



100-DAY CHALLENGE CASE STUDIES

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FL: NEW & INNOVATIVE CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Miami-Dade County leveraged strong cross-system partnerships to forge new and innovative connections with youth engaged in the homeless system of care, both through the implementation of youth Coordinated Entry processes and expanded use of mobile phone application technology.

HOW MIAMI-DADE COUNTY MADE IT HAPPEN

During the 100-Day Challenge, Miami-Dade County implemented new systems and expanded innovative technologies to ensure that youth are connected, supported, and sheltered once they make contact with the homeless system of care. The community leveraged the momentum of the 100-Day Challenge to begin operation of youth-specific access points through the Coordinated Entry System. Miami-Dade's youth access points include non-traditional partners operating outside of the CoC, including an LGBTQ center and an educational supports provider, to ensure that youth have a range of opportunities to access care. Through the implementation of youth-specific access points, Miami-Dade County was able to change how youth connect to services, with youth consistently connected to shelter and services within 1-2 days of being assessed.

Miami-Dade County has not only enhanced its ability to connect with youth at the front end of the homeless response system, it has also changed how it interacts with youth exiting the system of care into permanent housing options. Miami-Dade County is working to expand use of an existing mobile phone application developed by Educate Tomorrow to connect with youth and identify their ongoing needs, collect information for follow-up, and maintain contact with youth once they are housed. The application offers a mobile resource center for youth, including information on housing resources and employment options, and supports communication and continued contact between service providers and youth.

Key Takeaways:

- Communities should ensure that youth experiencing homelessness feel connected and supported throughout their experience with the homeless system of care.
- CoCs can improve connections with youth at the front end of the homeless response system, including by incorporating dedicated youth access points into their Coordinated Entry Systems.
- Cross-system partnerships can help identify challenges with youth engagement and develop solutions that foster strong connections with youth.
- Communities should be willing to reimagine how youth connections are made and maintained.
- Communities can improve connections with youth as they transition out of the homeless response system, particularly into permanent housing options. Consider the use of innovative technology to support continued engagement.

LESSONS LEARNED

1) Establish Separate Coordinated Access Points for Youth

Miami-Dade County established dedicated Coordinated Access points for youth to connect directly with the homeless system of care. Existing youth access points are operated through well-known youth-serving agencies, including an LGBTQ center, a safe haven program, a youth social services provider, and an educational supports provider. The inclusion of non-traditional partners such as an LGBTQ center and educational support provider helps meet youth where they are at and provides opportunities for youth to connect to homeless services through familiar agencies where they have already built trust. Coordinated entry assessors at every youth access site ensure that youth are quickly and appropriately engaged, assessed, and connected to shelter and resources.

2) Reimagine How Connections to Youth are Made and Maintained

The 100-Day Challenge served as a catalyst for Miami-Dade County to reimagine how youth connect and remain connected to the homeless system of care. Miami-Dade County partners worked collaboratively to change the process of connecting with youth new to the homeless response system, establishing a “new normal” that youth are off the streets and connected to shelter and services within 2 days of being assessed through Coordinated Entry. Through the 100-Day Challenge, Miami-Dade’s youth service providers also identified the need to ensure that youth experiencing homelessness are supported throughout and beyond their experience with the homeless response system, particularly as they transition into permanent housing situations. The team has developed a plan to maintain contact between service providers and youth through the use of a mobile application.

3) Leverage Cross-System Partnerships to Improve Outcomes

The cross-system partnerships that developed among homeless, education, and employment service providers during Miami-Dade County’s 100-Day Challenge brought new energy and different perspective on how to improve and strengthen connections with youth experiencing homelessness. Education partners developed new linkages with shelters and the Coordinated Entry System to ensure that students experiencing homelessness are quickly connected to shelter and services along with educational supports. Employment partners worked with Miami’s five largest shelters to better connect with youth and collaboratively address their employment, housing, and service needs through the launch of Transition Management Teams. As a result of these cross-system partnerships and efforts, more youth experiencing homelessness in Miami-Dade County are not only being connected to the homeless system of care, they are being connected quickly and efficiently to shelter and comprehensive, individualized services that support positive housing and self-sufficiency outcomes.

4) Utilize Innovative Technology to Connect with Youth

Miami-Dade County is working to create innovative new connections with youth experiencing homelessness through the expanded use of a mobile phone application operated by Educate Tomorrow, a 100-Day Challenge partner agency. The Educate Tomorrow App supports and encourages students in developing critical life skills as they transition into adulthood. Students are able to use the mobile application to identify their needs, track their goals, and access mentoring, employment, housing and goal-setting resources. Miami-Dade County is working to expand use of this application to a wider audience of community partners and youth experiencing homelessness. The community plans to use the expanded Educate Tomorrow App to maintain stronger connections with youth as they move through the homeless system of care and as their needs change. Service providers will also be able to track their contacts with youth through the application in order to better coordinate time and resources with partner agencies as they collaborate to meet the client’s needs.