



100-DAY CHALLENGE CASE STUDIES

SACRAMENTO, CA: SERVING PREGNANT & PARENTING YOUTH

The Sacramento 100-Day Challenge Team established a priority of providing pregnant and parenting youth with safe, stable housing connected to support. By the end of the Challenge, 41% of youth who were connected to housing and supports were pregnant or parenting.

HOW SACRAMENTO MADE IT HAPPEN

The Sacramento 100-Day Challenge Team found that there is a significant number of pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness in the community and on the housing waitlist, but very few dedicated resources to serve this population. The Team also found that pregnant and parenting youth can particularly benefit from access to wraparound services and intensive support, yet they often face eligibility barriers to youth housing and services because they are targeted to single young adults. Sacramento set out to address these issues by setting a goal that 20% of youth housed with connections to supports during the 100-Day Challenge would be pregnant and parenting youth.

The Sacramento 100-Day Challenge Team worked to identify and connect with both youth and single adult housing providers willing to begin accepting pregnant and parenting youth into their programs and to help them address barriers to serving this population. The Team also focused on identifying referrals from Coordinated Entry for pregnant and parenting youth and working to quickly connect them to safe and appropriate housing options. Most importantly, Sacramento established that improving connections to housing and supports for pregnant and parenting youth was a community-wide priority. As a result of Sacramento's efforts during the 100-Day Challenge, 41% of youth who had been connected to housing and supports were pregnant or parenting, exceeding the community's goal and demonstrating an increased capacity among providers to serve this population.

Key Takeaways:

- Pregnant and parenting youth can benefit from wraparound services and intensive support, but may face barriers to accessing services.
- Communities can make serving pregnant and parenting youth a priority within their efforts to end youth homelessness.
- Programs can address eligibility and programmatic barriers that prevent pregnant and parenting youth from accessing services.
- Homeless and housing service providers should develop strong community partnerships and provide a range of family and youth supports to better serve pregnant and parenting youth. Family and youth supports can be better integrated in order to address the distinct needs of this population.
- Children of parenting youth are also clients. Providers should work to identify their strengths and needs and provide program support.
- Communities should explore new and targeted funding opportunities to serve this population.

LESSONS LEARNED

1) Identify and Remove Barriers to Serving Pregnant and Parenting Youth at Both the Organizational and Community Level

Pregnant and parenting youth may face a number of barriers to accessing appropriate housing and services, including program ineligibility and a lack of programs or services designed to meet their needs. At the organizational level, youth and single adult providers can consider opening their programs to pregnant and parenting youth and can connect with experienced service providers to provide appropriate wraparound services. At the community level, efforts to prevent and end youth homelessness can include a priority for pregnant and parenting youth and on improving provider capacity community-wide to serve this population. The Sacramento 100-Day Challenge Team also found that the youth programs and family programs within the homeless response system operate largely independently of each other, forcing pregnant and parenting youth to choose between their identity as a youth or as a parent to pursue a pathway to housing and services. Family and youth supports can be better integrated at both the programmatic and community level to ensure that the whole person needs of pregnant and parenting youth are served and that their comprehensive needs are met.

2) Develop Strong Community Partnerships Around Serving This Populations

Sacramento's homeless and housing service providers have developed a number of rich partnerships to serve pregnant and parenting youth that stretch beyond the 100-Day Challenge:

- **Health Care:** Health care providers are vital partners in supporting the physical and emotional wellness of pregnant and parenting youth and their children, including reproductive health care, prenatal care, postpartum care, pediatric services, mental health care, and trauma counseling. Sacramento homeless providers have developed strong partnerships with their local hospital and reproductive health providers to help meet the health needs of their pregnant and parenting clients and their children.
- **Mainstream Benefits:** Programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and Medicaid can help provide for the basic needs of pregnant and parenting youth and their children. Sacramento's homeless services providers have found that many mainstream benefits that can be helpful for pregnant and parenting youth are underutilized, including support for breastfeeding mothers provided through the WIC program.
- **Education:** Sacramento's HeadStart program has increased its focus on serving families experiencing homelessness, partnering with homeless and housing service providers in the community to conduct on-site visits and deliver family support services. Homeless service providers have also formed partnerships with the school district to help support young families once their children are ready to enter school.
- **Child Welfare:** The Sacramento 100-Day Challenge Team worked with the child welfare system to identify pregnant and parenting youth in the foster care system who were at risk of homelessness and connect them to housing and services.

Homeless and housing service providers can identify similar providers, programs, and organizations in their community and form strong partnerships with them to provide coordinated care to pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness.

3) Provide Access to a Range of Family and Youth Supports

Pregnant and parenting youth can benefit from wraparound services, intensive support, and access to a wide range of family and youth supports. One of the most significant needs for pregnant and parenting youth is child care, which helps youth pursue educational or employment opportunities and achieve greater self-sufficiency for their family while ensuring that their children are in a safe, supportive environment. Homeless and housing service providers in Sacramento help parenting youth secure child care vouchers and identify participating child care providers. One housing provider that serves pregnant and parenting youth has established its own licensed child care center, which eases the burden of finding child care for their clients and helps maintain contact with young families even after they leave the organization's housing program.

The Sacramento 100-Day Challenge Team also emphasized the importance of providing non-traditional family supports, such as trips to the zoo, that support family bonding and child development. Additionally, all providers working with pregnant and parenting youth should be trained to recognize and screen for signs of postpartum depression and making appropriate referrals to health care providers as needed. Finally, it is important that pregnant and parenting youth have access to the full range of youth supports, including education and employment services, to help them secure safe and stable futures into adulthood. Sacramento has also found that there is overlap between youth who are pregnant and parenting and who identify as LGBTQ+ in their community, and has worked to blend programming for these subpopulations to create a better experience for youth.

4) Understand and Serve the Children of Parenting Youth as Clients

Programs that serve parenting youth should ensure that they are focusing on the needs of the children of young families as well, including through their intake process and program models. One homeless and housing service provider in Sacramento conducts a separate intake with parenting youth that is completely focused on the child to identify their strengths and interests; this information is used to develop goals for the child during their time in the program as well as to provide services that meet the child's needs and respond to their interests. Organizations that serve parenting youth should also explore and invest in program models that promote healthy child development and the development of healthy daily rhythms (such as routines around eating, sleeping, and bathing) for children and their families.

5) Explore New and Targeted Funding Options for Serving This Population

There are a number of funding opportunities that are available to serve children and families that can help support homeless and housing service providers in increasing services for this population. In Sacramento, funding from the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program (RHY) supported the development of a maternity group home for pregnant and parenting youth that has been in operation since 2003. Communities should also explore foundation and grant opportunities that are focused on improving outcomes for low-income children and families, as these resources can support the growth and development of programs targeted towards serving pregnant and parenting youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.