

HUD Cohort 5 100-Day Challenge Summary

Jacksonville, FL

100-Day Challenge Goal

In 100 Days, we will house or prevent homelessness for 100 youth and young adults (YYA) ages 16-24, 40% of whom will be LGBTQIA+ and/or survivors of human trafficking.

*Jacksonville developed new youth-focused staff positions to support outreach, identification, and engagement of YYA in the local Coordinated Entry System. These dedicated staff efforts supported quicker referrals to housing and services for YYA experiencing homelessness – including populations of focus such as YYA who are LGBTQIA+ and/or survivors of human trafficking – allowing the community to meet and exceed its ambitious 100-Day Challenge goal. Please see Jacksonville’s **Youth-Focused Staff Positions** case study to learn more about the innovative steps the community took to increase dedicated local staffing to address YYA homelessness.*

100-DAY CHALLENGE CONTEXT & FOCUS AREAS

BACKGROUND: YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN JACKSONVILLE

“In 2019 we found 109 youth/young adults (18-24) living on the streets. That’s 109 too many.” - Dawn Gilman, CEO of Changing Homelessness

Over the past 5 years, key stakeholders in Jacksonville and Northeast Florida have worked to build local capacity and invest in new opportunities to address youth and young adult (YYA) homelessness. From 2015 to 2020, local youth homelessness efforts have included:

- Grant awards made to Jacksonville Area Sexual Minority Youth Network (JASMYN) to support YYA outreach, housing stability, and rapid re-housing projects;
- Collaboration among cross-system stakeholders to coordinate, plan, and apply for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD’s) Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP);
- Development of a Youth/Young Adult Action Board (YAAB), including a YAAB action plan, vision, mission, values and a “What is Home?” video; and
- Dedication of 65 total beds in the homeless response system to YYA experiencing homelessness.

Prior to the 100-Day Challenge, JASMYN opened up a new Safety Net Resource Center to offer YYA in unsheltered situations access to resources to address basic needs, including laundry, mail, showers, and counseling services.

Jacksonville leveraged the 100-Day Challenge as an opportunity to build upon this new resource and develop an emergency response system specific to YYA that can provide clear pathways from unsheltered homelessness or precariously housed situations to permanent housing options.

100-DAY CHALLENGE FOCUS AREAS

System leaders from across Jacksonville and Northeast Florida came together to identify the following areas of focus for the community's 100-Day Challenge to prevent and end youth homelessness:

- Identify YYA experiencing homelessness who are not already connected to the homelessness system and the reasons they have not previously accessed the system;
- Prioritize YYA living on the street and connect them to available resources;
- Identify barriers to stable and permanent housing and strategies to eliminate these barriers; and
- Map the community's processes for taking YYA off the street and into housing in order to address areas where capacity is not meeting current need.

System leaders also identified unsheltered homelessness among YYA and improving access to homeless services for disconnected youth (youth who are not already connected to the education, child welfare, or juvenile justice systems) as priority issues for the 100-Day Challenge.

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 Jacksonville 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, members of the Jacksonville 100-Day Challenge Team adapted to meeting remotely and maintained their weekly meeting schedule. System leaders provided support to the 100-Day Challenge Team and individual Team members to continue the work of addressing YYA homelessness and adjusting to the new demands of the COVID-19 pandemic.

About 6 weeks after the initial pause, the 100-Day Challenge relaunched for another 75 days. The Jacksonville 100-Day Challenge Team chose to expand the focus of its 100-Day Challenge goal during the relaunch to include homelessness prevention in light of the increased housing instability experienced by YYA at-risk of homelessness in the community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“COVID-19 made it more urgent for us to look at the entire system and ensure that youth are safe in housing, whether that's through prevention or finding new housing placements. COVID-19 pushed us really hard to focus on building relationships, taking our time, engaging in new ways, and connecting with youth and young adults truly where they are to keep them safe from this pandemic.”

- Jacksonville, FL 100-Day Challenge Team Member

100-DAY CHALLENGE SUCCESSES, ACCOMPLISHMENTS & INNOVATIONS

SNAPSHOT OF 100-DAY CHALLENGE PROGRESS

100-Day Challenge Goal: In 100 Days, we will house or prevent homelessness for 100 youth and young adults (YYA) ages 16-24, 40% of whom will be LGBTQIA+ and/or survivors of human trafficking.

OUTCOMES AS OF DAY 100:

108 YYA safely and stably housed or provided prevention resources to remain in safe, stable housing

Identification



191 YYA experiencing homelessness identified during the 100-Day Challenge

Safe and Stable Housing



50% of YYA assisted during the Challenge were exited from homelessness to safe and stable housing

Homelessness Prevention



50% of YYA assisted during the Challenge were provided with homelessness prevention resources

Populations of Focus



Nearly 40% of all YYA housed during the Challenge were LGBTQIA+ and/or survivors of human trafficking

ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN SYSTEMS CHANGE

CROSS-SYSTEMS COLLABORATION

Throughout the 100-Day Challenge, Jacksonville identified new partners and deepened existing collaborative relationships in order to strengthen their cross-system efforts to prevent and end YYA homelessness. Jacksonville engaged 17 different agencies to participate in the 100-Day Challenge, many of which had not previously worked together on the issue of youth homelessness. Team members included representatives from the housing, homelessness, child welfare, and mental health systems, including staff from local non-profit organizations working with populations of focus such as YYA with involvement in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems, LGBTQIA+ YYA, and survivors of human trafficking. These new partnerships helped improve outreach, identification, and referral of YYA at-risk of and experiencing homelessness for housing and services, including YYA who had not previously been connected to the homeless response system.

Organizations that were engaged from the Launch remained engaged throughout the Challenge, including maintaining regular meetings and staying in communication via email and Trello (a virtual messaging platform) even while the Challenge was paused due to COVID-19. This increased level of cross-system collaboration improved Jacksonville's ability to identify YYA experiencing homelessness who were not already connected to the homeless response system but connected with other systems of care or partner agencies.

AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT OF YOUTH WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

Jacksonville consistently and authentically engaged youth from the beginning of the 100-Day Challenge, resulting in the creation of new processes and structures that incorporate authentic youth voice throughout the homeless response system. The Jacksonville 100-Day Challenge Team successfully recruited four young adults with lived experience to serve on a Youth and Young Adult Action Committee (YAAC) that was developed during the Challenge and which operates as a formal committee of the Continuum of Care (CoC). YYA advocate positions on the YAAC are compensated at living-wage hourly rates and are responsible for helping to increase authentic youth collaboration throughout the community. Jacksonville has consistently and deliberately focused on cultural and racial diversity in recruitment for the YAAC, recognizing that diverse and equitable representation is necessary to address the inequities that currently exist for YYA experiences of homelessness in accessing housing and services.

YOUTH-FOCUSED STAFF POSITIONS

The 100-Day Challenge helped Jacksonville identify gaps in the YYA homelessness response system and develop new youth-focused staff positions to strengthen local capacity to address these gaps. A new Youth Coordinated Entry Intake Specialist position was developed to dedicate time and resources to the outreach, engagement, and facilitation of connections between YYA experiencing homelessness and the Coordinated Entry System. The Youth Intake Specialist is able to conduct VI-SPDAT assessments for YYAs over the phone or by traveling to youth-serving agencies. The Youth Intake Specialist is also able to conduct assessments for YYA referred to Coordinated Entry by systems and agencies that do not currently participate in HMIS, such as the school system. This new staff position has helped increase the number of YYA who are connected to Coordinated Entry and therefore able to access housing and supportive services.

The Jacksonville 100-Day Challenge Team also spearheaded the development of four paid positions for YYA Advocates on the Youth and Young Adult Action Committee (YAAC) with the goal of increasing authentic youth collaboration in the work to prevent and end youth homelessness locally. YYA Advocates utilized a variety of strategies, including peer outreach, to engage YYA with diverse experiences and backgrounds in housing and services, including YYA who are LGBTQIA+ and/or survivors of human trafficking. All of the newly created youth-focused staff positions developed during the 100-Day Challenge are paid positions at a living wage and are filled by persons with lived experiences of youth homelessness.

IMPROVED DATA COLLECTION AND COORDINATED ENTRY PROCESSES

One of the key focus areas for Jacksonville's 100-Day Challenge was to improve local capacity for identifying youth experiencing homelessness and tracking their housing progress through HMIS and the Coordinated Entry System. The 100-Day Challenge Team's weekly meetings evolved to incorporate regular by-name list meetings among partner agencies, including staff from shelters, Transitional Living Programs, Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) and Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) providers, and representatives of organizations that specialize in working with LGBTQIA+ YYA, survivors of human trafficking, and YYA involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Jacksonville was able to increase the number of youth-serving partner agencies participating in HMIS and Coordinated Entry, with 5 additional agencies gaining access or working to gain access to HMIS over the course of the 100-Day Challenge. In order to improve collaboration with agencies that do not currently have access to HMIS, the Jacksonville 100-Day Challenge Team also tested an online collaboration tool for Coordinated Entry to identify, prioritize, and connect YYA to housing and resources for HMIS and non-HMIS participating agencies.

INCREASED ACCESS TO HOUSING OPTIONS

Jacksonville identified opportunities to increase access to existing housing options for YYA during the 100-Day Challenge, including streamlining existing housing processes and improving coordination around youth-focused housing opportunities. Jacksonville was able to pilot a shift in the local Coordinated Entry System away from requiring that YYA be “document ready” prior to referral to a RRH or PSH placement, instead referring and placing YYA in housing as soon as possible and successfully gathering documentation while the referral and placement process is being completed. The Jacksonville 100-Day Challenge Team also worked with the local Public Housing Authority and Family Support Services of North Florida to improve coordination and referrals to the Family Unification Program (FUP) for YYA who have aged out of the foster care system.

MAINTAINING 100-DAY CHALLENGE MOMENTUM

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

ACTION PLAN FOR ONGOING WORK

- Continue to meet regularly to discuss progress on youth homelessness;
- Use online collaboration tools for improving Coordinated Entry to better identify, prioritize, and connect YYA to housing and resources;
- Conduct case conferencing to prioritize YYA for housing and services;
- Maintain and strengthen the Youth/Young Adult Action Committee, including securing funding and solving meeting issues, e.g., technology needs of members;
- Provide support for the Youth Intake Specialist position; and
- Share resources and tools (e.g., document checklist) across the system.

ACTION PLAN FOR NEW WORK

- Engage in youth-focused landlord engagement;
- Build new and strong connections to the Coordinated Entry System for YYA;
- Expand outreach (e.g., social media);
- Disseminate useful tools in addressing youth homelessness to additional partners/providers; and
- Examine assessment practices/tools in terms of populations of focus.

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.

- Open up youth-specific housing options, such as master leased units specifically for YYA, additional vouchers from the local Housing Authority for foster youth through the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) initiative, and private market units specifically identified as being open to YYA;
- Create additional youth-specific positions, such as additional Youth Intake Specialists and Youth Housing locators, to support YYA in accessing and navigating the system; and
- Address concerns about sharing personal information, especially relating to LGBTQIA+ identification and experiences with domestic violence and/or trafficking.