



## 100-DAY CHALLENGE CASE STUDIES

# WEST TENNESSEE: EDUCATION AND OUTREACH TO ADULT PROVIDERS

**The West Tennessee 100-Day Challenge Team conducted outreach and education on youth homelessness to adult service providers throughout the region, improving local capacity for serving youth and increasing buy-in among non-youth-dedicated programs and organizations for preventing and ending youth homelessness.**

### HOW WEST TENNESSEE MADE IT HAPPEN

With no active youth service providers in the region, West Tennessee recognized the importance of leveraging the 100-Day Challenge to strengthen partnerships with adult service providers so they can serve youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. The West Tennessee 100-Day Challenge Team worked collaboratively with adult service providers to offer education and build their capacity to meet the needs of youth experiencing homelessness. These efforts included sharing information on the local prevalence and unmet needs of youth experiencing homelessness and facilitating “myth-busting” conversations to address common misconceptions and perceived challenges in serving youth and young adults.

West Tennessee was able to generate significant awareness and buy-in from adult service providers as result of these youth homelessness education and awareness efforts. The 100-Day Challenge Team and adult service providers began sharing information and working collaboratively to generate ideas for improving West Tennessee’s response to youth homelessness while acknowledging current provider resource and capacity constraints. The Team’s outreach and education efforts also expanded beyond adult providers to include community college admissions coordinators. The 100-Day Challenge Team was able to provide college admissions coordinators with information on youth homelessness and Housing First for youth, while admissions coordinators were able to identify a small amount of funding that could be used to provide housing to students experiencing homelessness.

### Key Takeaways:

- Adult providers are important partners in serving youth experiencing homelessness, particularly when there are few youth-dedicated resources in the community.
- Local and national data on youth homelessness can help gain buy-in and support from adult providers to increase housing and service options for youth.
- Education on best practices and “myth-busting” around youth homelessness can help increase the capacity of adult providers to serve youth, particularly among providers with limited resources to dedicate to youth.
- Building trust and rapport is key to engaging and sustaining the involvement of adult providers in efforts to prevent and end youth homelessness.
- Engaging local champions and sharing successes with the public can help generate greater buy-in and involvement among adult providers and other partners.

The Team also experienced success in engaging elected officials and local leaders in discussions around youth homelessness, creating political buy-in for the 100-Day Challenge and garnering support for continuing West Tennessee's efforts to prevent and end youth homelessness as a local priority.

## LESSONS LEARNED

### **1) Build Trust and Rapport with Adult Providers**

The West Tennessee 100-Day Challenge Team found that building trust and rapport was key to engaging adult providers in youth homelessness efforts and developing working relationships around improving youth access to provider resources and services. The Team was open and transparent with adult providers about the current challenges facing youth experiencing homelessness in West Tennessee and the goals of the 100-Day Challenge, while at the same time encouraging adult providers to share their goals and the challenges they face in serving their clients, including youth who present at their programs in need of assistance. These conversations helped identify shared goals and opportunities for collaboration that can extend beyond the 100-Day Challenge, with youth homelessness as one (but not the only) area of collaboration. By building a strong foundation of trust and rapport with adult providers, the 100-Day Challenge Team is working to create sustainable and mutually beneficial relationships for not only addressing youth homelessness, but also improving the overall capacity of the West Tennessee homeless response system to serve all individuals experiencing a housing crisis.

### **2) Use Data to Support Your Outreach and Education Efforts**

The West Tennessee 100-Day Challenge Team found that their efforts to increase local education, awareness and buy-in around addressing youth homelessness among diverse stakeholders, including adult providers, city leaders, and community college admissions coordinators, were bolstered by data. West Tennessee utilized multiple sources of data to make the case for prioritizing youth homelessness as an issue, including local data on the prevalence of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness; information on the nationwide movement and progress to increase housing and prevent homelessness for youth; and cost comparison data on the effectiveness of providing housing rather than allowing youth to remain in unhoused situations. This information helped stakeholders understand the scope of youth homelessness locally and the importance of their role providing housing and service options for youth experiencing homelessness among the clients they serve.

### **3) Meet Providers Where They Are in Their Ability to Address Youth Homelessness**

West Tennessee found that most adult service providers were supportive of the 100-Day Challenge and responsive to the Team's outreach and education efforts around youth homelessness, but that most lack the current resources and capacity to take on a prominent role in preventing and ending youth homelessness. The 100-Day Challenge Team was understanding of these challenges and worked to meet adult service providers where they were in terms of their resources and capacity for serving youth experiencing homelessness. In many cases, the Team focused on providing education, guidance, and best practice information to help adult service providers build their capacity to serve youth. These efforts support adult service providers in improving their ability to serve youth who present for housing or services as clients, creating greater regional capacity to serve youth experiencing homelessness without an increase in dedicated resources for youth.

#### **4) Identify Local Champions to Support Your Work**

The West Tennessee 100-Day Challenge Team leveraged existing relationships and identified champions of the cause to amplify their youth homelessness outreach and education efforts. The Team identified local people and organizations with whom they already had positive working relationships and who have been local champions for addressing homelessness and worked with them to become champions for preventing and ending youth homelessness as well. The Team made the case to potential champions regarding why youth homelessness needs additional focus within the community, including providing information on the prevalence of youth homelessness locally and the importance of West Tennessee's role in the national movement to prevent and end youth homelessness as a 100-Day Challenge community. The West Tennessee 100-Day Challenge Team was able to identify a number of champions on the issue of youth homelessness, including the local Housing Authority and the Mayor of Jackson County, who have helped build momentum, community support and political buy-in for ongoing efforts to prevent and end youth homelessness as a local priority.

#### **5) Keep Partners Engaged in Your Progress to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness**

West Tennessee found that sharing the community's progress and successes regarding the 100-Day Challenge has helped to keep adult providers engaged as they continue to build trust and develop buy-in around preventing and ending youth homelessness. The West Tennessee 100-Day Challenge Team operates a "West Tennessee – Ending Youth Homelessness" Facebook page and wrote an article for the local newspaper to share the accomplishments of the 100-Day Challenge and ways that community stakeholders can become involved in ongoing efforts to address youth homelessness. The Team plans to regularly communicate West Tennessee's progress on addressing youth homelessness to adult providers in order to keep them engaged in the work and generate greater buy-in from them as they see local successes around providing housing and services for youth.