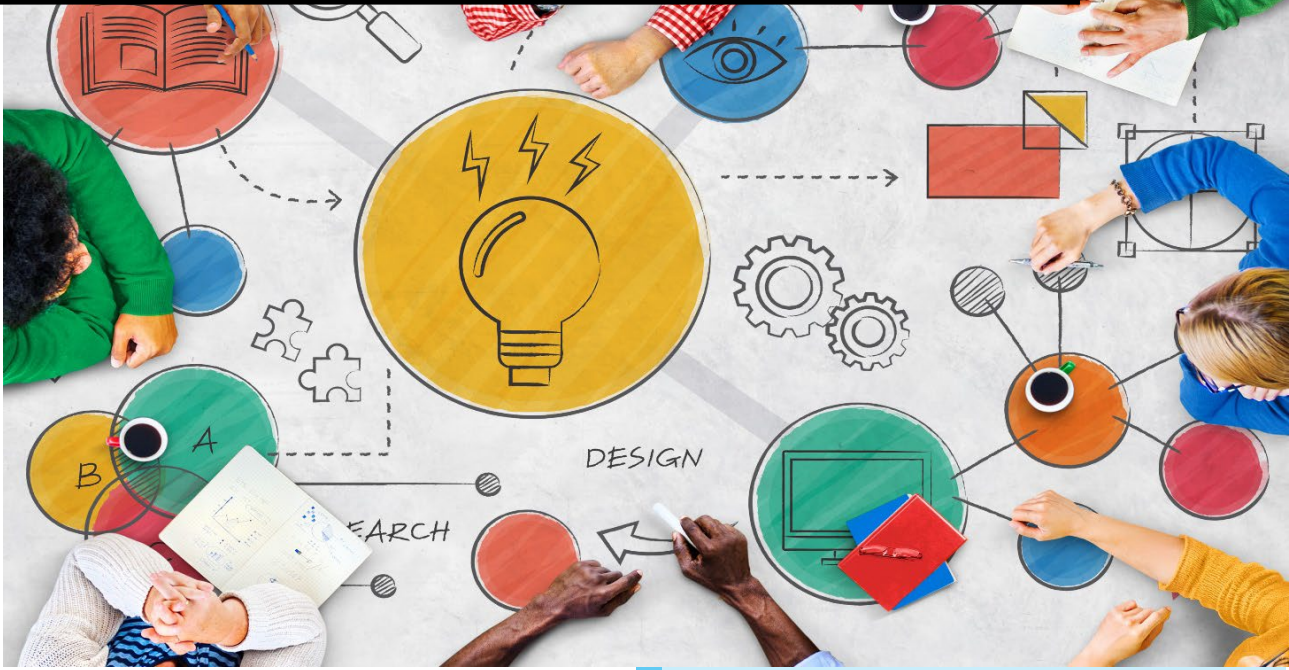


Guidebook for Creating a Youth Homelessness Response Plan



SDYHC



Context and Overview

Guide Summary

This guidebook provides a structured approach for communities to create a Youth Homelessness Response Plan (YHRP). Throughout this guide, the reader will gain insights into the process that San Diego County is taking to address youth homelessness. This work was made possible by countless hours of expertise gathering that involved many individuals compiling best practices, lessons learned, and actionable steps to utilize when organizing solutions to prevent and end youth homelessness.

San Diego Youth Homelessness Consortium (SDYHC)

The [San Diego Youth Homelessness Consortium](#) is a collaborative entity that organizes a membership of over 50 service providers, community leaders, and youth experts to increase the effectiveness of the service delivery system in San Diego County for youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

San Diego County's Continuum of Care (CoC)

The San Diego County CoC is a community-based network of organizations coordinated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to address homelessness by providing housing and supportive services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness within San Diego County.

Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program in San Diego (YHDP)

In July of 2018, San Diego County's Continuum of Care (CoC) was awarded through national competition the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) grant by HUD in the amount of \$7.94 million. As a threshold requirement, the CoC was required to create a Coordinated Community Plan (CCP) to End Youth Homelessness in the San Diego region. This process included the San Diego Youth Homelessness Consortium, the San Diego Youth Action Board (YAB), subject matter experts, and community stakeholders. Developing the plan was an amalgam of input and best practices from six special focus groups, four community input sessions, and more than 25 Operational Team meetings.

YHDP funds were used to house hundreds of youth and establish a baseline youth-centered homelessness response system throughout San Diego County.

San Diego's Coordinated Community Plan to End Youth Homelessness (2018-2024)

In 2018, as part of the implementation of its YHDP grant, San Diego County developed a Coordinated Community Plan to End Youth Homelessness (CCP) to serve as the cornerstone for San Diego's efforts to combat youth homelessness, establishing a vision for systemic change, community collaboration, and youth-centered practices. The San Diego Youth Homelessness Consortium (SDYHC) is tasked with advancing the CCP and driving its mission to end youth homelessness. Since the adoption of the CCP, SDYHC Steering Committee members have actively participated in over 50 San Diego Youth Advisory Board (YAB) meetings and Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) implementation sessions. This group also delivered a "State of the CCP" community presentation in November 2020 to highlight progress and challenges.

Remaining steadfast in its commitment to achieving the goals outlined in the CCP, in 2024 the SDYHC developed the Youth Homelessness Response Plan to serve as an adaptable tool that focuses on

ensuring access to safe and stable housing as a foundation for addressing the broader factors contributing to housing instability.

San Diego Youth Homelessness Response Plan

Building on our experience developing and implementing the CCP, San Diego County decided to revisit and update the CCP in what it now calls the Youth Homelessness Response Plan (YHRP). The Youth Homelessness Response Plan (YHRP) is a comprehensive framework designed to guide the development of an effective youth homelessness response system. It informs a system that empowers youth to transition successfully into stable adulthood, prioritizing collaboration, equity, and data-driven decision-making. Central to this mission is the emphasis on building youth power by involving them in both internal and community decision-making processes. The plan promotes cross-system and cross-agency partnerships to ensure comprehensive care and leverages high-quality data to improve services and track outcomes effectively.

The Benefits of Community Youth Homelessness Response Planning

Communities often find that funding tied to specific plans or programs can be restrictive, making it difficult to build and sustain a seamless system of care. This is why many communities choose to develop a Youth Homelessness Response Plan (YHRP)—a coordinated strategy that allows for planning across funding sources, systems, and jurisdictions. Unlike project-specific plans, a YHRP provides the flexibility to align and leverage multiple streams of funding, address gaps, and unify efforts under a shared vision. By prioritizing housing as the foundation for stability, the YHRP supports targeted, cross-sector solutions that can be integrated at the local, regional, and state levels.





Creating a Plan to Address Youth Homelessness

The YHRP was crafted through a structured approach that emphasized critical planning components. In this guide, each component is accompanied by targeted actions and practical resources used in San Diego County to ensure comprehensive integration throughout the process.

Below is a list of the actions needed for creating a plan:

1. Engaging Stakeholders
2. Establishing and Operating a Plan Workgroup
3. Developing the Plan
4. Delivering and Implementing the Plan

Developing a YHRP involves “system-mapping,” which is series of actions and activities that aim to establish a baseline of information that is relevant to coordinating efforts across partners, sectors, funding sources, etc.

Below is a list of information needed for creating a plan:

1. Community Partner List and Service Specialty
2. Housing Inventory Count
3. Program Services and Eligibility
4. Funding Source Timeline Chart

This guide outlines the methodology that can be combined with actions and key information to create a responsive and impactful plan to address youth homelessness.

Stakeholder Engagement

Effective planning begins with engaging a diverse range of stakeholders, including youth with lived experience, service providers, educators, government agencies, and community leaders. Stakeholder engagement is the foundation of the planning process, requiring early and continual inclusion. Community involvement does not start after planning but shapes the plan's outline and development. This process ensures the plan reflects collective insights and meets the community's needs comprehensively.

Recommended Actions for Stakeholder Engagement

In planning and implementing stakeholder engagement, it is recommended that communities

- Develop a compensation structure to ensure that youth are being paid for their time and contributions.
- Create an outline of exactly what is expected of a participant including meeting frequency, locations, and specific purpose of participation.
- Provide materials like agendas and question lists ahead of engagements, when possible, to allow participants to review and prepare responses.

- Ensure meeting times accommodate the scheduling needs of participants who are not available during usual business hours and create digital platforms to collect targeted feedback virtually for participants who may not be able to join in-person events.

San Diego Youth Homelessness Consortium Stakeholder Engagement Actions

As part of its stakeholder engagement process, the SDYHC

- Developed a list of questions designed to engage different audiences, including youth, providers, community members, and elected officials. ([Link to Community Questions](#))
- Utilized giftogram.com to distribute gift cards to provide each participant with a virtual \$20 gift card credit that can be used at their choice of store. ([Link to GiftoGram](#)).
- Conducted over 50 community listening sessions focused on how to create a plan, including convenings held throughout San Diego County, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, San José, and San Francisco in collaboration with the California Coalition for Youth.

Building and Operating a Workgroup

A well-defined workgroup is central to addressing youth homelessness. This component focuses on forming a team with clear objectives and measurable outcomes. By fostering collaboration, maintaining focus, and driving accountability, the workgroup ensures efforts are purpose-driven and aligned with the overarching goals of the YHRP.

Recommended Actions for Building and Operating a Workgroup

In building and operating a workgroup, it is recommended that communities

- Create a list of key stakeholders or organizations from across sectors that intersect with housing instability (example: education, workforce development, entrepreneurship, behavioral health, etc.)
- Organize call to action that can be utilized via print and virtual pathways to invite stakeholders to join your group or meeting.
- Create a schedule of meetings that happen inside and outside of traditional business hours.
- Create a shared storage space that is not behind a log in wall to ensure all workgroup members have access.
- Create a meeting log with group intentions at the top and use this log as a living document that continues to grow as meetings progress and ensure new participants have access to this log to catch up on previous meetings.

San Diego Youth Homelessness Consortium Workgroup Actions:

In building and operating a workgroup, the SDYHC

- Created a work group from SDYHC membership including representation from housing, employment, education, behavioral health, criminal justice, amongst other cross-sector collaborators. ([Link to SDYHC Members](#)).
- Created a call to action to invite community to join the workgroup. ([Link to call to action](#)).
- Created a list of youth-led organizer groups and engaged them in their spaces. ([Link to Youth Voice Network Doc](#)).
- Formalized a workgroup plan ([Link to CCP Workgroup Plan](#)).
- Convened workgroup monthly throughout 2021-2023 and adjusted meeting times to ensure youth involvement every single meeting included at least one youth.
- Utilized monthly SDYHC general membership meetings to solicit feedback from providers.
- Created an action plan that outlines the goals from feedback received ([Link to action work plan](#)).

Leveraging Data

To close gaps in services and resources, the use of data, community feedback, and input from youth experiencing housing instability is essential. This data-driven approach guarantees that proposed solutions are evidence-based, address actual community needs, and reflect the lived experiences of those directly affected by homelessness.

Recommended Actions for Leveraging Data

In leveraging data, it is recommended that communities

1. Develop questions that are specific to your community that can be used to illustrate the housing needs of youth experiencing instability.
2. Create an online pathway for surveys to be completed and contributions to be stored for later analysis.
3. Identify groups of personnel that channel surveys directly to youth experiencing housing instability.
4. Anonymize contributors but collect email addresses to verify feedback and ensure the ability to compensate youth contributors via virtual gift card.
5. Utilize a spreadsheet to track and create a unique number identifier for contributors and use this same spreadsheet to track compensation delivery.
6. Synthesize your data to form a plan for incorporating this information in your community.

San Diego Youth Homelessness Consortium Data Actions

In leveraging data, the SDYHC

- Conducted a Youth Housing Stability Survey and received responses from 130 youth, highlighting a need for increased housing inventory, employment access, and mental health resources.
- Engaged drop-in center staff, support specialists, case managers, housing navigators, and other contacts to help share the Youth Housing Stability Survey and support its completion by youth experiencing housing instability.
- Elevated gaps identified in the Housing Stability Survey to ensure there is a solution proposed in the Youth Homelessness Response Plan.
- Created a data dashboard to share key highlights with partners (Link to the [San Diego Regional Task Force on Homelessness \(RTFH\) Reports & Data webpage](#)).

Plan Development

The development phase involves crafting a detailed roadmap that outlines specific, actionable steps to achieve established goals. Strategic planning ensures that each phase of implementation is well-coordinated and directly contributes to the overarching mission of preventing and ending youth homelessness.

Recommended Actions for Plan Development

In developing its plan, it is recommended that communities

1. Review and assess prior or existing local, regional, and federal plans and data materials to inform the information within your plan.
2. Identify priority areas to address and begin to pair issues with recommendations.
3. Meet regularly to ensure there is a clear direction with plan development.
4. Utilize running meeting logs and agendas to track and update pending items.
5. Begin writing out action steps that can lead to your goals.
6. Identify parties that can complete action steps identified in the plan.

San Diego Youth Homelessness Consortium Plan Development Actions:

In developing its plan, the SDYHC

- Identified Coordinated Entry System, Housing Action, Comprehensive Supports, Data, and Capacity-Building & Youth Voice as the five priority areas to focus the Youth Homelessness Response Plan.
- Conducted feedback sessions to identify goals to accomplish within priority areas.
- Conducted feedback sessions to identify action steps to accomplish goals.
- Created a document that outlines action steps, goals, and priority areas.

Plan Delivery and Resource Allocation

Plan delivery involves aligning resource allocation and support with identified priorities. This component emphasizes efficient use of funding and resources to achieve targeted outcomes, ensuring sustainability and long-term impact.

Recommended Plan Delivery and Resource Allocation Actions:

When considering plan delivery and resource allocation, it is recommended that communities

1. Develop buy-in from funding sources by involving them in plan implementation.
2. Create a place for the plan to live on the internet.
3. Begin using the plan language and referencing the plan in grant applications to ensure alignment with resources.
4. Establish a plan and timeline to revisit, revise, and update the plan.

San Diego Youth Homelessness Consortium Plan Delivery and Resource Allocation Actions

When considering plan delivery and resource allocation, the SDYHC

- Considered the resources available from San Diego County's Housing Our Youth (HOY) program. HOY, introduced in the CCP, is funded by the San Diego County Office of Homelessness Solutions to support and bolster San Diego's youth homelessness response system. This program has assisted over 200 youth into permanent housing since February 2021.
- Considered the funding received by the SDYHC from the [California Homeless Education Technical Assistance Center \(HETAC\)](#) to support the county's youth homelessness planning body, including through funding a vital position to manage the work.





Summary

Ending youth homelessness requires a shared commitment and the collaborative spirit of diverse stakeholders coming together to address a complex and multifaceted issue. Collaboration fosters the exchange of ideas, resources, and expertise, enabling communities to create comprehensive solutions that no single organization or entity could achieve alone. This collective effort emphasizes the importance of uniting government agencies, service providers, community organizations, educators, businesses, and youth with lived experience to ensure that all voices are heard and all resources are effectively mobilized. At its core, the spirit of collaboration reflects a belief in the power of partnership and shared accountability to create meaningful, lasting change.

Working collaboratively to end youth homelessness not only enhances the effectiveness of interventions but also strengthens the community as a whole. By engaging youth as equal partners in the process, communities affirm their value, amplify their voices, and ensure that solutions are tailored to their unique needs. This partnership-driven approach fosters innovation, maximizes the impact of resources, and builds a sense of shared purpose that drives systemic change. Collaboration also breaks down silos between systems, enabling cross-agency cooperation that addresses the interconnected challenges youth face, from housing instability to education, employment, and mental health support.

Ultimately, the spirit of collaboration is rooted in hope, resilience, and the unwavering belief that youth homelessness is a solvable problem. By working together, communities can not only provide immediate relief to those in crisis but also create a foundation for long-term solutions that prevent homelessness before it starts. This collective commitment ensures that every youth has the opportunity to thrive and reflects the values of equity, inclusion, and shared humanity that lie at the heart of this vital work. Together, through collaboration, communities can build a future where every young person has the stability, support, and opportunities they need to succeed.



Acronyms

CCP – Coordinated Community Plan to End Youth Homelessness

CoC – Continuum of Care

HETAC – Higher Education Technical Assistance Center

HUD – U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

SDCOE – San Diego County Office of Education

SDYHC – San Diego Youth Homelessness Consortium

YAB – Youth Action Board

YHRP – Youth Homelessness Response Plan