

# HUD Cohort 5 100-Day Challenge Case Study

## Monroe County, FL: Building the Infrastructure of a Youth Homeless Response System

**Monroe County, FL utilized the 100-Day Challenge to bring a dedicated focus to the issue of youth homelessness and to engage key partners in building out essential components of a youth homeless response system.**

### HOW MONROE COUNTY, FL MADE IT HAPPEN

Monroe County, FL utilized the 100-Day Challenge to bring together youth serving agencies and homeless service providers for the first time around a shared mission to prevent and end youth homelessness. These diverse providers worked together as part of the 100-Day Challenge Team to identify gaps in serving youth and young adults (YYA) experiencing homelessness and to help build the infrastructure needed to develop a dedicated youth homeless response system in Monroe County, FL.

The Monroe County Continuum of Care (CoC) made a number of changes to the CoC structure during the 100-Day Challenge that helped increase local capacity to respond to YYA homelessness. A new End Youth Homelessness Committee was established to serve as a formal subcommittee of the CoC, including representatives from a range of youth-serving agencies, homeless service providers, community members, and YYA with lived experiences of homelessness. The committee is responsible for conducting YYA case conferencing and identifying additional partners, housing opportunities, and funding to respond to YYA homelessness locally.

The CoC also added a seat for a member of the Youth Action Board<sup>1</sup>, known as Keys Youth Action Network (KYAN), to participate on the CoC Board and is providing ongoing support for the growth and development of KYAN beyond the 100-Day Challenge. This will help ensure that decisions regarding YYA homelessness are genuinely and authentically informed by YYA with lived experiences of homelessness.

### Key Takeaways:

- Engaging key partners is an essential first step in the development of a youth homeless response system.
- A dedicated focus on addressing YYA homelessness can help break down silos between homeless service providers and youth-serving agencies.
- Communities should consider ways to build a focus on YYA homelessness into existing structures and systems, including the CoC and Coordinated Entry processes.
- A youth by-name list can help improve identification and coordination of care for youth as part of a youth homeless response system, including between HMIS and non-HMIS participating agencies.
- Efforts such as setting an annual YYA housing goal and conducting YYA case conferencing can help sustain a local focus on ending youth homelessness.

<sup>1</sup> A Youth Action Board (YAB) is a decision-making body composed of youth and young adults who help shape and inform local youth homelessness policy and project decisions. YAB members should be representative of the youth and young adult population experiencing homelessness in the community, including being comprised primarily of people with lived experiences of homelessness. For YHDP community YAB requirements, please see the [YHDP NOFO](#).

Additionally, Monroe County developed a dynamic YYA by-name list over the course of the 100-Day Challenge. The by-name list is updated in real time during case conferencing meetings, does not collect any personally identifying information, and can be populated by agencies outside of HMIS. The by-name list and case conferencing process has increased local capacity to identify YYA experiencing homelessness across systems and make referrals for appropriate housing and services.

## LESSONS LEARNED

### 1) Engage New and Key Partners in Conversation Together

The 100-Day Challenge provided Monroe County, FL with the opportunity to bring together youth-serving agencies and homeless service providers that had previously worked in silos to tackle the shared concern of YYA homelessness. Prior to the 100-Day Challenge, there were a number of agencies in Monroe County, FL that worked with youth but were not engaged in addressing homelessness among their YYA clients. Similarly, there were organizations dedicated to addressing the issue of homelessness that did not focus on or specifically address YYA homelessness. The 100-Day Challenge helped bridge the gap between homeless service providers and youth-serving agencies, including the Departments of Juvenile Justice and Children and Families, and create a sense of shared accountability and ownership for preventing and ending YYA homelessness in Monroe County, FL.

### 2) Increase Awareness and Understanding of YYA Homelessness Among Partner Agencies

In order to develop the infrastructure for a youth homeless response system, the Monroe County 100-Day Challenge Team had to increase awareness and understanding of YYA homelessness among key partners. The Monroe County CoC engaged a number of partners in the 100-Day Challenge who had never worked with the homeless response system. 100-Day Challenge Team members worked with these new partners to provide information on what the CoC is, what role it serves in the community, and how it can serve as a partner to other agencies. The 100-Day Challenge also allowed for the CoC to share information with a diverse array of newly engaged agencies about the distinct characteristics of YYA homelessness in Monroe County, FL, and the barriers to housing that YYA face. This included information on:

- How YYA homelessness is defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and other systems of care, such as the education system;
- Characteristics of YYA homelessness in Monroe County, FL and youth populations that are disproportionately impacted by homelessness, including LGBTQ+ and systems-involved youth;
- How needs related to mental health, substance use, education, and child welfare and justice involvement intersect with housing stability and homelessness for youth populations; and
- How factors such as the distinct geography of the Florida Keys island chain, a significantly expensive housing market, and seasonal changes in the prevalence of YYA homelessness pose unique challenges to connecting YYA to safe and stable housing and resources.

The 100-Day Challenge Team also provided newly engaged agencies with information on best practices for serving YYA experiencing homelessness, including Housing First, Trauma-Informed Care, and Positive Youth Development as foundational elements for programs that provide youth-focused housing and services. Overall, the 100-Day Challenge helped increase awareness among new and potential partners that YYA homelessness is a unique experience of homelessness that requires dedicated time, attention, and resources.

### **3) Identify Changes to Systems and Structures that Can Help Address YYA Homelessness**

Monroe County, FL identified a number of areas where greater supports and structures to address YYA homelessness could be implemented during the 100-Day Challenge. One key area of focus was working within the CoC structure to increase collaboration around YYA homelessness and lay the groundwork for a more robust youth homeless response system. The establishment of the End Youth Homelessness Committee of the CoC helped to operationalize cross-systems coordination, which was identified as a gap in the community's youth homelessness response prior to the 100-Day Challenge. The CoC also identified the need for greater YYA voice and representation in local efforts to prevent and end youth homelessness, resulting in the addition of a YAB member seat on the CoC Board and increased support for the growth and development of the local YAB, known as KYAN. The development of a dynamic YYA-specific by-name list also helped respond to a known challenge in Monroe County by providing a means for data collection on YYA homelessness among both HMIS and non-HMIS participating agencies. The development of a dynamic by-name list for young people is the first step in Monroe County's plans for developing a Youth Coordinated Entry System as part of their YYA homeless response efforts.

### **4) Implement Processes to Ensure a Focus on YYA Homelessness is Sustained**

The Monroe County 100-Day Challenge Team established new processes to ensure that the progress made towards the development of a youth homeless response system would be sustained beyond the 100-Day Challenge. In order to sustain momentum around YYA homelessness as a local priority, the End Youth Homelessness Committee and the CoC decided to maintain an annual goal of ending YYA homelessness. The Team has also established monthly case conferencing meetings using the youth by-name list to identify, coordinate, and provide progress on housing status for YYA experiencing homelessness in Monroe County being served across systems and partner agencies. The community has been working beyond the 100-Day Challenge to increase supports for KYAN and to maintain and update a "Trusted Landlord" list to identify landlords who are willing to house YYA tenants.