



100-DAY CHALLENGE CASE STUDIES

MENDOCINO COUNTY, CA: INCREASING COMMUNITY COLLABORATION AND OUTREACH

Mendocino County worked to increase community connections and strengthen outreach to partners and youth with lived experience throughout the 100-Day Challenge. Mendocino County was able to leverage existing partnerships and resources to create a successful community collaboration to prevent and end youth homelessness.

HOW MENDOCINO COUNTY MADE IT HAPPEN

When Mendocino County began the 100-Day Challenge, the community recognized that there were many systems working to meet the needs of youth at-risk of or experiencing homelessness, but that were not working in collaboration with each other. The Mendocino County 100-Day Team worked from the beginning of the initiative to identify the challenges and strengths of existing systems and work toward greater community collaboration on preventing and ending youth homelessness across these systems. Central to this work was improving outreach between community partners, increasing knowledge of who each provider served and how, and breaking down silos to improve service coordination.

Additionally, Mendocino County recognized the need for collaboration and outreach to youth with lived experience in order to make the 100-Day Challenge a success. Young adults with lived experience were strongly represented on the 100-Day Challenge Team. Youth team members were supported in expressing their views and were treated as equals by their adult team members. This authentic youth collaboration and representation helped the Mendocino County 100-Day Challenge Team and their partners build and strengthen connections with youth experiencing homelessness throughout the community.

Key Takeaways:

- Intentional and authentic youth engagement is crucial to the success of efforts to prevent and end youth homelessness. Maintaining intentionality around youth outreach and engagement is critical for ongoing success.
- Outreach and engagement of new community partners should be multifaceted. Strategies may include direct outreach to potential partners and system, informational community meetings, utilizing data to demonstrate need and progress, and leveraging existing partnerships to build new collaborations.
- Addressing shared issues within the community can help build collaborative relationships and break down silos. Collaboration around a specific topic can open the door for broader collaboration around preventing and ending youth homelessness in the future.
- Coordination and collaboration can help communities innovate and maximize utilization of their existing resources.

The increased collaboration and outreach between and amongst community partners and youth experiencing homelessness in Mendocino County produced successful, tangible results: the Mendocino County team housed 39 transitional age youth (TAY) during the 100 Days, compared to 5 housing placements for TAY made in the 18 months prior to the 100-Day Challenge.

LESSONS LEARNED

1) **Maintain Intentionality Around Youth Outreach and Engagement**

The Mendocino County 100-Day Challenge Team emphasized the need to maintain intentionality and follow-through around youth outreach and engagement in order to sustain authentic youth representation. They developed a strong outreach strategy that connected with a large number of youth experiencing homelessness. One important aspect of intentional youth outreach and engagement was fostering a deeper connection between the local Street Medicine program and the youth system of care. Through connections with the 100-Day Challenge Team, the Street Medicine program was able to more intentionally outreach and engage with youth experiencing homelessness and identify those locations where youth experiencing homelessness are most likely to be to support street outreach efforts.

2) **Use a Multifaceted Approach to Outreach and Engage with New Partners**

Mendocino County utilized a multifaceted approach to conducted outreach to potential new partners and engage them in the 100-Day Challenge efforts to prevent and end youth homelessness:

- The Mendocino County 100-Day Challenge Team worked hard to reach out to all members of the Continuum of Care (CoC) and ask them to participate. The team also attended monthly CoC meetings to provide 100-Day Challenge presentations with the goal of engaging and informing new community partners.
- The 100-Day Challenge Team improved their data on youth homelessness and used this data to conduct outreach to the community. The team saw a vast improvement in buy-in from community partners once they were able to share clear, accurate data about youth homelessness and raise local awareness of the issue.
- Mendocino County utilized existing collaborations to show other potential partners the benefits of participation in the 100-Day Challenge and why it is important for them to be at the table. Partners brought to the table during the 100-Day Challenge include mental health providers, the child welfare system, and a local homeless education liaison for the Mendocino County Office of Education.
- The 100-Day Challenge Team appealed to leaders within non-homeless systems to share the importance of this work and why their involvement in the 100-Day Challenge was needed to prevent and end youth homelessness. Sharing the successful results of the 100-Day Challenge also helped get system leaders authentically engaged in the work moving forward.
- Members of the 100-Day Challenge Team presented to community organization (ex: local Rotary Club, churches) to help spread awareness of local efforts to prevent and end youth homelessness and to recruit community members interested in sharing housing with youth at-risk of or experiencing homelessness.

By pursuing a number of different outreach and engagement strategies, Mendocino County was able to create widespread awareness of the 100-Day Challenge initiative, engage new partners in collaboration, and begin work at the systems-level to prevent and end youth homelessness.

3) Address Topics of Shared Interest to Help Break Down Silos

Mendocino County worked collaboratively with community partners during the 100-Day Challenge to address topics of shared interest and define priorities for preventing and ending youth homelessness moving forward. The connection between mental health and experiences of homelessness for youth was identified as a topic of shared interest between mental health providers and homeless service providers in Mendocino County and became a key focus of the 100-Day Challenge. This shared interest in meeting the mental health needs of youth at-risk of and experiencing homelessness helped break down silos between mental health and homeless service providers and encouraged more collaborative strategies for serving this population of focus.

Mendocino County has also shifted the focus of providers from agency-specific goals to community-wide goals and has developed a culture of coordination of services around clients. For example, Mendocino County has established inclusivity for LGBTQ+ youth and young adults as a community-wide priority within its efforts to prevent and end youth homelessness. The community has been exploring training options for service providers and working with a variety of youth-serving agencies to update their forms and data collection processes to be inclusive of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. By focusing on addressing data collection issues for LGBTQ+ individuals, Mendocino County will have a better understanding of the true face of youth and young adult homelessness in their community.

4) Leverage Collaboration to Maximize Utilization of Existing Resources

Mendocino County found that relative to many other communities, they have a great deal of homelessness resources and funding. However, prior to the 100-Day Challenge, these resources were siloed and under-utilized for serving youth experiencing homelessness. Increased collaboration and coordination helped Mendocino County use existing infrastructure in new ways and find innovative ways to utilize resources that are already in place throughout the community as part of the homeless response system, foster care system, health and mental health system, and education system. Mendocino County emphasized that this work of creating community connections and strengthening collaboration is often challenging, but provides a tangible sense of accomplishment – not only through the improved coordination and collaboration apparent among service providers, but also as demonstrated by the improved housing and service outcomes for youth experiencing homelessness.