

# HUD Cohort 5 100-Day Challenge Summary

## Charleston, SC

### 100-Day Challenge Goal

In 100 days, Charleston will house 50 youth and young adults (YYA) age 18 to 25 to safe and stable housing. We will attempt to connect 100% to supportive services, and 35% will be pregnant or parenting.

*Over the course of Charleston's 100-Day Challenge, the community increased its focus on addressing unsheltered YYA homelessness and made this population a priority following the onset of the COVID-19 crisis. As a result of this focused effort, Charleston saw a significant increase in housing placements for YYA experiencing homelessness, 100% of whom were housed out of unsheltered situations. Please see Charleston's **Housing Youth and Young Adults Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness** case study to learn more about how the community increased outreach, engagement, housing, and service connections for YYA experiencing unsheltered homelessness to help reach their 100-Day Challenge goal.*

### 100-DAY CHALLENGE CONTEXT & FOCUS AREAS

#### BACKGROUND: YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN CHARLESTON, SC

Charleston, SC has recently experienced an increase in collaboration among service providers to ensure that unaccompanied youth and young adults (YYA) experiencing homelessness are on a quick path to safe, stable, and permanent housing. In 2018, The Joseph P. Riley, Jr. Center for Livable Communities at the College of Charleston brought attention to the issue of youth homelessness in Charleston by conducting a youth count to identify YYA experiencing housing insecurity. The study estimated that there are between 125-175 YYA living in places not fit for human habitation in Charleston County. Among YYA experiencing homelessness identified during the study, key demographic trends that emerged included:

- 38% identified as LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning/queer);
- 38% reported that they were in foster care at some point growing up;
- 51% reported that they have been incarcerated (mostly in county jails); and
- 50% reported interactions with law enforcement in the last year.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> College of Charleston, Joseph P. Riley, Jr. Center for Livable Communities, "Charleston YOUth Count Street Canvassing Study: A Report of Youth Age 25 and Under Experiencing Homelessness in Charleston County, SC," March 8, 2019, <https://riley.cofc.edu/About%20the%20Riley%20Center/CYC%20Canvassing%20Full%20Report%2003.8.19.pdf>

This study and resulting data helped to inform policy makers and service providers about the distinct needs and experiences of YYA experiencing homelessness. The 100-Day Challenge provided a new and focused opportunity for key stakeholders in Charleston to further local efforts to engage new partners and develop a coordinated community response to preventing and ending YYA homelessness.

## 100-DAY CHALLENGE FOCUS AREAS

System leaders from across Charleston, SC came together to help identify the following areas of focus for their 100-Day Challenge to prevent and end youth homelessness:

- Working with transitional age youth (TAY) under age 25 in Berkeley, Dorchester, & Charleston to prevent experiences of unsheltered homelessness; and
- Strengthening connections between local providers and mainstream resources in the community.

The community also incorporated a focus on homelessness prevention and diversion into its 100-Day Challenge goal in response to data from education and child welfare partners regarding YYA at-risk of homelessness. However, Charleston shifted its focus to unsheltered homelessness during the 100-Day Challenge in response to the impact of COVID-19 on unsheltered YYA populations.

## IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE 100-DAY CHALLENGE

Only a couple of weeks into their 100-Day Challenge, the COVID-19 pandemic became a reality for Charleston and the other Cohort 5 100-Day Challenge communities. A decision was made to pause the Challenge so that the community could first address its immediate needs related to the growing pandemic, including staffing changes, shifts in local priorities, and changes in how YYA were engaging with the homeless response system.

During this pause, several 100-Day Challenge Team members were shifted into different projects to respond to COVID-19. However, the Team retained a core group of participants who remained engaged and invested in the 100-Day Challenge. The Team also realized during this pause that YYA experiencing unsheltered homelessness were being disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and were no longer seeking out shelter or other site-based services due to concerns about the spread of COVID-19.

About 6 weeks after the initial pause, the 100-Day Challenge relaunched for another 75 days. Charleston made the following changes to its 100-Day Challenge goal during the relaunch in light of changes in staff capacity and local priorities due to the COVID-19 pandemic:

Original Goal	Revised/Reboot Goal
In 100 days, Charleston will house or divert 75 YYAs age 18 to 25 to safe and stable housing. We will attempt to connect 100% to supportive services, 25% will be (or have been) child welfare involved, and 35% will be pregnant or parenting.	In 100 days, Charleston will house 50 YYAs age 18 to 25 to safe and stable housing. We will attempt to connect 100% to supportive services, and 35% will be pregnant or parenting.

Charleston chose to shift its focus for the remainder of the 100-Day Challenge away from prevention and diversion to focus completely on addressing unsheltered homelessness. This change was made due to insights from YYA with lived experience and youth-serving providers that many of the barriers to accessing housing and services for YYA in unsheltered situations were being exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additionally, the Charleston 100-Day Challenge Team chose to slightly reduce its goal due to increased difficulties in identifying and connecting with YYA experiencing homelessness once shelters reduced their capacity in response to COVID-19. The community also chose not to track engagement of YYA with histories of child welfare involvement due to data collection challenges during the COVID-19 crisis, but continued its targeted efforts to provide housing and supportive services for this population of focus.

## 100-DAY CHALLENGE SUCCESSES, ACCOMPLISHMENTS & INNOVATIONS

### SNAPSHOT OF 100-DAY CHALLENGE PROGRESS

**100-Day Challenge Goal:** In 100 days, Charleston will house 50 youth and young adults (YYA) age 18 to 25 to safe and stable housing. Charleston will attempt to connect 100% to supportive services, and 35% will be pregnant or parenting.

#### OUTCOMES AS OF DAY 100: 46 YYA safely and stably housed

##### Safe and Stable Housing



46 YYA were connected to safe, stable housing during the 100-Day Challenge, of whom **100% were exiting unsheltered situations**

##### Housing Placement Rate



The Housing placement rate for YYA increased by **44%** during the 100-Day Challenge from 2019

##### Pregnant and Parenting Youth



**61%** of all YYA housed during the Challenge were pregnant or parenting

##### Connection to Services



**93%** of all YYA served during the Challenge were connected to supportive services

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN SYSTEMS CHANGE

#### CROSS-SYSTEMS COLLABORATION

The Charleston 100-Day Challenge Team found that developing relationships with community partners was an essential first step for achieving systems-level changes and establishing a strong service network for YYA experiencing unsheltered homelessness. New partner agencies engaged during the 100-Day Challenge included homeless providers, youth serving agencies, mental health providers, juvenile justice, law enforcement, and the local Department of Social Services. The 100-Day Challenge resulted in a particularly strong connection with a local mental health agency, which remained actively engaged throughout the Challenge and commits to continue its involvement as a member of the Continuum of Care (CoC) Youth Committee.

Weekly meetings brought partner agencies together throughout the 100-Day Challenge to support each other and to learn about how each service and organization operates in order to improve coordination of care for YYA clients. This coordination was particularly important to help partners bring resources to YYA “where they are” and

overcome barriers to providing resources to YYA in unsheltered situations. This investment in cross-systems collaboration has helped identify additional referral sources for youth and create a more coordinated community response to YYA homelessness in Charleston, resulting in a significant increase in youth housing placements. The 100-Day Challenge Team plans to leverage this success to demonstrate the importance of this new, collaborative way of working together and to engage additional partners in preventing and ending youth homelessness beyond the 100-Day Challenge.

### **ENGAGING ADULT SERVICE PROVIDERS**

Charleston's 100-Day Challenge helped break down silos between youth serving agencies and adult homeless service providers, helping to increase local capacity to serve YYA experiencing homelessness. Prior to the 100-Day Challenge, Charleston had only one youth-specific provider to whom all YYA clients experiencing homelessness were referred. The Challenge helped bring adult homeless service providers to the table to identify their role in serving YYA experiencing homelessness and to learn more about providing youth-specific services. The 100-Day Challenge Team worked with adult homeless service providers to help them figure out how many YYA clients they were serving and to incorporate more youth-specific services and best practices into their program models such as trauma-informed care (TIC), Positive Youth Development (PYD), and Housing First. Charleston also established dedicated staff positions within the community to serve YYA experiencing homelessness, including three youth-focused case manager positions who have helped build rapport with YYA clients and make connections to appropriate resources within youth serving agencies and homeless service providers.

### **YOUTH-SPECIFIC OUTREACH AND IDENTIFICATION EFFORTS**

One of the priorities for Charleston's 100-Day Challenge was improving outreach and identification efforts for YYA experiencing unsheltered homelessness. The Charleston 100-Day Challenge Team realized that YYA experiencing homelessness were not primarily accessing resources through the homeless shelter system and therefore many of their needs were going unmet. The Team also identified that YYA experiencing unsheltered homelessness were being uniquely impacted by the COVID-19 crisis and were no longer residing in the same locations as they were prior to the outbreak. As a result, Charleston identified the need for new and different outreach approaches to engage with YYA residing in unsheltered situations to connect them to housing and services. Charleston began conducting weekly youth-focused outreach in front of a local drop-in center, which provided an opportunity for YYA experiencing homelessness to meet with a case manager in-person to discuss their needs while being able to maintain social distance and other COVID-19 safety protocols. The 100-Day Challenge Team shared information regarding the new outreach hours with community partners, through the housing crisis hotline, and through flyers to reach as many YYA experiencing homelessness as possible. The Team also collaboratively developed a new outreach assessment tool to be used when outreaching and engaging with new YYA clients to determine the services offered by partner agencies for which they are eligible.

### **HOUSING FOR YOUTH EXPERIENCING UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS**

Charleston established a focus over the course of its 100-Day Challenge on providing housing and services to YYA experiencing unsheltered homelessness. 100% of the YYA housed during the 100-Day Challenge came directly from unsheltered situations and were connected to housing and services through the community's expanded outreach and engagement efforts. The Charleston 100-Day Challenge Team worked to connect YYA experiencing unsheltered homelessness to a number of different housing interventions dependent upon their needs, including housing problem-solving approaches, reunification with chosen family or friends, and Rapid Re-Housing (RRH). RRH was found to be one of the most appropriate housing solutions for many YYA experiencing unsheltered homelessness based on their vulnerability and needs, which lead the Team to develop a youth by-name list to

improve prioritization and referral of YYA clients to RRH placements. Charleston was also able to help YYA coming from unsheltered situations overcome barriers to housing, such as a lack of identification documentation, by strengthening relationships with landlords to accept YYA tenants. The Charleston 100-Day Challenge Team and partner agencies worked to ensure that YYA exiting unsheltered homelessness were provided with connections to supportive services based on their identified needs, including employment, mental health, and substance use treatment services.

### **IMPROVED DATA COLLECTION AND COORDINATED ENTRY PROCESSES**

Charleston leveraged the 100-Day Challenge as an opportunity to help improve data collection and coordinated entry processes to better serve YYA experiencing homelessness. The 100-Day Challenge Team was able to engage new partner agencies who did not currently participate in HMIS and increase data collection and sharing between these providers and the homeless response system. The development of a youth-specific by-name list and youth case conferencing process has helped Charleston improve service coordination across HMIS and non-HMIS participating agencies and increase YYA access to resources through the Coordinated Entry System. The 100-Day Challenge Team also made changes to data collection during the intake process to improve identification of pregnant and parenting YYA and to better assess the supportive service and income needs of all YYA clients. Charleston plans to continue these new practices beyond the 100-Day Challenge, including working to ensure that the Coordinated Entry System is as accessible and responsive to YYA as it is to adults experiencing homelessness.

## **MAINTAINING 100-DAY CHALLENGE MOMENTUM**

In order to lock in their gains and maintain the momentum around preventing and ending youth homelessness, the Charleston 100-Day Challenge Team plans to focus on the following priorities moving forward.

### **ACTION PLAN FOR ONGOING WORK**

- Maintain a 100-Day Challenge communication network;
- Continue to meet regularly and expanding 100-Day Challenge Team participation;
- Conduct weekly outreach to YYA experiencing homelessness at One80 Place;
- Establish regular review and case conferencing for youth on the by-name list; and
- Expand existing youth outreach and engagement efforts.

### **ACTION PLAN FOR NEW WORK**

- Develop a Youth Action Board (YAB)<sup>2</sup>;
- Engage the Housing Authority in efforts to prevent and end YYA homelessness;
- Create a housing problem-solving training for youth service providers, focusing on building credibility and trust with YYA clients;
- Promote a “youth friendly” CoC, including securing YYA representation on the CoC Governing Council;
- Ensure that YYA experiencing homelessness remain a priority for new and ongoing funding sources; and
- Maintain a collaborative referral system that ensures “warm hand-offs” among providers.

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<sup>2</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](#).

## **PRIORITIES FOR SYSTEM LEADERS**

Additionally, the team has established the following priority system shifts needed to sustain performance and proposed actions to make those system shifts a reality.

- Establishing youth-specific case conferencing protocols and processes;
- Facilitating new opportunities for YYA outreach and engagement efforts;
- Identifying a North Charleston local person/agency for youth-specific homeless outreach;
- Increasing housing options for YYA experiencing homelessness coming directly from unsheltered situations; and
- Identifying funding and YYA representatives to help establish a Youth Action Board (YAB).