

# SUBURBAN COOK COUNTY, IL

## BACKGROUND: WHY AND WHY NOW?

Suburban Cook County made monumental strides in ending veteran and chronic homelessness and entered the 100-Day Challenge ready and eager to capitalize on this momentum to end youth homelessness. The community also gained valuable insights to guide the 100-Day Challenge from their recent application process for the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP), which helped highlight what local systems are doing well to address youth homelessness and where there is still significant work to be done. The YHDP planning process brought providers from the youth, education, justice, and welfare systems together, and the community is developing a new strategic plan to address homelessness that includes youth providers. The 100-Day Challenge provided an opportunity for the community to capitalize on these partnerships and work towards a concrete goal for preventing and ending youth homelessness.

The launch of the 100-Day Challenge also supported Suburban Cook County in building momentum around state legislation changes the community had recently spearheaded to the Education for Homeless Children Act that allows school districts to use transportation money to house students who are homeless or would otherwise become homeless. Suburban Cook County utilized the 100-Day Challenge to support implementation of the amended legislation, with a focus on both creating policies with school districts and on building relationships between service providers, schools, and the CoC.

## 100-DAY CHALLENGE PRIORITY AREAS

In addition to increasing housing placements, Suburban Cook County identified the following priority areas to address during their 100-Day Challenge:

- For systems-engaged youth under age 18 and their families, focus on prevention, diversion, and housing resources. Special attention placed on self-identification, reducing stigma, and making sure all system partners are aware of the resources available (i.e. Education for Homeless Children Act) to assist youth at-risk of or experiencing homelessness.
- For unaccompanied youth ages 18 to 24, focus on connecting individuals at-risk of or experiencing homelessness to safe and stable housing. Special attention placed on prevention, assessing needs, coordinating among service providers, and leveraging existing Continuum of Care assets.

### 100-Day Goal

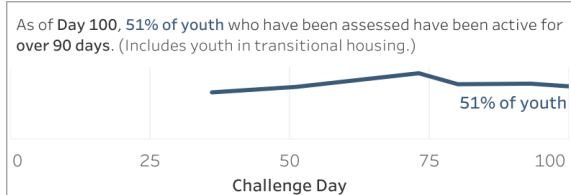
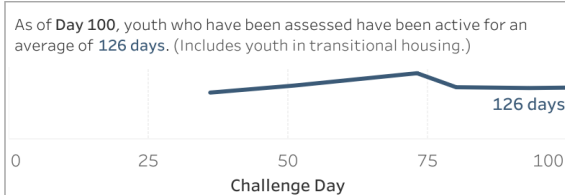
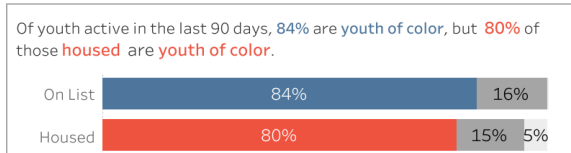
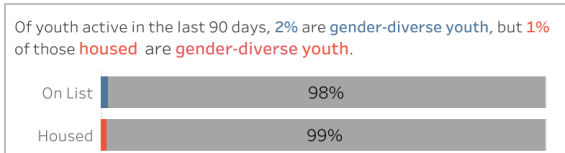
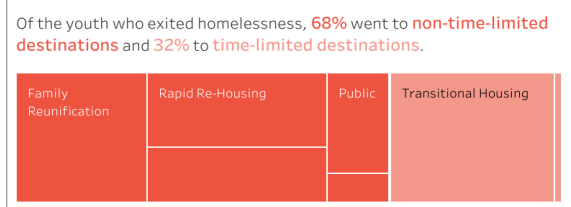
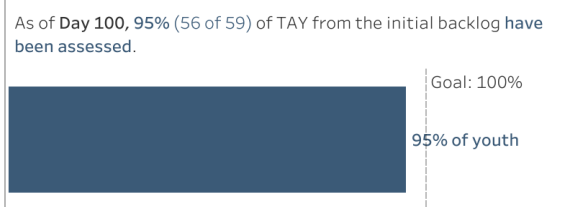
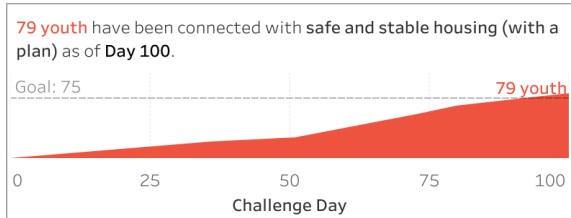
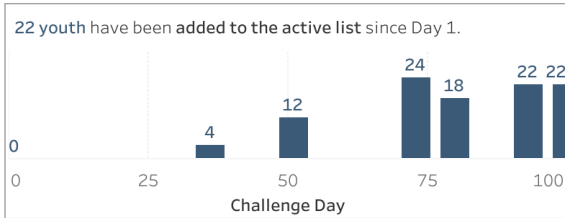
In 100 Days, we will improve identification of unaccompanied youth under age 25 in 3 regions (centered around high school districts), and we will assess 100% of youth in our system, resulting in connecting 75 youth experiencing homelessness to safe and stable housing (with a plan).

PROGRESS, SUCCESSES, AND ACHIEVEMENTS

GOAL	RESULTS
<p>In Suburban Cook County, in 100 days:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>75 youth will be safe and stably housed (with a stability plan).</li> <li>Improve the identification of unaccompanied youth under age 25 in 3 regions (centered around high school districts).</li> <li>Assess 100% of youth within the system.</li> </ul>	<p>As of Day 100:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>79 youth were safely and stably housed (with a stability plan).</li> <li>22 youth have been added to the active list.</li> <li>95% of TAY from the initial backlog have been assessed.</li> <li>Partnered with 6 school districts on implementation of the amended Education for Homeless Children Act.</li> </ul>

100-Day Challenge | Suburban Cook County, IL | Day 100 | Mar 6 2019

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## SUCSESSES IN INNOVATION AND COLLABORATION

### **AUTHENTIC YOUTH ENGAGEMENT**

The Suburban Cook County 100-Day Challenge Team established from the beginning of the Challenge that a critical component of their success would be the continuous and significant involvement of the Youth Action Board (YAB), ensuring that the community's partnership with young adults would align with or exceed the best practices for authentic youth collaboration. The YAB took a strong leadership role in the Challenge, meeting every other week to support the work of ending youth homelessness. The YAB provided input on all components of the 100-Day Challenge, including:

- Developing new youth-led outreach strategies;
- Conducting outreach and helping to identify youth experiencing homelessness who were not yet identified by service providers or other community partners; and
- Crafting language and terminology for marketing materials.

Adult members of the 100-Day Challenge Team learned to see youth as the authority on their situation and came to understand the importance of consistency and trust in establishing strong youth-adult partnerships to prevent and end youth homelessness.

### **CROSS-SYSTEM PARTNERSHIPS**

Suburban Cook County utilized the 100-Day Challenge to better engage non-CoC systems, including the education, housing, child welfare, employment, and justice systems, in the work of preventing and ending youth homelessness. The Team engaged in weekly calls that brought together representatives from these diverse systems, which helped hold team members accountable to their goals and foster stronger relationships. The cross-system relationships built and strengthened during the 100-Day Challenge resulted in better identification of youth and access to more community resources. The Suburban Cook County team worked hard to connect with three school districts in high-need areas to have conversations with teachers, administration, social workers, and McKinney-Vento Liaisons about identifying youth experiencing homelessness and implementing the Education for Homeless Children Act.

### **OUTREACH & IDENTIFICATION OF YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS**

The Suburban Cook County 100-Day Challenge Team employed a multi-faceted approach to improve identification of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness. The Team leveraged the new relationships developing through the 100-Day Challenge work to improve outreach efforts within non-CoC systems, including schools, state agencies, employment, justice, and community groups. Suburban Cook County supported these increased outreach efforts in non-CoC systems through the development of robust marketing materials, including flyers and posters, to connect with youth who had not yet been identified as experiencing homelessness and connect them to resources. As a result of these efforts, Suburban Cook County saw the consistent addition of youth experiencing homelessness to the active by-

name list, indicating that the increased outreach and identification efforts were working to reach new youth experiencing housing instability within local systems.

### **ASSESSMENT & CASE CONFERENCING**

The Suburban Cook County 100-Day Challenge Team made significant progress on improving processes within the homeless response system to more effectively assess and connect youth experiencing homelessness to housing and other resources. Prior to the 100-Day Challenge, Suburban Cook County had experienced a backlog of identified but unassessed transitional age youth (TAY); by Day 100, 95% of TAY in initial backlog were assessed for housing. The 100-Day Challenge Team was able to use their new collaborative partnerships to work through the backlog and is now investing in performance-focused goals to sustain their progress and continue reducing the backlog of identified but unassessed youth.

Suburban Cook County also leveraged the new collaborative partnerships formed during the 100-Day Challenge to begin case conferencing. The case conferencing process brings multiple agencies together once a week to talk about youth clients, including which housing and services would be the best fit for a client and any barriers that might exist to connecting the youth to appropriate housing and resources. Case conferencing in Suburban Cook County includes youth providers, the Coordinated Entry team, and other agencies serving youth, including the VA and non-housing providers.

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

To preserve the gains made during the 100 days and maintain momentum around preventing and ending youth homelessness, Suburban Cook County plans to carry out the following activities:

#### **TEAM'S ACTION PLANS FOR ONGOING WORK**

1. Expand and strengthen the Youth Action Board.
2. Increase LGBTQ visibility, engagement and inclusion.
3. Implement school outreach and HB261 (Education for Homeless Children Act).

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS TO SYSTEM LEADERS**

1. Explore options to expand the Chicago StreetLight App for connecting youth experiencing homelessness to beds to Suburban Cook County and increase youth-specific outreach.
2. Improve systems coordination, including with Juvenile Justice, the Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS), and Comprehensive Community-Based Youth Services (CCBYS).
3. Invest in culture and behavior changes.