

Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Oregon Revised Statute 417.799
Report to the Oregon Legislature

Self-Sufficiency Programs
Oregon Department of Human Services

September 20, 2022

Executive Summary

Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) submits this report to the Legislative committees on child welfare in accordance with ORS 417.799 Runaway and Homeless Youth. The report is intended to provide a status update related to the system of services and supports ODHS has developed for youth experiencing homelessness. The report will also highlight program updates and success stories.

The report will be revised on or before October 31, 2022, to include information pursuant to House Bill 4013 (2022) Section 5.

Program Overview

Oregon's Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) program was established in 2005 and administered by the Oregon Commission on Children and Families (OCCF). In 2011, OCCF was abolished and responsibility for the coordination and delivery of services to runaway and homeless youth was transferred to ODHS.

In 2015, the Legislature directed ODHS to enhance services for runaway and homeless youth, appoint an advisory committee and begin making annual reports related to the program. In 2018, ODHS transferred the program from the Child Welfare Division to Self-Sufficiency Programs (SSP), where it is still housed.

In 2022, ODHS changed the program name to the Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program (YEHP), following a recommendation from the Youth Experiencing Homelessness Advisory Committee (YEHAC). The advisory committee wanted to highlight that the term "homelessness" should not be an adjective used to describe a young person, because homelessness is an experience in their lives that can be overcome.

The YEHP partners with impacted youth, community organizations and state agencies to help youth secure housing and to prevent homelessness among youth across the state.

YEHP Funding

Since 2015, YEHP has been funded at \$3.154 million per biennium. The 2021-2023 program budget is currently \$17.2 million, almost five and a half times greater than the historic budget, thanks to the following temporary investments from the Legislature:

- \$1 million appropriated by the Oregon Legislative Emergency Board (2021)
- \$3.6 million budgeted from House Bill 2544 (2021)
- \$472,500 budgeted from House Bill 4013 (2022)
- \$9 million transferred via Interagency Agreement from Oregon Housing and Community Services (2022)

These investments are set to end on June 30, 2023.

YEHP-funded Services

YEHP-funded services have historically fallen into three categories: (1) Overnight Shelter Services, (2) Drop-in Day Shelter and Street Outreach Services, and (3) Job Development and Mentoring Services. As a result of the investments made beginning in 2021, YEHP funded additional community-based providers serving youth and increased service locations, service types and the development of new initiatives. Since September 2021:

- The number of providers increased from 13 to 37.
- The number of grants and contracts increased from 24 to 55.
- The number of service locations increased from 12 counties to 18.
- The funded service types now include Host Homes and Transitional Living Programs.
- Service and Housing Initiatives now include youth-specific, affordable-housing units and direct cash transfer components.

The names and county locations of current YEHP-funded providers are found in the addendum at the end of this report.

Youth Experiencing Homelessness Advisory Committee

The Youth Experiencing Homelessness Advisory Committee (YEHAC) is charged with advising ODHS regarding policies and procedures that address statewide planning for the delivery of services to youth experiencing homelessness. YEHAC holds meetings every quarter and its agendas and meeting notes can be found on the [ODHS website](#).

The current membership of the YEHAC is as follows:

Agency / Representation	Member Name
Oregon Department of Education - McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Program	Chris James
Oregon Department of Education – Youth Development Division	Cord Bueker
Oregon Department of Human Services – Child Welfare	Greg Thomas
Oregon Housing and Community Services	Mike Savara Jenn Bauer- Leffler
Oregon Health Authority – School Mental Health Specialist	Mikah Rotman
Oregon Youth Authority	Laura Ward
Portland/Multnomah County - Homeless Youth Continuum	Caitlin Campbell
Salem Health	Tricia Frizzell
Oregon Alliance	Royce Bowlin
Hearts with a Mission	Kevin Lamson
Home Plate Youth Services	Bridget Calfee
Maslow Project	Fallon Stewart
Boys and Girls Aid	Drew Williamson
New Avenues for Youth	Sarah Nadeau
J Bar J Youth Services	Eliza Wilson
Native American Youth Association	Naduah Wheeler
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon - Second Home Initiative	Jennifer Pratt
Oregon Department of Human Services – Self-Sufficiency YEHP	Matt Rasmussen (Chair) Jennifer Kellam

Program Updates

Statewide Youth Housing Needs Assessment

In 2021, ODHS funded a [Statewide Assessment on Housing Needs for Youth Experiencing Homelessness](#) conducted by the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) to better understand the continuum of housing and other service needs for youth. Community stakeholders and youth with lived experience and expertise were involved in the regional planning sessions and played a significant role in developing the recommendations.

This assessment helped identify the continuum of housing and service needs for youth experiencing homelessness, including existing interventions, utilization and gaps. It also provided recommendations and a roadmap for building the optimal system for young adults experiencing homelessness in Oregon, including financial modeling for additional housing and services interventions across the continuum.

The Statewide Assessment found:

- Approximately 8,278 unaccompanied youth need supportive housing interventions.¹
- An optimal youth homelessness response system must have “front porch” and crisis housing supports, as well as permanent and non-time-limited housing options. “Front porch” supports are those provided to a young person early in their housing crisis and include interventions like outreach, diversion and drop-in centers or services. Short-term assistance and navigation can help a young person avoid entering the larger homeless system.
- Combining youth housing and service needs with the costs of providing interventions produced a statewide cost projection of approximately \$154 million to meet the needs of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness ages 18 to 24.

Nearly 90 percent of the estimated \$154 million is needed for long-term housing and permanent supportive housing needs. ODHS recently began to

¹ It is important to note that the Oregon Department of Education’s McKinney-Vento (MV) Program yearly count of unaccompanied homeless youth in schools was not included in this total based on the assumption that many of these youth are likely duplicated within the other systems’ reporting, which would inflate the assumed need.

support host homes and transitional living programming but has no authority to deliver permanent supportive housing or rapid rehousing.² The remaining amount of the \$154 million would support “front porch” and crisis services, supports ODHS has historically funded.

The Statewide Assessment also included specific recommendations for ODHS in the areas of youth engagement and leadership, cross-department collaboration and data-sharing, and equity and community engagement. The results of the Statewide Assessment can be found in the [Summary Report](#).

Youth Engagement

YEHP prioritizes the inclusion of youth voice in informing its program strategies and has capitalized on the youth engagement surrounding the 2021 Statewide Assessment, which included Young Leaders in each assessment region. Young Leaders are young people, ages 14 to 24, with an experience of unaccompanied houselessness engaged with YEHP in a formal planning capacity. Young Leaders lend their expertise to identified projects, are invested in change for themselves and their peers, and are compensated for their knowledge and involvement.

Following the Statewide Assessment, a group of Young Leaders presented to ODHS and Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) leadership their recommendations for future youth engagement, which included the creation of a Statewide Youth Advisory Board and appropriately compensating youth for their time.

ODHS is committed to the creation of a Statewide Youth Advisory Board (YAB). In March 2022, YEHP partnered with CSH to create grounding principles, a governance structure and a shared vision of the YAB across multiple state agencies. CSH delivered a draft YAB environmental scan in July 2022, and work toward formally embedding the YAB into ODHS began in summer 2022. Young Leaders will be subsequently recruited for participation.

In 2022, YEHP created its first approved process to pay Young Leaders who are participating in requested initiatives. Payments are made either by store card or via delivered check for \$25/hour. Additionally, in the rollout of new

² *Permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing are in the purview of Oregon Housing and Community Services*

initiatives, YEHP has supported the hiring of Oregon Young Leaders by contracted providers to support their projects.

Direct Cash Transfer Pilot

In February 2022, YEHP and OHCS partnered with the national organization Point Source Youth to plan a Direct Cash Transfer (DCT) pilot initiative for young people ages 18 to 24. DCT is an anti-poverty strategy that puts money in the hands of people experiencing poverty. DCT responds to young people's expressed need for cash to help them transition out of homelessness. YEHP facilitated hiring two Oregon Youth Leaders to inform the planning of the Oregon DCT pilot.

DCT is gaining support in the United States, with New York already offering DCT programming for youth experiencing homelessness and program planning underway in Los Angeles and Oakland.

Oregon's pilot would use a "cash plus" model which combines direct cash transfers with supportive services interventions to address other barriers.³ Supportive services would include case management, housing navigation and financial empowerment⁴ for young people to access as needed. Recipients will have the freedom to spend the funds in ways they feel benefit them the most – for example, some will use funds to help pay for apartments while others may decide to purchase a vehicle or pay for tuition.

In partnership with community-based organizations serving youth, Oregon's DCT pilot design allows for urban, rural and suburban implementation as follows:

³ Morton, M. H., Chavez, R., Kull, M. A., Carreon, E. D., Bishop, J., Deferred, S., Wood, E., Cohen, L., & Barreyro, P. (2020). *Developing a direct cash transfer program for youth experiencing homelessness: Results of a mixed methods, multistakeholder design process*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago

⁴ ODHS worked with providers and youth to define financial empowerment as a combination of the following supports:

- *Financial education on paychecks, loan types and impacts to non-cash benefits;*
- *Financial wellness workshops;*
- *Budgeting for regular, unexpected income and lump sums;*
- *Credit/debit assistance;*
- *Partnerships with banks and credit unions;*
- *Tax preparation;*
- *Financial guides or coaches;*
- *Having an address for financial mail; and*
- *Employment literacy to self-advocate for wages and benefits.*

- Metro Multnomah County – DCT would pay 50 young people \$1000/month with supports provided by the Native American Youth Association.
- Rural Clackamas County – DCT would pay 10 young people \$1000/month with supports provided by AntFarm Youth Services.
- Deschutes County – DCT would pay 20 young people \$750/month with supports provided by JBarJ Youth Services.

It is expected that the recruitment of young people for the receipt of DCT funds and supportive services will begin in fall 2022.

Youth-Specific Affordable Housing Investments

Affordable housing opportunities specifically for youth experiencing homelessness are very limited in all areas of Oregon. As a result, youth are often forced to compete with adult and family populations experiencing homelessness to receive housing vouchers, which consistently have long waiting lists and are difficult for youth to navigate. Youth experiencing homelessness also frequently encounter bias from landlords who may view them as less reliable than adults, which can further limit their access to housing.

An Interagency Agreement with OHCS made it possible for YEHP to fund Youth-Specific Free and Affordable Housing opportunities through a pilot partnership with College Housing Northwest (CHNW), a non-profit housing provider. YEHP is supporting one year of free rent in CHNW properties for 25 youth experiencing homelessness who are pursuing education and employment goals to better their future. Youth are also provided with case management supports. Youth began entering the housing units in June 2022 and full capacity is anticipated to be reached by the end of September 2022.

YEHP is also partnering with CHNW to hold up to 21 apartment units for 25 years at 30 percent area median income (AMI) for youth experiencing homelessness or for youth at risk of homelessness who are leaving a system like Child Welfare or the Oregon Youth Authority.

Additional Partnerships

In addition to the above partnerships, the YEHP Program is working closely with:

- OHCS' Rental Assistance for Youth (RAY) pilot team
- Oregon Network of Host Home Organizations
- Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) recipients in Lane and Marion/Polk Counties
- Child Welfare's Youth Transitions Unit, Self-Selected Environment, and Youth & Young Adult Services workgroups
- Rural Oregon Continuum of Care (ROCC)

Success Stories

“Front Porch” Services/Outreach

“H” is a 15-year-old youth referred by her school social worker. She didn't feel safe to go home and had stayed after school with nowhere to go. When she met with the mentor, she shared that she doesn't feel listened to by mom. Mom expressed concern about H due to history of trauma and concerns for current exploitation. Through work with a mediator, both H and mom were set to explore effective communication strategies and additional resources for moments of conflict and counseling. H has now been home with mom for a whole month, is still regularly attending school, meeting with mentor regularly, attending the healthy relationships group, and is considering joining the Youth Advisory Board.

-New Avenues for Youth

Shelter

“B” was only 11 when she first entered our shelter and, over the past two years, she has stayed four times. In between stays we have had ongoing contact with her through our aftercare program that allowed us to develop a very solid relationship and build trust. With each stay, we saw her grow in every aspect of her life. Most notable has been her ability to learn how to cope with adverse circumstances and develop

lasting relationships. With so many changes and transitions, it was important that we helped maintain her enrollment in her home school and collaborate with teachers to ensure progress in her studies.

B was dealing with some negative circumstances in her life and collaboration was occurring with local ODHS to find a safe family member. After two years, and many hours of hard work and determination, B has been reunited with her biological father and she is thriving in that relationship.

-Hearts with a Mission

Job Development

“G” emigrated from Haiti to the United States as a teenager in search of opportunity and connection – he had no living family In Haiti and felt there was “nothing left for him” there. Following a stint in California, and a brief return home, he landed in Portland. After accessing an emergency night in shelter, he screened into the Homeless Youth Continuum and connected with the Employment & Education Resource Center (ERC) and enrolled in Job Readiness Training (JRT). Just five days later, he started the program.

G excelled in JRT. He remained focused and positive, and maintained perfect attendance – even when the realities of living in shelter (and, one night, on the street) began to weigh on him. Upon finishing JRT, G worked with staff and took the first steps toward his goal of becoming an accredited barber while he becomes enrolled in school. He is participating in the newly relaunched Native Plant Garden Project and exploring employment opportunities that would complement a student schedule.


-Outside In

Transitional Living Programming

“L” first came to Youth Outreach at age 17 when he lost his mother and had a challenging relationship with his father. He was sleeping in a tent in a friend’s backyard and was able to stay temporarily in a warm bed with a welcoming Host Home family. Unfortunately, after leaving the program he continued to struggle and, for the next two years, found himself staying in homeless shelters, couch-surfing, or sleeping outside in parks, as well as struggles with substances.

He found his way back to Youth Outreach at age 19, ready to change his life and in need of support. He began working with a case manager who provided immediate needs resources and support. A few months later, he entered the program’s Transitional Living Program (TLP) and began building a resume, applying for jobs, and improving his interview skills. He was soon hired and has received three pay raises, opened a bank account, and contributed more than \$4,000 to savings! L is currently exploring CNA programs to further his education. A little more than six months since entering TLP, he has completely turned his life around and demonstrated the incredible resiliency and strength of his character.

-Yamhill Community Action Partnership

		YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS (YEHP) PROGRAM TYPES							
		Basic Center	Transitional Living Program	Street Outreach	Direct Cash Transfer Pilot	Host Home Demonstration	Shelter	Outreach	Job Development/ Mentoring
Counties Served:	Program Name:								
Baker and Union	Northeast Oregon Compassion Center					X			
Benton and Linn	Jackson Street Youth Shelter Inc.	X							
Clackamas	Ant Farm			X	X				
	Parrot Creek Child and Family Services, Inc.						X	X	
	Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon					X			
Columbia	Youth Era - St. Helens						X		
Coos	Alternative Youth Activities					X	X		
Deschutes	J Bar J Youth services	X	X	X			X	X	
Douglas	Family, Faith and Relationship Advocates							X	
Hood River	Next Door, Inc.		X					X	
Jackson	Community Works		X						
	Maslow Project			X				X	
	Hearts with a Mission	X	X	X			X	X	
Josephine	Hearts with a Mission (Host Home)					X			
Klamath	Hearts with a Mission (Host Home)					X			
	Integral Youth Services	X	X						
Lane	A Family for Every Child					X			
	Christians as Young Advocates					X			
	Looking Glass Youth and Family Services	X	X	X			X	X	
	Oregon Social Learning Center - 15th Night							X	
	Thrive Housing Network		X						
	Youth Era - Eugene							X	
Lincoln	Lincoln County Juvenile Department.	X							
	Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon					X			
Malheur	Community in Action							X	
Marion and Polk	Mid Willamette Valley Community Action			X			X	X	
	Northwest Human Services - HOST		X						
	Youth Era - Salem							X	
Multnomah	College Housing Northwest						X - HOUSING		
	Janus Youth Programs	X	X	X			X		
	Kindred Partners					X			
	Native American Youth and Family Services (NAYA)				X			X	
	New Avenues for Youth (NAFY)	X						X	
	Outside In		X					X	
	Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon					X			
Tillamook	Tillamook County							X	
Union	Youth Era - La Grande							X	
Wasco	Yes House								
Washington	Boys & Girls Aid Society of Oregon (BGAI/O)						X		
	Homeplate Youth Services, Inc							X	
	Ecumenical Ministries Of Oregon					X			
Yamhill	Yamhill Community Action Partnerships	X	X	X				X	



For additional information:

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