



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
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**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** EOHHS Youth Providers  
**FROM:** Linn Torto, Executive Director, Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness  
**DATE:** March 22, 2019  
**RE:** Engaging Partners in the 2019 Massachusetts Youth Count Initiative

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As you are aware, the Massachusetts Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth has been working for several years to outline a strategy for better understanding the scope and needs of unaccompanied youth and young adults who are experiencing homelessness. For the sixth year, the state's budget includes resources to enhance the work of the Commission. The Commission, chaired by Secretary of Health and Human Services, Marylou Sudders, has been moving ahead with a strong agenda for continued partnership with local communities and youth services providers to not only understand the scope and profiles of youth who are experiencing homelessness, but also to invest resources to address the needs of these young adults. In FY'19, the Legislature increased the Governor's request for full funding for housing and services for youth and young adults experiencing homelessness to \$3.3 million and the Governor approved the increase. We are hopeful that the Legislature will support the Governor's FY '20 budget request for funding for the important housing and services that support Massachusetts youth and young adults.

This year, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services will fund the 10 EOHHS-funded youth providers to support the 2019 Youth Count Initiative. We are asking the youth providers to continue to coordinate their efforts with the MA Continuums of Care and other partners to outreach within their regions and deploy the survey. The survey will be administered from Friday, April 12<sup>th</sup> through Sunday, May 12<sup>th</sup>. The Commission defines an unaccompanied homeless youth as a person 24 years of age or younger who is not in the physical custody or care of a parent or legal guardian, and who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

Massachusetts was the first state in the nation to conduct a statewide Youth Count in 2014, and participation by a diverse group of partners will be critical to realizing our goal of continuing this important work and improving our results. Strong, reliable data is necessary for informing policy and program design. With a clearer understanding of this vulnerable population, we all will be better positioned to allocate resources in a more effective and efficient manner, with the ultimate goal of ending homelessness among youth and young adults. We are pleased to announce that Dr. Laurie Ross of Clark University, who has an expertise in working with youth and young adults, will continue to assist us with the analysis of the 2019 youth count and survey. The

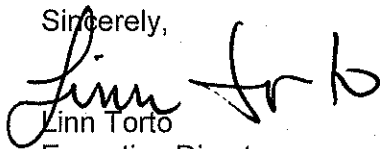
results of the 2019 youth count and survey will be published in the fall. In the meantime, the analysis of the 2018 youth count and survey is available on the ICHH web page.

I encourage you to seek the partnership, leadership, and expertise of key stakeholders throughout your community, including youth and young adults themselves, single adult and family homeless shelters, drop-in centers, schools and educational programs, law enforcement, fire departments, child welfare agencies, juvenile courts, municipal agencies serving youth, faith-based organizations, health care facilities, youth employment programs, food banks, libraries, LGBTQ services, recreation centers, United Ways, children's mental health centers, universities, and others.

In addition, it will be important for you and your partners to engage the support of your business community to fully leverage the state resources being provided to you. The more successful you can be to engage your youth in sharing their experiences and their aspirations through incentives and local events to participate in the survey, the better able we will be to provide continued advocacy and funding for housing and services to meet their specific needs.

As you engage additional partners in this work, please share my expression of appreciation - and that of the Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth - for their assistance. Thank you for your commitment to youth and young adults experiencing homelessness and the Massachusetts Youth Count effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Linn Torto". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Linn" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Torto".

Linn Torto  
Executive Director  
Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness