



100-DAY CHALLENGE CASE STUDIES

HUD COHORT 4: YOUTH PRIORITIZATION FOR HOUSING AND SERVICES

Three of the HUD Cohort 4 100-Day Challenge communities – Northern Michigan, West Tennessee, and Horry County, South Carolina – implemented changes within their Coordinated Entry systems to improve the prioritization of youth for housing and homeless services.

HOW THE COHORT 4 COMMUNITIES MADE IT HAPPEN

During the 100-Day Challenge, the communities of West Tennessee, Northern Michigan, and Horry County, SC each recognized that youth were not being highly prioritized for housing and services through their Coordinated Entry systems. Each community took its own approach to improving the prioritization process for youth:

- **West Tennessee** changed its Coordinated Entry assessment process to more accurately reflect youth vulnerability, resulting in the improved prioritization and referral of youth for housing and services.
- **Northern Michigan** implemented a new “zipper” prioritization process that alternately prioritizes individuals from across subpopulation groups for housing and services, including youth, Veterans, and individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in order to ensure that each subpopulation has an opportunity to access available housing and services.
- **Horry County, SC** highly prioritized youth within Coordinated Entry for the duration of the 100-Day Challenge.

These improved prioritization processes helped the 100-Day Challenge communities move youth more quickly off the by-name list and into appropriate housing with services. The 100-Day Challenge Teams also learned and adapted from each other to improve youth prioritization processes in their own communities. For example, Horry County, SC adopted a “zipper” prioritization process similar to the one developed in Northern Michigan as a

Key Takeaways:

- Limited life experience and other factors may result in lower prioritization and less access to housing and services for youth through the Coordinated Entry System.
- Communities should continuously evaluate Coordinated Entry for youth, including the prioritization process, to identify areas of improvement.
- Youth prioritization can be part of broader discussions for improving the local Coordinated Entry process across populations of focus, including youth, Veterans, and individuals experiencing chronic homelessness.
- Changes to the prioritization process can have a significant impact on populations served and local utilization of housing and services. It is important to get broad stakeholder buy-in to support these changes to reflect the needs of youth.

method for continuing to improve local prioritization of youth and other vulnerable subpopulations beyond the 100-Day Challenge.

LESSONS LEARNED

1) Identify the Gaps and Challenges for Youth within Your Coordinated Entry System

The 100-Day Challenge brought together diverse stakeholders within each community who were able to help identify gaps and challenges for youth to access housing and services through the local Coordinated Entry System. The Horry County 100-Day Challenge Team was able to identify that youth were not being highly prioritized within the Coordinated Entry System, and as a result were remaining on the by-name list for extended periods of time. Similarly, West Tennessee recognized that youth and young adults were not receiving high scores through the Coordinated Entry assessment process due to factors within the assessment tool and prioritization scheme that tend to skew against younger people – i.e., younger people often have shorter lengths of time homeless, don't meet chronic homelessness definitions, and may have fewer serious illnesses - resulting in limited access to housing and services within the region. Northern Michigan also leveraged the 100-Day Challenge as an opportunity to evaluate its current prioritization processes and identify areas of improvement for addressing youth homelessness and preventing chronic adult homelessness. The identification of these challenges and gaps helped each community develop a pathway to improve its local prioritization process for youth.

2) Garner Broad Stakeholder Support for Changes to the Coordinated Entry Prioritization Process

The 100-Day Challenge communities ensured that key stakeholders were informed of the challenges youth face to accessing housing and services through the Coordinated Entry System and worked to garner their support for changing the local prioritization process to better serve youth. West Tennessee and Horry County leveraged the momentum of the 100-Day Challenge to identify youth homelessness as a local priority and make the case that this be reflected through changes to the local Coordinated Entry prioritization process. The Northern Michigan 100-Day Challenge Team emphasized with stakeholders that by ensuring youth were prioritized equitably for housing and services, the community could effectively end youth homelessness and prevent recurring, chronic homelessness. The Team also maintained open communication with stakeholders who were concerned about the impact that reprioritizing youth may have on access to housing and services for other vulnerable populations and utilized their feedback to develop a prioritization policy that would address those concerns.

3) Employ a Strategy for Improving Overall Prioritization of Vulnerable Populations, Including but Not Limited to Youth

Northern Michigan recognized the importance of improving youth access to housing and services while not taking away resources for other vulnerable subpopulations of persons experiencing homelessness. The 100-Day Challenge Team chose not to focus exclusively on the prioritization of youth, but rather to frame the conversation around improving the overall prioritization process in Northern Michigan for persons experiencing homelessness. This resulted in the development of a “zipper” prioritization process in Northern Michigan that alternately prioritizes individuals from across highly vulnerable populations of focus within the region, including youth, Veterans, and individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. This process creates consistent movement from the by-name list into housing and allows for the improved prioritization of youth without taking away resources from other priority populations, thus strengthening the community's prioritization process as a whole.

The Horry County 100-Day Challenge Team similarly recognized that highly prioritizing youth within the Coordinated Entry System would not be sustainable beyond the 100-Day Challenge and would create access and

resource limitations for other subpopulations of persons experiencing homelessness. After the 100-Day Challenge, Horry County implemented a “zipper” prioritization process similar to that utilized in Northern Michigan to ensure that youth were still being prioritized for housing and services, but in a more equitable manner alongside other subpopulations of persons experiencing homelessness.

4) Continuously Evaluate and Improve Coordinated Entry and Prioritization Processes for Youth

Northern Michigan, West Tennessee, and Horry County all utilized the 100-Day Challenge as an opportunity to evaluate and improve upon their current coordinated entry system and the prioritization process for youth, and continue to identify ways to improve their processes. During the 100-Day Challenge, Horry County identified a need to improve management of the youth by-name list to support their youth prioritization efforts, establishing a process to ensure that the information on the youth by-name list would be accurate and up-to-date. Provider staff and interns worked to call every youth on the list and make contact in order to update information on their current housing situation and service needs; remove clients who have self-resolved or are unable to be reached; and identify and respond to new and emerging crises. These improved processes helped Horry County to decrease the number of youth active on the by-name list from 74 at the beginning of the 100-Day Challenge to 30 by the end of the Challenge. As the landscape of youth homelessness changes in these communities, it will be important that they continue to evaluate their coordinated entry and prioritization processes to ensure that they are effectively helping to connect youth to appropriate housing and services.