

# HUD Cohort 6 100-Day Challenge Case Study

## Santa Barbara County, CA: Youth-Focused Data Collection and Coordinated Entry Processes

**The Santa Barbara County 100-Day Challenge helped improve data collection and Coordinated Entry processes to be more responsive and effective in addressing the distinct needs of youth experiencing homelessness.**

### HOW SANTA BARBARA, CA MADE IT HAPPEN

The Santa Barbara County 100-Day Challenge Team set out to improve outcomes for youth and young adults (YYA) experiencing homelessness on their by-name list (BNL) through improved connections to housing navigation, case management, and permanent housing options. In order to achieve this goal, Santa Barbara County engaged in a communitywide, cross-systems process of re-evaluating and reimagining its data collection and Coordinated Entry processes. The 100-Day Challenge Team identified opportunities to improve collection of youth-specific data, increase engagement of youth-serving providers in the local Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and Coordinated Entry, and to better utilize local data to more efficiently connect YYA to housing and services.

The 100-Day Challenge helped Santa Barbara County improve youth-specific data collection and analysis by race and gender and outcomes for YYA exiting the homeless response system. The community also identified a need for additional data collection on sexual orientation. These improved data collection processes allowed youth-serving providers in Santa Barbara County to better identify, understand, and meet the needs of YYA experiencing homelessness. The Santa Barbara 100-Day Challenge Team also worked to establish Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with new cross-systems partners, including Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) and colleges, to support data sharing and participation in the local HMIS and Coordinated Entry System (CES). The community launched youth-specific case conferencing during the 100-Day Challenge, which allowed youth-serving organizations to engage in targeted conversations around housing and service options for YYA experiencing homelessness on the BNL. These changes to Coordinated Entry case conferencing helped to accelerate the rate of YYA connected to permanent housing options in the community.

### Key Takeaways:

- Youth-specific Coordinated Entry and HMIS data are crucial for analyzing local YYA homelessness and housing placement trends.
- Youth-serving providers outside of the CoC should be supported in connecting to local HMIS and Coordinated Entry systems.
- Communities should collect and analyze youth-specific data by race, gender, sexual orientation, and other key demographics.
- HMIS and Coordinated Entry data can help CoCs identify and begin to address disparities in YYA experiences of homelessness and housing outcomes.
- Youth-specific case conferencing can help CoCs to prioritize and connect YYA clients to available permanent housing resources.
- Local data collection and Coordinated Entry processes should be evaluated often and in partnership with YYA with lived experiences of homelessness and cross-system partners.

## LESSONS LEARNED

### 1) Evaluate Existing Data Collection Processes for YYA Experiencing Homelessness

The 100-Day Challenge helped Santa Barbara County evaluate and improve its current data collection process for YYA experiencing homelessness. The Team was able to analyze data by race and gender for YYA experiencing homelessness on the BNL and for YYA exiting the homeless response system to permanent housing during the 100-Day Challenge. This allowed the community to identify and begin addressing disparities in race and gender demographics between YYA experiencing homelessness and the general YYA population of Santa Barbara County, as well as racial and gender disparities between YYA who were on the BNL compared to those who exited to permanent housing destinations. The 100-Day Challenge also helped Santa Barbara County recognize that data on sexual orientation and gender identity was not being captured in HMIS or CES, creating barriers to effectively serving YYA identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer/questioning (LGBTQ+). Santa Barbara has facilitated communitywide conversations with providers, system leaders and Coordinated Entry representatives to discuss policy changes to allow for the collection of this data in a trauma-informed manner.

### 2) Connect Non-CoC Youth-Serving Agencies to HMIS and Coordinated Entry

Santa Barbara's 100-Day Challenge helped to connect non-CoC youth-serving agencies to the homeless response system, including the local HMIS and CES. The Santa Barbara 100-Day Challenge Team created trainings to help new partners learn about CES, including how YYA clients can access the system and how they are assessed, prioritized, and referred to housing options in the community. The Santa Barbara County CoC also developed MOUs with youth-serving providers, including a local college and PHA, to allow these partners to contribute and share data on YYA experiencing homelessness through HMIS and Coordinated Entry. Communities working to prevent and end YYA homelessness may consider establishing MOUs and data sharing agreements with a wide range of non-traditional youth-serving organizations, including school districts, institutes of higher education, health providers, child welfare agencies, PHAs, and LGBTQ+ organizations. Santa Barbara County found that this effort to connect non-CoC youth serving agencies to HMIS and CES helped the community improve identification and engagement of YYA experiencing homelessness with the homeless response system in order to provide connections to housing and supportive services.

### 3) Explore Population-Specific Case Conferencing Processes

Santa Barbara County utilized the 100-Day Challenge as an opportunity to reimagine the local Coordinated Entry process to allow for youth-specific case conferencing. Santa Barbara County has historically conducted geography-based case conferencing. However, the 100-Day Challenge encouraged the community to explore and experiment with population-based case conferencing, including youth-specific case conferencing. Santa Barbara County conducted virtual case conferencing meetings due in part to the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing youth-serving providers from across regions of the county to come together and coordinate housing solutions for YYA experiencing homelessness. Santa Barbara County also took a multipronged approach of incorporating youth-focused breakout discussions into case conferencing meetings, as well as increasing the focus on YYA experiencing homelessness in case conferencing meetings in general. This intensive case conferencing among youth providers helped Santa Barbara to better prioritize and connect YYA experiencing homelessness to available permanent housing resources and accelerate the rate of YYA housed during the 100-Day Challenge.

#### **4) Commit to Continuous Quality Improvement of Data Collection and Coordinated Entry Processes**

Santa Barbara County worked throughout the 100-Day Challenge to continuously evaluate and improve data collection and Coordinated Entry processes to meet the needs of YYA experiencing homelessness. The 100-Day Challenge Team recognized the importance of timely and accurate data entry into HMIS and worked with youth-serving providers to support them in reporting data on YYA homelessness in a timely manner. The Santa Barbara County CoC also worked to generate new reports in HMIS to track progress and YYA housing outcomes. The community continues to incorporate a youth focus into case conferencing meetings while exploring new and different case conferencing structures to best support youth-serving providers in addressing their clients' needs. As communities continuously evaluate, reimagine, and refine their local data collection and Coordinated Entry processes related to YYA homelessness, they should ensure that YYA with lived experiences of homelessness and cross-systems partners are meaningfully engaged throughout the process.