

MARION COUNTY, OREGON

BACKGROUND: WHY AND WHY NOW?

To launch the Marion County 100 Day Challenge, 21 representatives from a range of governmental agencies and service organizations engaged in lively conversations about urgent challenges and ongoing initiatives in and around Marion County. The group reached a consensus that nothing was more urgent in the community than to find housing solutions for unaccompanied, non-system engaged youth 12 - 17 years old. While planning for a youth shelter had been ongoing, the stakeholders agreed that the 100-Day Challenge should inform the County's effort to establish a shelter by strengthening and improving coordination of local preventative services. The Challenge included testing innovative ways to 1) address the immediate challenges that unaccompanied youth face, 2) strengthen approaches to reunification, and 3) streamline and increase effectiveness of outreach to youth, using strengths-based and youth-focused approaches. Stakeholders committed to a number of actions to support the 100 Day Challenge, including community education and exploring flex fund options.

The Marion County 100-Day Challenge team represented a cross-section of service providers, including representation from government agencies, including Department of Human Services at state and county levels, and street-policing. The team co-leaders (selected by the team) were a youth with lived experience and a representative from child welfare. The team's work focused on youth engagement, creating and using a by-name list, building support from the broader community, and finding appropriate solutions for unaccompanied youth 12-18 years old, including family reunification, shelter solutions, and innovative alternative solutions. They also worked – and continue to work – to strengthen existing efforts to create a 24/7 single entry point for youth and providers to offer immediate support to youth.

100-DAY CHALLENGE PRIORITY AREAS

In addition to its overall goal of providing 150 young people a safe and stable place to be, Marion County identified multiple goals to pursue during their 100-Day Challenge:

- Assess at least 25 young people.
- Create a dedicated youth council.
- Create a countywide master “By-Name List” of youth being served, along with a process for continual updates.
- Strengthen and improve current street outreach programs and aim to encounter at least 10 new youth per week.
- Create an “Immediate Need Mobile System” with a single-entry point that can be accessed 24/7 by youth and community providers.
- Have a celebration event to empower and educate the community.
- Work to build a youth shelter.

100-Day Goal

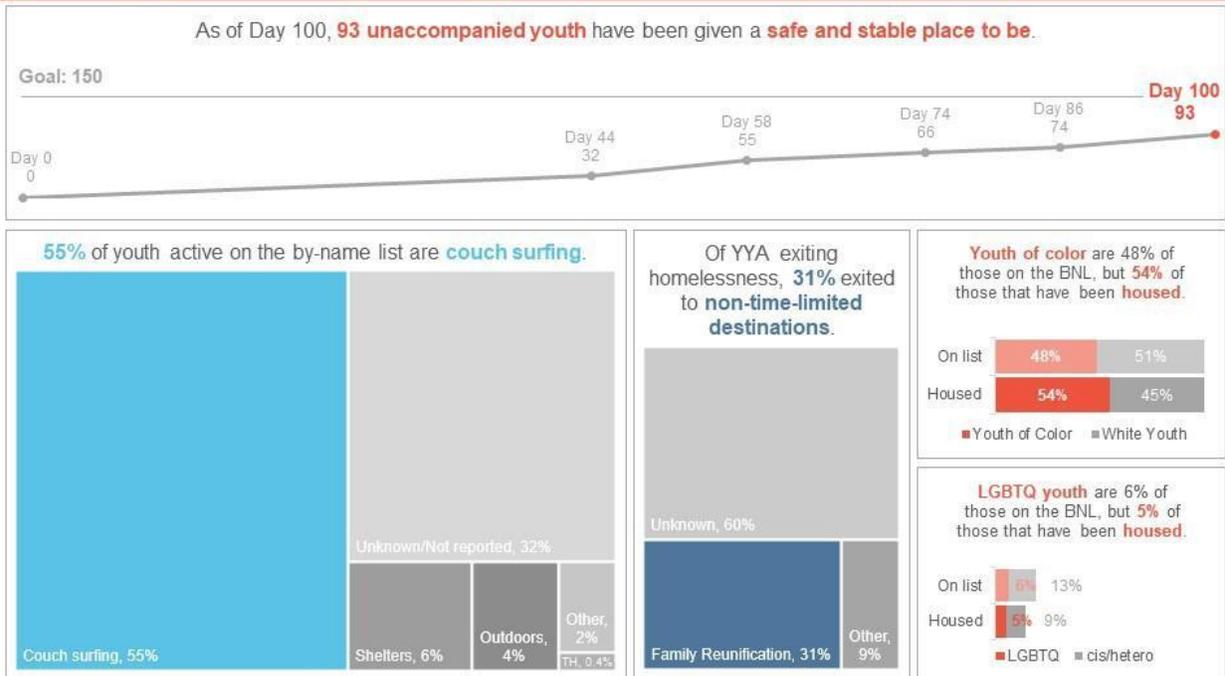
In 100 days, we will build a coordinated system that gives 150 unaccompanied youth in crisis, ages 12-18, a safe and stable place to be. This will empower youth and connect them to a variety of services and resources to support both immediate and long-term needs.

PROGRESS, SUCCESSES, AND ACHIEVEMENTS

| PRIMARY GOAL | RESULTS |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| In Marion County, in 100 days, we will provide 150 unaccompanied youth in crisis ages 12-18 a safe and stable place to be: 50 in shelter, 50 through reunification with family, and 50 through creative placement. | As of Day 100: 93 unaccompanied youth have been given a safe and stable place to be: 10 placed in shelter, 72 reunified with family, and 11 placed creatively. |

100-Day Challenge: MARION COUNTY, OR *Day 100 | Mar 21*

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SUCSESSES IN INNOVATION AND COLLABORATION

NEW TOOLS AND PROCESSES

During the 100-Day Challenge, the community developed a By-Name List for youth experiencing homelessness. There are still gaps that require conversations at a higher level regarding policy changes, procedures changes, lack of data relating to young people who identify as LGBTQ+, and giving purpose to data (i.e., shifting from simply collecting data to strategically using it). However, through developing its list, the community also learned a lot. For example, programs in Marion County have little overlap, which is good for avoiding duplication of efforts, but may indicate that some people are failing to get resources from all the systems they need. The team also identified a need for more intentional transition planning, including stabilization plans, that incorporate warm hand-offs and follow-through and include representatives from adult systems to be part of transition planning conversations (e.g., when a young person turns 21 and leaves the foster/child welfare system but still needs housing assistance).

In addition to developing a By-Name List, the team worked to create an HMIS form specific to the community, and explored creative placement options for its newly identified and engaged young people, including adopting a host home model and creating the program. The team also realized the need for additional analysis on whether and when minors can enter into legal contracts for housing.

NEW RESOURCES

During the course of the 100 days, the team actively supported a local high school student to achieve his goal of raising the full amount (\$400,000) needed to purchase a house for Salem's first youth shelter - a dream the community has had for seven years. The team led work parties to renovate the building over the summer. The shelter is due to open soon. The fundraising was made possible in large part to a successful community celebration – attended by 140 people – to allow community members to interact with youth experiencing homelessness and providers, learn statistics, and be energized by the work being done by the 100-Day Challenge Team and youth leaders. The event spotlighted the work of the 100-Day Challenge and gave community members a way to see progress. The team plans to hold similar events in the future.

Marion County also successfully launched a mobile system to quickly provide young people with essentials such as warm jackets, socks, sleeping bags, and backpacks, at any hour of the day or night. Developed by the Salem Housing Authority and Salem Police Department, it is fully stocked, and calls are accepted after hours by an additional community partner.

NEW PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Through the 100-Day Challenge effort, a Youth Council was created, and multiple cross-system partnerships were formed. Salem Housing Authority was very involved with the process, as was the Salem Police Department. The team conducted numerous community presentations, which served as education and access points for involvement by additional stakeholders that had not traditionally been involved in this work.

The team initially faced challenges with street outreach, but ultimately partnered with adult outreach workers who contact the team when they encounter a young person. The team is also working to develop a youth-specific outreach effort. Continuing to work toward consistent and effective outreach requires adopting an appropriate youth-centered model, developing a process for engaging the community, and a training module. The team also recognized the need to create a universal, and possibly broader, definition of outreach.

SYSTEMS CHANGE AND LEADERSHIP

The 100-Day Challenge success was due in large part to a shared vision, consistent messaging, and focused teamwork, including immense dedication and consistent communication by the 100-Day Challenge Team collectively and the individuals involved in the team. Strong team leadership, active youth engagement, and supportive system leaders were key factors in their success. The team valued diversity, involving frontline staff in decision-making and actions, as opposed to local leaders, and lifted each other up and provided support to prevent staff from burning out. It fostered a sense of trust and responsibility that frontline staff sometimes find lacking in other contexts. The strong sense of team and leadership support allowed for the team to push boundaries and to accept that perfection was not necessary, and failures were part of the process. Significantly, the team never lost any members.

The team collaborated in creative ways, using project management software (Basecamp) very effectively to keep communicating and updating each other on progress on each of their goals. They used weekly team meetings to brainstorm solutions and build strong relationships.

MAINTAINING 100-DAY MOMENTUM

Marion County's 100-Day Challenge Team is committed to continuing the work and maintaining its momentum. While traveling to the final 100 Day Challenge meeting, which was held in Mississippi, the team took time to celebrate and recommit with a side-trip to New Orleans and, in the words of one member, "came back stronger than ever." The Team put a central emphasis on youth involvement through the Youth Council and will continue to meet monthly and bring new people onto the team. Team members are committed to providing technical assistance and mentoring to other communities in the region, while continuing to spearhead the effort in Marion County.

To preserve the gains made during the 100 days and maintain momentum around preventing and ending youth homelessness, Marion County plans to:

- Continue to have community-wide events to educate the public and raise and maintain awareness by celebrating successes;
- Apply for a Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project grant;
- Provide Technical Assistance to other counties in the region;
- Continue to hold monthly meetings, while allowing flexibility for additional people to join and for people who need to step back to do so.

NEW GOAL

Over the next 180 days, continue building a coordinated system that gives 150 unaccompanied youth in crisis, ages 12-18 years old, a safe and stable place to be, empowering youth and connecting them to a variety of services and resources to support both immediate and long-term need.

Subgoals

- Continue a dedicated youth council meeting at least twice a monthly to provide insight and planning
- Continue entry and modification of a countywide master “By-Name List” and complete an assessment tool for youth experiencing homelessness
- Safely and stably place 30 youth in a Marion County shelter, reunify 50 youth with family, and start a host home model designed to creatively place youth
- Adopt a street outreach program model and create a training module
- Schedule an ongoing Community Information forum
- Continue expanding “Immediate Need Mobile System”