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HUD Cohort 6 100-Day Challenge Case Study

Monterey / San Benito Counties, CA: Developing a Regional Approach to Addressing Youth Homelessness

Monterey and San Benito Counties utilized the 100-Day Challenge to increase cross-county collaboration and to begin development of a coordinated regional approach to preventing and ending youth homelessness.

HOW MONTEREY AND SAN BENITO, CA MADE IT HAPPEN

The Monterey and San Benito CoC, which coordinates the use of federal, state and local funding to address the needs of persons experiencing homelessness, covers the two counties of Monterey and San Benito, CA. The CoC identified addressing youth and young adult (YYA) homelessness as a particular need for the bi-county region, with YYAs representing 28% of the homeless population in Monterey County and 16% of the homeless population in San Benito County. However, prior to the 100-Day Challenge, there was a lack of collaboration between the two counties to address YYA homelessness. The 100-Day Challenge engaged system leaders and key stakeholders from both Monterey and San Benito Counties in planning and coordination efforts, fostering new collaborative relationships and the development of a regional approach to addressing YYA homelessness for the first time in the community.

The 100-Day Challenge Team engaged in intentional outreach to ensure that non-profit service providers, County agencies, and law enforcement from across the region were represented, including among Team leadership. Weekly Team meetings were used to help coordinate outreach, identification, and access to housing and services for YYA experiencing homelessness across the bi-county area, particularly in more rural parts of the region. The 100-Day Challenge Team also invested in new tools and processes – including improvements to the Coordinated Entry System to better serve YYA clients and development of a Supportive Services Resource Booklet – to increase coordination and knowledge of youth-specific resources across counties. Monterey and San Benito Counties have set up regular Systems Change meetings to strengthen the working relationships developed during the 100-Day Challenge and sustain this new regional approach to addressing YYA homelessness.

Key Takeaways:

- A regional approach to addressing YYA homelessness requires buy-in from system leaders across jurisdictions.
- Relationships among cross-county stakeholders need to be intentionally fostered and developed to support regional YYA homelessness initiatives.
- Increasing cross-jurisdictional knowledge and understanding of YYA resources is crucial for regional coordination.
- Special consideration should be given to ensuring that YYA outreach and engagement efforts reach all parts of the region, including rural areas.
- Coordinated Entry for youth can strengthen and help formalize regional coordination efforts.
- Communities should meaningfully and intentionally engage YYA representing different geographies and lived experiences of homelessness from across the region.

LESSONS LEARNED

1) Engage Representatives from Across the Region in Leadership Roles

Monterey and San Benito Counties were able to increase cross-county collaboration on YYA homelessness through the 100-Day Challenge by engaging key stakeholders from across the region in leadership roles. System leaders from both Monterey and San Benito Counties - including city and county officials and representatives from each county's school districts, child welfare agencies, juvenile justice departments and other youth-serving systems of care – were engaged in the collaborative effort from the beginning to secure system-level support for the regional effort to prevent and end YYA homelessness. One Team Lead was selected from each of Monterey and San Benito Counties, which helped to ensure that real-time outreach, engagement, and identification efforts were coordinated across counties. Bi-county leadership also helped ensure that the 100-Day Challenge Team could quickly identify and address county-specific issues as they arose. System leaders from Monterey and San Benito counties have continued to meet regularly following the 100-Day Challenge to continue the development and implementation of a regional strategy for addressing YYA homelessness.

2) Increase Regional Knowledge of Existing YYA Resources

The 100-Day Challenge helped key stakeholders better understand and leverage the range of housing and supportive services available throughout the region for YYA experiencing homelessness. The 100-Day Challenge Team conducted outreach to youth-serving agencies across Monterey and San Benito Counties and compiled comprehensive lists of housing and supportive services options available for transition aged youth (TAY). This allowed youth-serving agencies to increase their knowledge of resources available throughout the entire region and expand access to supportive services for YYA clients across county lines. The 100-Day Challenge Team was also able to strengthen relationships with local Public Housing Authorities to identify new housing options available for youth in both Monterey and San Benito Counties. This work during the 100-Day Challenge helped to increase the comprehensiveness of the community's response to YYA homelessness and mobilize quick access to housing and supportive service options regardless of where a YYA client was residing within the region.

3) Coordinate to Ensure Full Geographic Coverage of Outreach and Engagement Efforts

Monterey and San Benito Counties utilized the 100-Day Challenge to improve identification of YYA experiencing homelessness across counties and systems. Street outreach teams coordinated outreach across the urban, suburban, and rural regions of the Monterey Peninsula and Salinas Valley, focusing on “meeting youth where they are” to conduct housing assessments and identify their needs. Youth-serving agencies across Monterey and San Benito Counties also posted flyers and shared information directly with clients to help them connect with their local outreach team or to a Coordinated Entry access point. The Team also utilized grant funding provided by Axa XL Insurance to purchase cell phones and phone cards to provide to YYA clients, allowing outreach workers to remain connected to conduct assessments, provide case management, and facilitate connections to housing and services even if clients moved throughout different areas of the region.

4) Work Collaboratively to Improve Regional Coordinated Entry Processes for YYA Clients

Changes to the Monterey and San Benito Coordinated Entry System (CES) to better address the needs of YYA clients was a critical component in establishing a regional approach to preventing and ending YYA homelessness. The 100-Day Challenge Team brought together youth-serving agencies from across systems and counties to identify existing gaps in CES for YYA clients, including identifying areas within the region where CES is less accessible for YYA experiencing homelessness and developing strategies to increase targeted outreach and

engagement to these areas. Team members also worked to develop and execute memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with youth-serving agencies from across Monterey and San Benito Counties to allow for data sharing, case conferencing, and improved referrals for housing and services. Changes and improvements made to CES to better serve YYA during the 100-Day Challenge helped to formalize the community's commitment to coordinating access, assessment, prioritization, and referral for YYA clients to appropriate housing and supportive service options at a regional level.

5) Authentically Engage YYA with Lived Experience from Different Geographies within the Region

Monterey and San Benito Counties recognized the importance of not only engaging YYA with lived experience, but of ensuring representation of YYA from different geographies and with different lived experiences of homelessness from throughout the region. The 100-Day Challenge Team was successful in making connections with YYA with lived expertise from across the bi-county region who were interested in supporting efforts to prevent and end youth homelessness. YYA with lived experience supported landlord outreach and engagement, development of social media and marketing materials, and evaluation of current CES processes to identify opportunities to better serve YYA clients as part of the 100-Day Challenge. A Monterey/San Benito Youth Action Board (YAB) was developed to inform the community's work of preventing and ending homelessness during and beyond the 100-Day Challenge, with dedicated outreach efforts to engage YYA from both counties and with diverse lived experiences, including indigenous youth and YYA from rural areas of the region.