

FACT SHEET: Youth and Young Adult (YYA) Homelessness

Barnstable County Department of Human Services

August 2021

History

The Massachusetts Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth was established in 2013 to study and make recommendations regarding unaccompanied homeless Youth and Young Adults (YYA). The commission released the **Massachusetts State Plan to End Youth Homelessness** which envisions a “a system in which every community in the Commonwealth has coordinated, developmentally appropriate, and trauma-informed resources that are effective, regionally accessible, and reliably funded.” The Executive Office of Health and Human Services allocated funds to youth serving agencies and their partners ensuring statewide coverage in ten regions which supports housing and services for YYA who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.¹

Cape Cod and the Islands YYA Services

In 2018, the Barnstable County Department of Human Services (BCDHS) was awarded funding to lead the efforts on the Cape and Islands to enact the recommendations of the Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth. BCDHS identified six partner agencies- Housing Assistance Corporation, Homeless Prevention Council, Duffy, Champ Homes, Martha’s Vineyard Community Services and Fairwinds Nantucket Counseling- to deliver services and resources to the community.



The partners work to identify and engage YYA experiencing housing instability, utilize flexible funds to ensure their basic needs are met and establish a trusting relationship that fosters connections to housing opportunities, access to physical and behavioral healthcare and long term case management services to help with sustaining housing solutions.

1) <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/ma-unaccompanied-homeless-youth-commission>

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PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Between February and June 2019 BCDHS completed a Community Needs Assessment which utilized qualitative and quantitative data to assess the current homelessness systems and the individual needs of unaccompanied homeless youth. The complete Needs Assessment is posted on the BCDHS website and was included in *Furthering the Work of the MA State Plan to End Youth Homelessness: A state-level analysis of Community Needs Assessments from the ten EOHS Homeless Youth Program Regions*.

During FY 20, YYA partner agencies engaged and provided services to **130 YYA** who were either homeless or imminently at risk of homelessness. In FY21 the number of YYA receiving supports increased to **147**.

YYA Outreach Workers are embedded in the Barnstable, Yarmouth and Dennis Police Department's **Community Crisis Intervention Team (CCIT)** meetings. These meetings bring together key stakeholders to coordinate community efforts to support those experiencing behavioral health crises.

Funding for the YYA grant has been enhanced annually and has funded expanded services such as a Stabilization **Program Manager** position at Housing Assistance Corporation to assist with development of independent living and housing sustainability skills for YYA who have secured housing.

FY20 funding was used to build and deliver a **year long Training Institute in FY21** to build capacity of YYA partner staff and wider homelessness service agencies to successfully work with YYA and ensure that future staff hires receive training on best practices and effective YYA engagement. A state-wide Training Institute is being explored based on the success of the Cape and Islands cohort.

BCDHS has funded 3 providers– Duffy Health Center on the Cape, Martha's Vineyard Community Services and Fairwinds Nantucket Counseling– to provide an **Emergency Weather Response** which provides hotel rooms to YYA who are unable to access other housing resources during exceptionally cold or inclement conditions.

During FY20, a Cape YYA was sworn in as a **Young Adult Commissioner on the Special Commission for Unaccompanied and Homeless Youth**. Her story of homelessness and experience in the child welfare system helped to inform partner agencies on prevention and diversion practices, as well as exploring successful re-housing efforts. The YYA also served as a presenter on Adultism during the Training Institute.

FUNDING

Funding for the Unaccompanied Youth and Young Adult Homelessness grant comes through the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. Funding in FY21 and FY22 is \$492,814.