony Sims Sherry Ulery  Nick Butina Allison Gill Erin Rearden Melissa Sirak	City of Cleveland Office of Prevention, Intervention and Opportunity for YYA    Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services	CCPC  trafficking  YHDP Core Team CCPC
Runaway Homeless Youth Providers	Gloria Craig Lisa Smith  Karen McHenry Lexi Spizarny	Luthern Metropolitan Ministry  Bellefaire JCB - Homeless and Missing Youth Program	CCPC

Health, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse Agencies	Britany King Myra Henderson Jim McCafferty Anjhani McGee	Alcohol Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board (ADAMHS) Ohio Health Transitions Project (OTHP)	
Local and State Law Enforcement	Hazel Remesch	The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland	CCPC
Affordable Housing Providers	Kelly Camlin Jenny Eppich Rochelle Harris	Enterprise Community Partners CHN Housing Partners	CCPC
Local and State Educational Agencies	Angeline Sulak Carrie Sullivan	Cleveland Metropolitan School District - Project ACT Educational Services Center	CCPC
Employment Services	Rachel Benders Ron Scott Tulani Black Toni Arnold-Spikes	Ohio Means Jobs - Cleveland/Cuyahoga Towards Employment Youth Opportunities Unlimited	CCPC
Non-profit Youth Organizations	Ebony Clayton Kate Lodge Christie Sozio Natasha Wynn Beverly Johnson	A Place 4 Me Collaborative Community of Hope	YHDP Core Team, CCPC, YHDP Lead Agency CCPC
Local Advocacy, Research, and Philanthropic Organizations	Angela D'Orazio Meagan Ray-Novak	Sisters of Charity Cleveland Foundation Case Western Reserve University - Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development	CCPC

	Carey Gibbons Ange Mastandrea	Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless	
	Eileen Kelly	The Identification Crisis Collaborative	
Organizations that serve culturally specific (Black, Latino, Indigenous, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+, etc.) communities	Rae Jackson Carmen Recchia Gulnar Feerasta JD Harrison  Rachel Soccoro	LGBT Center of Greater Cleveland  The Collaborative to End Human Trafficking	CCPC



# Appendix C: HUD Funded Projects

HUD awarded the Cuyahoga CoC \$3.9 million as part of our community’s participation in YHDP. As a condition of drawing down those funds, HUD required the community to develop this coordinated community plan, REACHing for New Heights, and include specific details regarding how we would spend our YHDP allocation. This section briefly explains how we made that decision and describes each of our two proposed YHDP-funded projects.

In early spring, 2023, HUD TA and the YHDP Core Team facilitated a series of system modeling exercises with our Coordinated Community Planning Committee and REACH YAB. The exercises incorporated system maps using CoC data, a gaps analysis supported by Case Western Reserve University, and feedback from listening sessions with YAs currently experiencing homelessness. Together, we first identified needs and potential solutions and then developed “ideal pathway” assumptions for different YYA cohorts: unaccompanied YA, unaccompanied minors, pregnant and parenting YYA, and YYA fleeing violence. REACH YAB had the final say in the prioritized project types per our planning governance, and the details below outline the threshold requirements for our YHDP-funded projects.

Moving forward, the Committee agreed that OHS, on behalf of the Cuyahoga CoC, will apply to HUD as the grant recipient for both projects. In the coming months, REACH YAB in partnership with the Office of Homeless Services (CoC leadership) will lead a transparent Request For Proposals process to identify the best sub-recipients with whom to subcontract each project. The sub-recipients will be expected to follow the threshold items below and operate the projects in accordance with the values described in this plan.

<b>The Navigation and Housing (NH) Team + Targeted Prevention Problem-Solving</b>
<b>Project Type:</b> SSO
<b>Project Description</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> This supportive services-only project includes two Navigators who specialize in Coordinated Entry, two dedicated to Outreach, and two who specialize in Housing location. All team members will have lived experience, embodying the diverse identities of the YYA we serve, particularly BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ YYA. Navigators work system-wide and across projects to create a cohesive support with continuity.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> The NH Team will provide wrap-around services and meet immediate needs including providing targeted financial assistance (i.e., referrals, connection to mainstream benefits, emergency financial assistance, transportation assistance, ID and documentation, food, clothing, etc.) to YYA for an average of 12 months. The team will be mobile to increase the number of youth-dedicated access points in our community to help YYA navigate system resources from Coordinated Entry through multiple program enrollments/exits and across systems.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> The NH Team will use a peer support model and a tiered approach to assist YYA in developing a service plan to meet their housing needs. Navigators will be cross-trained to meet the needs of YYA, and YYA will be assigned to collaborate with the navigator best suited to carry out their</li></ul>

<p>service plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> On average, CE Navigators will support YYA between 30-90 days. Outreach &amp; Housing Navigators will support YYA for an average of 12 months or until program exit. Outreach navigators will serve as an access point and conduct street outreach to assist unsheltered YYA. Outreach and Housing navigation will include location, applications, inspections, landlord mediation, and coordination with CoC for additional resources that are available in the community to support housing. Additionally, Outreach &amp; Housing Navigators can provide aftercare to YYA for an average of 6 months and up to 36 months following program exit. This provision will be driven by the YHDP principles of YYA choice and individualized client-driven support.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> CE Navigators will assist YYA in finding or maintaining safe, appropriate housing without a stay in a shelter and financial assistance for diversion/rapid resolution of homelessness. Financial assistance uses will include fines and fees preventing YYA from accessing housing, utility deposits, application fees, holding fees, phone bills, transportation assistance in the form of bus tickets, storage units, and any other individualized eligible supportive services. The maximum financial assistance provided is \$2,000 per YYA for an average of 31 households annually.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Target Number of YYA and Subpopulations Served</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Serving categories 1, 2, and 4 homelessness.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Unaccompanied and pregnant &amp; parenting YYA age 18-24 and unaccompanied minors, including all subpopulations.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Serving 175 YYAs annually. On average, 31 YYA HH will be financially assisted through targeted prevention problem-solving.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Staffing Capacity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 6 FTE Navigators</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The caseload ratio will be 1:15.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Target Number of Housing Units</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 0 units</li> </ul>
<p><b>Estimated Amount of Funding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> \$434,660 (annual)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> \$869,320 (2-year demo)</li> </ul>

<b>Project Keys</b>
<b>Project Type:</b> TH-RRH
<p><b>Project Description</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The purpose of this project is to provide and sustain permanent or transitional housing for young adults experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness between the ages of 18-24 years old. This intervention does not currently exist in the community and will bridge the gap between short-term and long-term housing assistance. YYA will be co-enrolled into TH and RRH with the choice to opt-in or opt out of the TH portion or the RRH portion at any time.</li> </ul>

- The RRH component of this project will be scattered-site, so units will be throughout the community and available on the private market. YYA households will be given the option to do shared housing if they so choose. Financial rental assistance will be provided for an average of 12 months (up to 36 months) with an average of six months of aftercare (up to 36 months) once rental assistance ends.
- The TH component will provide short- to medium-term assistance for up to 30 YA and YA families for up to 24 months in a site-based setting. The average length of stay will be 6 months. This project will be designed to uplift and affirm the unique identities and meet the unique needs of YA and YA families who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community or fleeing violence, including trafficking and exploitation. Utilizing a YHDP special activity, the CoC will use habitability standards to maximize available housing stock and YYA choice.

**Target Number of Youth and Subpopulations Served**

- Serving categories 1, 2, and 4 homelessness.
- Prioritizing LGBTQIA+ YYA and YYA fleeing violence.
- Serving 62 YYAs annually.

**Staffing Capacity**

- The RRH component will be staffed with an FTE RRH Coordinator with additional support from the NH Team. The RRH Coordinator will oversee YYA enrollment into RRH, ensure rapid connection to housing with an emphasis on valuing YYA choice, and support continuity of care. The NH team will provide case management, housing location, linkage to supportive services, and aftercare for both projects. The caseload ratio will be 1:15.
- The TH component will require a minimum of 2 FTE site-based case managers and 2 FTE front desk staff. The YHDP Recipient will be required to hire front desk staff.

**Target Number of Housing Units**

- 30 TH units
- 32 RRH units

**Estimated Amount of Funding**

- \$1,553,240 (annual)
- \$ 3,106,480 (2-year demo)

# Appendix D: Detailed Systems Analysis

## HUD Threshold Requirements Chart

Population	Data Source(s)	Annual Estimates of # of Youth	Needs: Housing, Education & Employment, Social and Emotional Wellbeing	Data Disaggregated by: Race, Gender, Sexual Identity, Sexual Orientation
<b>At-risk unaccompanied youth</b>	HMIS (all ES,TH,SH projects where prior living situation noted as a temporary or permanent situation; all ODH projects)	340 - 615		Black/AA: 265-491 White: 48-98 Male: 102-233 Female: 197-411 Heterosexual: 255-485 LGBTQ+**: 95-172
<b>Unaccompanied youth experiencing homeless</b>	HMIS (all ES,TH,SH,SO projects)	370 - 500		Black/AA: 281-395 White: 59-95 Male: 170-265 Female: 163-245 Heterosexual: 241-335 LGBTQ+**: 104-140
<b>At-risk pregnant or parenting youth</b>	HMIS (all ES,TH,SH projects where prior living situation noted as a temporary or permanent situation; all ODH projects)	40 - 60		Black/AA: 32-49 White: 5-8 Male: 2-3 Female: 38-58 Heterosexual: 33-49 LGBTQ+: 2-4
<b>Pregnant or parenting youth experiencing homeless</b>	HMIS (all ES,TH,SH,SO projects)	60 - 70		Black/AA: 49-60 White: 5-8 Male: 1-2 Female: 58-69 Heterosexual: 60-70 LGBTQ+: 0

LGBTQ+ and gender nonconforming youth*	Available research	30 - 185 8-37% <sup>1</sup> 28% <sup>2</sup>		
Minors (young people under the age of 18)	HMIS (all ES, TH, SH projects; all ODH and RHY projects)	45 - 60		Black/AA: 31-45 White: 10-14 Male: 8-14 Female: 33-47 Heterosexual: 31-47 LGBTQ+: 10-19
Youth involved with Juvenile Justice*	Joint Case Western Reserve University and CoC Report	137 - 185 (37%)		
Youth involved with child welfare*	Joint Case Western Reserve University and CoC Report	222 - 300 (60%)		
Victims of sexual trafficking and exploitation*	Available research	70 - 95 19% <sup>3</sup>		
Youth with co-occurring diagnosis, including mental health, substance abuse, HIV-AIDS and other communicable diseases*	HMIS (all ES,TH,SH,SO projects) Available research	37 - 100 10-20% <sup>4</sup>		

\*numbers given for *unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness* category only

\*\*based on 28% statistic from The Trevor Project

<sup>1</sup> Ecker, J. (2016). Queer, young, and homeless: A review of the literature. *Child & Youth Services*, 37(4), 325–361.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/0145935X.2016.1151781>

<sup>2</sup> DeChants, J.P., Green, A.E., Price, M.N., & Davis, C.K. 2021. Homelessness and Housing Instability Among LGBTQ Youth. West Hollywood, CA The Trevor Project.

<sup>3</sup> Murphy, L. (2016). Labor and sex trafficking among homeless youth: A ten city study. New Orleans, LA. Modern Slavery Research Project. <https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/ht/murphy-labor-sex-trafficking-homeless-youth.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Burke et al. found variable occurrence of mental health and substance use disorders in transition age young adults experiencing homelessness. The range for mental health diagnoses in the past 12 months was 9-36% and for substance use disorder diagnoses the range was 0-44%. We present available HMIS data here due to this variability in occurrence documented by the empirical literature. Burke, Colin W., Elizabeth S. Firmin, Sylvia Lanni, Peter Ducharme, Maura DiSalvo, and Timothy E. Wilens. "Substance Use Disorders and Psychiatric Illness Among Transitional Age Youth Experiencing Homelessness." JAACAP Open, January 2023, S2949732923000017. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaacop.2023.01.001>.

## Additional Resources

In addition to the above data, the resources linked below will provide you with additional context should you wish to dive more deeply into the quantitative data that informed our statement of needs.

[Youth Experiencing Homelessness Research Brief](#)

[Youth and Young Adult \(YYA\) Listening Sessions Graphic](#)

[YHDP Listening Sessions Summary](#)

[Cuyahoga County Strategic Plan](#)

## Appendix E: YHDP Special Activities

Cuyahoga County CoC is notifying HUD of the use of the following flexibilities to implement the Coordinated Community Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness. The CoC, REACH YAB, and the core team worked together to develop the flexibilities identified below.

Flexibility	Notified
<b>1.C1.a</b>	
<b>C.1.a(1)</b> Leases under 12 months (minimum 1 month)	Yes
<b>C.1.a(2)</b> Use of leasing, Sponsored Based Rental Assistance (SRA) and Project Based Rental Assistance (PRA) in Rapid Rehousing	Yes
<b>1.C.1.a(3)</b> Use 10% of total YHDP funding for Planning grants	Yes
<b>1.C.1.a(4)</b> In addition to the eligible costs listed in 24 CFR 578.59(a), YHDP recipients may use project administrative funds to support costs associated with involving youth with lived experience in project implementation, execution, and improvement.	Yes
<b>1.C.1a(5)</b> Project administrative funds to attend conferences and training that are not HUD-sponsored or HUD-approved, provided that the subject matter is relevant to youth homelessness.	Yes
<b>1.C.1a(6)</b> Recipients may employ youth who are receiving services, including housing, from the recipient organization. Recipients that utilize this special YHDP activity must maintain documentation that discloses the nature of work that the youth does, and that the youth is not in a position that creates a conflict of interest.	Yes
<b>1.C.1a(7)</b> Recipients may use habitability standards in 24 CFR 576.403(c) rather than Housing Quality Standards in 24 CFR 578.75 for short or medium-term (up to 24 months) housing assistance. Recipients implementing this special YHDP activity must keep documentation of which standards are applied to the units and proof that the units complied with the standards before assistance is provided for every unit funded by YHDP.	Yes
<b>1.C.1a(8)</b> Recipients may provide moving expenses more than one -time to a program participant.	Yes
<b>1.C.1a(9)</b> Recipients may provide payments of up to \$500 per month for families that provide housing under a host home and kinship care model in order to offset the increased costs associated with having youth housed in the unit.	No
<i>YHDP grant funds may be used for the following if they are necessary to assist program participants to obtain and maintain housing. Recipients and subrecipients must maintain records establishing how it was determined paying the costs was necessary for the program participant to obtain and retain housing and must also conduct an annual assessment of the needs of the program participants and adjust costs accordingly</i>	

<b>1.C.1a(10)(a)</b> Security deposits for units (not to exceed 2 months of rent)	Yes
<b>1.C.1a(10)(b)</b> Pay for damage to units (not to exceed 2 months of rent)  <i>The costs to pay for any damage to housing due to the action of a program participant, which may be paid while the youth continues to reside in the unit. The total costs paid for damage per program participant may not exceed the cost of two months' rent.</i>	Yes
<b>1.C.1a(10)(c)</b> The costs of providing household cleaning supplies to clients.	Yes
<b>1.C.1a(10)(d)</b> Housing start-up expenses for program participants (not to exceed \$300 in value per program participant).  <i>Housing start-up expenses for program participants including furniture, pots and pans, linens, toiletries, and other household goods, not to exceed \$300 in value per program participant.</i>	Yes
<b>1.C.1a(10)(e)</b> Purchase a cell phone and service (cost must be reasonable and housing related)  <i>The one-time cost of purchasing a cellular phone and service for program participant use, provided that access to a cellular phone is necessary to obtain or maintain housing and the costs of the phone and services are reasonable per 2 CFR 200.404.</i>	Yes
<b>1.C.1a(10)(f)</b> The cost of internet in a program participant's unit (costs of the service is reasonable per 2 CFR 200.404.)	Yes
<b>1.C.1a(10)(g)</b> Payment of rental arrears (for up to 6 months of rent in arrears)  <i>Payment of rental arrears consisting of a one-time payment for up to 6 months of rent in arrears, including any late fees on those arrears.</i>	Yes
<b>1.C.1a(10)(h)</b> Payment of utility arrears (up to 6 months per service)	Yes
<b>1.C.1a(10)(i)</b> Payment of utilities (up to three months) of utilities for a program participant, based on the utility costs schedule for the unit size and location.  <i>Payment of utilities up to three months of utilities for a program participant, based on the utility costs schedule for the unit size and location.</i>	Yes
<b>1.C.1a(10)</b> pay gas and mileage costs for a program participant's personal vehicle for trips to eligible activities.  <i>In addition to transportation costs eligible in 24 CFR 578.53(e)(15), a recipient may pay gas and mileage costs for a program participant's personal vehicle for trips to and from medical care, employment, childcare, or other services eligible under this section.</i>	Yes
<b>1.C.1a(10)(k)</b> Payment of legal fees  <i>Legal fees, including court fees, bail bonds, and required courses and equipment.</i>	Yes
<b>1.C.1a(10)(l)</b> Payment of insurance, registration and past driving fines  <i>Program participant's past driving fines and fees that are blocking a young person from being able to obtain or renew a driver's license and impacting their ability to obtain or maintain housing. Additionally, recipients may</i>	Yes



pay for program participants costs for insurance and registration for personal vehicles, if the personal vehicle is necessary to reach medical care, employment, childcare, or other services eligible under this section.

The Cuyahoga County CoC and REACH YAB with support from TA have prepared the following justifications and are requesting HUD approval for the use of the following special YHDP activity exemptions to implement the Coordinated Community Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness.

Flexibility	Justification for Request
<p><b>C.1.b.</b></p>	
<p><b>I.C.1b(1)</b> A recipient may provide up to 36 months of Rapid Rehousing rental assistance to a program participant if the recipient demonstrates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) the method it will use to determine which youth need rental assistance beyond 24 months and</li> <li>(2) the services and resources that will be offered to ensure youth are able to sustain their housing at the end of the 36 months of assistance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The method used to determine which youth need rental assistance beyond 24 months will be directed by the individual needs of the household. This will require regular review of the service plan (e.g., monthly case management or weekly case conferencing calls) with the YYA to ensure sustainability. Supportive services staff are responsible for providing YYA with stable housing supports. Supportive services staff will be required to support YYA's understanding of anticipated timelines to assume responsibility for rent and assist YYAs in executing personalized plans and timelines to ensure YYA have the income to cover their rent in advance of a request for extended service. Examples, where a household might need this extension, include but are not limited to pregnant and parenting households, students, and the YYA's personal timeline and responsiveness to services.</li> <li>(2) YYA will be offered supportive services tailored to their individual needs and/or linked to resources in the community to sustain their housing at the end of the 36 months of assistance. Supportive services staff will collaborate with YYA to develop plans rooted in trauma-informed practices and positive youth development, accounting for YYA's goal achievement across the 4 core YHDP outcomes.</li> </ul>

<p><b>I.C.1b(2)</b> YHDP recipients may continue providing supportive services to program participants for up to 24 months after the program participant exits homelessness, transitional housing, or after the end of housing assistance if the recipient demonstrates:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) the proposed length of extended services to be provided;</li> <li>2) the method it will use to determine whether services are still necessary; and 3) how those services will result in self-sufficiency and ensure stable housing for the YHDP program participant</li> </ol> <p>*YHDP recipients may continue providing supportive services to program participants for up to 36 months after the program participant exits homelessness, if the services are in connection with housing assistance, such as the Foster Youth to Independence initiative, or if the recipient can demonstrate that extended supportive services ensure continuity of case workers for program participants.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The proposed length of extended services will be up to 36 months.</li> <li>2) The method used to determine whether services are still necessary will be driven by youth choice concerning monthly reviews and assessments of the service plan. Within the 30 days prior program exit, YYA, and supportive services staff will update the service plan to identify the needs for extended supportive services. Supportive services staff will collaborate with YYAs to discuss timelines and adjust the interaction frequency of extended support services, ensuring the goals established are driven by youth and tailored to meet their needs.</li> <li>3) Having aftercare services in place provides the ability to leverage unique community resources to ensure YYAs transition into independence in a supportive manner. Aftercare services may incorporate peer support and mentoring programs, where individuals who have successfully transitioned from homelessness to stable housing become mentors for current program participants. Additionally, this provision assists in creating a safety net for YYAs as they move toward self-sufficiency. Our community has named the challenge of cliff effects in existing services, and this provision will assist in redressing that issue. Supportive services staff will connect YYA to cross-system resources that foster independence as early and as often as possible. These services will result in self-sufficiency and ensure stable housing for YHDP program participants by grounding support in youth choice and positive youth development. YHDP providers will monitor YYA's goal attainment, ensuring it applies across the 4 core YHDP outcomes. The CQI team will monitor overall project performance, including safe and stable exits.</li> </ol>
<p><b>I.C.1b(3)</b> Recipients will not be required to meet the 25% match requirement if the applicant is able to show it has taken reasonable steps to maximize resources available for youth experiencing homelessness in the community.</p>	<p>The community is requesting an ongoing match waiver as we have leveraged all of our existing funding opportunities to support the CoC system as a whole. Additionally, staffing is not at a level needed to support in-kind matches. The community will continue to seek additional funding resources to support the community's goal to end and prevent youth homelessness.</p>
<p><b>I.C.1b(4)</b> Rental assistance may be combined with</p>	<p>The ability to co-locate the joint component will</p>

<p>leasing or operating funds in the same building, provided that the recipient submits a project plan that includes safeguards to ensure that no part of the project would receive a double subsidy.</p>	<p>meet the challenge of limited and aging housing stock in our community. 90% of rental housing in Cleveland was built before 1978 when residential lead-based paint was outlawed. YYA in general and BIPOC YYA in particular face discrimination in accessing safe housing in our current system. The ability to co-locate RRH and TH would allow for creative mechanisms to ensure equitable access to stable housing. Additionally, this ability would maximize supportive services by allowing support to visit YYA in TH and RRH without the significant travel time.</p>
<p><b>Other Innovative Activities</b></p>	
<p><b>I.C.1b(4)(6)</b> In addition to the specific activities authorized above or in 24 CFR part 578, other innovative activities to reduce youth homelessness may be carried out using YHDP funds, provided that the recipient can demonstrate that the activity meets the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The activity is approved by both the Youth Action Board and the Continuum of Care, as evidenced by letters of support from each organization;</li> <li>b) That activity will be testing or likely to achieve a positive outcome in at least one of the four core outcomes for youth experiencing homelessness (stable housing, permanent connections, education/employment, and well-being);<sup>1</sup></li> <li>c) The activity is cost-effective; and</li> <li>d) The activity is not in conflict with fair housing, civil rights, or environmental regulations.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Rent Reasonable instead of Fair Market Rent</b></p> <p>The CoC is requesting approval for the use of rent reasonable standards in place of Fair Market Rent (FMR) for the RRH component of the YHDP TH-RRH project. Cuyahoga County has limited affordable housing stock, much of which is aging. YYA in general and BIPOC YYA in particular face discrimination in accessing safe housing in our current system. The rent reasonable will support our efforts to ensure equitable access to safe housing for YYA. The combination of co-location and rent reasonable standards along with housing navigators focused on landlord recruitment will help the CoC to permanently house YYA in safe/stable units that are eligible and appropriate. We expect this waiver will achieve a positive outcome given the local challenging rental market.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Letters of support from REACH YAB and CoC will be provided during project application.</li> <li>b) The activity will support a positive outcome in the core outcomes of stable housing and education/employment by support access to safe housing of YYA choice, including in locations near their education/employment.</li> <li>c) The activity will be cost-effective through using Rent Reasonable to ensure cost-effective rental assistance that also meets the needs of YYA.</li> <li>d) Use of rent reasonable will not be used in conflict with fair housing, civil rights, or environmental regulations.</li> </ul>