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# MA STATE PLAN TO END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

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## ON A GIVEN NIGHT THERE ARE OVER 1000 YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN MA.

Limited affordable housing, inconsistent transitions out of justice or child welfare systems, substance use and mental health disorders, rejection due to sexual orientation, racial discrimination, and trauma are some of the many factors that contribute to youth and young adults (YYA) finding themselves unstably housed on a friend's couch, in a shelter, or on the street. Though it is impossible to intercept every variable that could jeopardize the housing stability of YYA, the MA State Plan to End Youth Homelessness was created to help the Commonwealth develop a system that prevents more YYA from experiencing crises, identifies them more quickly when a crisis occurs, and responds immediately with the supports that young people need to either prevent or end their experience of homelessness. This was a multi-stakeholder initiative in which YYA with lived experience co-developed this report, alongside providers, stakeholders, and state agencies.

**VISION:** Our goal is to build a system in which every community in the Commonwealth has coordinated, developmentally appropriate, and trauma-informed resources that are effective, regionally accessible, and reliably funded.

**PROCESS:** The Plan integrates key recommendations and insights from the local, state, and national levels, drawing on the “Federal Framework to End Youth Homelessness” developed by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness as well as feedback from state and local partners about the current needs and strengths of programs and systems serving YYA across the Commonwealth. Eight evidence-based practices and valued principles are central to the Plan: harm reduction, trauma-informed care, positive youth development, Housing First, culturally responsive services, racial equity, authentic youth and young adult engagement, and multi-system approaches.

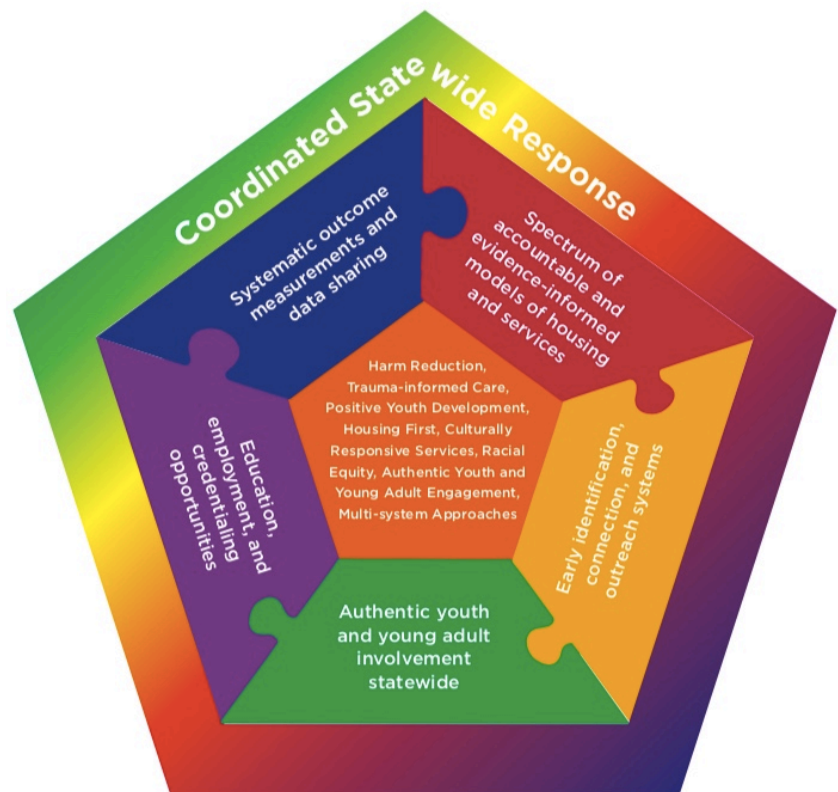
**“We’re youth and that’s *not* a good thing. People assume that people our age don’t normally go homeless.”**

**-YYA, 19, ORLEANS**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** There are six primary recommendations in the plan, one of which is an enveloping strategy: **implement a coordinated statewide response to youth homelessness**. Achieving the outcomes in this overarching recommendation will enable the advancement of the other recommendations through the creation of central leadership, strengthened interagency collaboration, and enhanced regional capacity to prevent and end youth homelessness.

The six recommendations are:

- (1) Implement a coordinated statewide response to youth homelessness;
- (2) Expand the current spectrum of accountable and evidence-informed models of housing and services;
- (3) Enhance early identification, connection, and outreach systems to improve young people’s connection to existing resources;
- (4) Improve education, employment, and credentialing opportunities in order to support young people’s access to long-term, sustainable employment and income;
- (5) Create systematic outcome measurement systems and data-sharing opportunities; and
- (6) Create a structure to support authentic youth and young adult involvement statewide.



**The 2017 MA statewide Youth Count reported that of the 501 YYA identified as homeless:**

- **22.8% identified as LGBTQ**
- **56% identified as Black, Latinx, or Multiracial**
- **50% became homeless before age 18**
- **39% had ever been in placed in a group home or residential placement**
- **26.4% had juvenile or criminal justice involvement**

The recommendations and the accompanying action plan serve as a roadmap for ending youth homelessness for the Executive Branch, the Legislature, and regional networks and Continuums of Care .

This plan was written with the urgency of knowing many youth and young adults who are currently experiencing homelessness and housing instability.