

# Homeless System Response: Special Population Rehousing Strategy: Youth and Young Adults

Rehousing youth and young adults is a critical component of an Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) recipient's COVID-19 response. While youth and young adults are not typically experiencing severe symptoms of COVID-19 at the same rate as older adults, [people of color](#) and [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer \(LGBTQ\)-identified people](#), irrespective of age, are more likely to suffer from chronic diseases and be at a higher risk of COVID-19. Additionally, typical experiences of many youth and young adults who experience homelessness result in greater challenges to obtain stable housing and increase the likelihood of contact with more people, widening the spread of the virus.

## Center Those Most Impacted by COVID-19 in Resource Planning and Allocation

*Understand how Black, Indigenous, and other youth of color and LGBTQ-identified young people disproportionately impacted by racism, transphobia, and homophobia are at greater risk of homelessness and COVID-19 in your community.*

Youth and young adults experiencing homelessness are [disproportionately youth of color and LGBTQ-identified youth](#). In order to address equity for youth and young adults, ESG administrators should do the following:

- Ensure youth of color—especially Black and Indigenous youth—and LGBTQ youth are meaningfully involved in the creation and [implementation of ESG policies and practices](#).
- Evaluate existing [race and ethnicity data](#).
- Complete a [Racial Equity Impact Assessment \(REIA\)](#).

### *Involve youth and young adults in planning and community investment decision-making bodies.*

Youth with lived experience have the best understanding of programs and knowledge of services and interventions that are the most effective solutions to prevent and end homelessness. Include youth—especially Black, Indigenous, other youth of color, and LGBTQ-identified youth—in decision-making bodies. Include them in discussions about funding priorities and program adjustments needed to improve youth outcomes.

- If a community within your jurisdiction has been awarded [Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program \(YHDP\) funds](#), engage with the YHDP Youth Action Board to assess current policies and funding requirements to determine changes that need to be made to effectively serve youth and young adults.
- If your community has not participated in YHDP, reach out to subrecipients and Continuums of Care (CoCs) to determine if there are [youth action boards](#) or [consumer groups](#) and involve them in decision-making.
- Ensure youth and young adults are [equitably compensated](#) for their time and contributions.

### *Target rehousing and prevention resources.*

Align ESG-CV resources with other funding sources to maximize immediate resources to prevent homelessness and housing instability and rehouse youth and young adults during COVID-19.

Use data to shape funding priorities so that rehousing activities are impactful and responsive to the needs of youth and young adults most impacted by homelessness and COVID-19. To do so:

- Coordinate with your local Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) lead to identify baseline disaggregated data (by race, gender identify, sexual orientation, age and ability/disability) for

unaccompanied youth under the age of 18 and unaccompanied young adults aged 18–24 experiencing homelessness.

- Review disparities identified with different stakeholder groups such as data committees, CoC governance, and Youth Action Boards to identify the root causes of the disparities.
- Determine what additional disaggregated data for youth and young adults—both qualitative and quantitative—needs to be collected and tracked to [assess and determine greatest inequity impacts](#) during the COVID-19 response.
- Use the information to [inform local funding priorities](#) to address the needs of the population groups that are most negatively impacted by COVID-19.

Youth Population Cohorts to Consider in Targeted <b>Rehousing</b> Strategies	Youth Population Cohorts to Consider in Targeted <b>Prevention</b> Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people who are sleeping outside, in a vehicle, or in other places not meant for human habitation.</li> <li>• Young people in non-congregate shelter, emergency shelter, or transitional housing.</li> <li>• Young people who are released from <a href="#">juvenile justice</a>, county jails, or <a href="#">state prisons</a> during the COVID-19 pandemic whose only place to stay is an emergency shelter or unsheltered location.</li> <li>• Young people who are fleeing violence (e.g., dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, human trafficking).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people who are <a href="#">exiting foster care</a> during the COVID-19 pandemic.</li> <li>• Young people who are released from <a href="#">juvenile justice</a>, county jails, or <a href="#">state prisons</a> during the COVID-19 pandemic with no stable housing options.</li> <li>• Young people who are <a href="#">couch surfing</a> with no regular residence and are fleeing violence (e.g., dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, human trafficking).</li> <li>• Young people who have previously been rapidly rehoused but have lost income due to COVID-19 and are at risk of eviction.</li> <li>• Young <a href="#">college students</a> without stable housing who are unable to stay in student housing (e.g., dorms) due to COVID-19.</li> </ul>

### ***Engage providers with experience serving youth and young adults.***

Engaging providers with experience serving youth and young adults will increase access by young people to ESG-funded activities. To do this, design ESG funding application requirements to be inclusive of youth and young adult service providers and community-based organizations even if they have not previously received state and federal grants.

- Conduct outreach to youth service providers to inform them of the funding opportunity and educate them on application requirements. Communicate through statewide [youth and young adult advocacy organizations](#), culturally specific organizations, local CoCs, and agencies overseeing [Runaway Homeless Youth Funding](#), [John H. Chafee](#), and other youth-specific funding.
- Develop written materials explaining the ESG application process that clearly explains information without jargon. Host webinars with Q&A for applicant organizations that may not be familiar with acronyms commonly used in the ESG Program.
- Prioritize organizations with experience serving youth with local [procurement processes](#).

## **Provide Guidance for Addressing Needs of Youth and Young Adults to Both Youth-Specific and General Population Projects**

To increase accessibility and inclusiveness in ESG projects, review criteria within local requests for proposals (RFP) and other program policy documents and amend as necessary to ensure that they do the following:

### ***Set policies that minimize barriers to program entry.***

With new ESG-CV funding, evaluate existing locally established program criteria prior to releasing RFPs. Engage young people to review and refine any existing criteria that create barriers to accessing housing resources.

- Familiarize yourself with [recordkeeping allowances](#) for serving youth and young adults.
- [Lower barriers to program entry](#) by removing any screening criteria that creates disparities for young people, especially those who have a history in juvenile justice or other criminal justice systems.

### ***Allow for maximum flexibility of assistance.***

Young people<sup>1</sup> and people of color<sup>2</sup> have disparate access to employment,<sup>3</sup> are more likely to have lost employment during COVID-19, and face hiring discrimination that results in longer job searches. In addition to working with young people to [minimize barriers to employment](#), make sure that programs are designed to give everyone flexibility to be successful, especially if they face these structural barriers.

- Within [rapid rehousing \(RRH\)](#) project contracts, include flexibility to scale the length and amount of assistance to the circumstances a young person is facing—for example, by lengthening assistance for young people who are not able to find employment.
- Fund projects designed with both RRH and prevention assistance components to ensure at-risk and literally homeless youth and young adults are able to access rehousing and housing stabilization services.
- Encourage providers to apply a [progressive engagement](#) case management approach that considers the impact of structural barriers that youth of color and LGBTQ-identified youth disproportionately experience which lead to housing stability barriers (e.g., prior eviction, lack of or poor credit history, and criminal justice system involvement).
- Update ESG and CoC written standards on RRH for flexibility and alignment with the planning and implementation bullets above.

### ***Be accountable for the safety of LGBTQ youth and young adults.***

Research shows that LGBTQ youth and young adults experiencing homelessness are [impacted by violence and discrimination](#) in ways that contribute to their homelessness and keep them from accessing necessary shelter and services.<sup>4</sup> Safety and security should be prioritized for all populations, but particular attention is warranted for LGBTQ-identified youth and young adults. ESG administrators should do the following to address the safety needs for LGBTQ youth and young adults:

- Under the [Equal Access Rule](#), ESG projects must ensure that [access to shelter and housing](#) are based on an individual's self-expressed gender identity. It is the responsibility of ESG administrators to ensure that subrecipients fully understand these [protections](#). ESG recipients should provide subrecipients with information about protections and information about how to adhere to the rule.
- Require all ESG recipients and subrecipients to complete [training on the Equal Access Rule](#) and [LGBTQ cultural responsiveness](#).

### ***Practice recommendations.***

- Require subrecipients to create culturally and [COVID-19 responsive program and staffing structures](#):
  - Incentivize applicants to [hire young people](#), people with lived expertise, and those who reflect the culture and identity of the young people served.
  - Include [hazard pay](#) for all essential workers.
  - Train all new and existing staff on [current HUD Disease Risk and Homelessness guidelines](#).
  - Supply and replenish stores of personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff and participants.
- Encourage subrecipients to adopt the following youth-informed practice models:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/06/09/hispanic-women-immigrants-young-adults-those-with-less-education-hit-hardest-by-covid-19-job-losses/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/how-covid-19-affecting-black-and-latino-families-employment-and-financial-well-being>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/people-color-employment-disparities-start-early>

<sup>4</sup> Caitlin Rooney, et al., Center for American Progress and the Equal Rights Center Discrimination Against Transgender Women Seeking Access to Homeless Shelters, January 7, 2016.

- [Trauma-Informed Care](#)—Apply the Trauma-Informed Service Delivery model and ensure staff are trained in current practices.
- [Positive Youth Development](#)—recommend Positive Youth Development training as part of ESG program staff capacity building.
- [Family Engagement](#)—include family reunification strategies as part of Homelessness Prevention and RRH stabilization services.
- Develop a system-wide strategy for [landlord engagement](#) that includes housing options for young people: