

## **Introduction**

The Polk County Continuum of Care Board (CoCB) is excited to work together as a community in support of ending youth homelessness in Polk County, Iowa. Youth homelessness, both nationally and in Polk County, is an underreported issue that our community would like to address as a group. We are applying to be selected as one of the 6 non-rural communities that HUD will fund for this 2-year Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program. Our CoCB is located in the Des Moines Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Prior to the release of the NOFA, our youth service provider community and representatives from the CoCB started meeting informally to begin the dialog about how best to approach the issue of youth homelessness and work together to best support homeless youth who access services in our community. We look forward to creating a community-wide plan that will incorporate 1) our community identifying best practices working with homeless youth, 2) wrapping supportive services around youth experiencing homelessness, 3) helping youth secure permanent, safe housing while utilizing a housing first model, and 4) providing youth currently experiencing homelessness a strong voice throughout the entire process as our community works toward ending youth homelessness. Funding from this proposal will support the creation, identification and execution of a plan to end youth homelessness in Central Iowa by providing a broad array of housing and supportive services to run away and homeless youth, age 24 and under. Representatives from a diverse mixture of homeless youth service providers, governmental agencies, community leaders/funders, our CoCB members, and most importantly, current and formerly homeless youth - have come together to work on solving youth homelessness in Polk County Iowa. We are united as a community to put kids first and work together across the full

spectrum of supportive services required to provide the best possible care for youth dealing with homelessness in the Des Moines MSA.

### **1. Leadership Capacity**

**Systemic challenges:** The Polk County Continuum of Care has a rich history of community collaboration when addressing systemic challenges related to homelessness. The example that immediately comes to mind is our community led effort to **End Veterans Homelessness in Polk County**. In 2014/2015 our CoC agreed to participate in the Mayor's Challenge to End Veterans Homelessness. All agencies in our community that interacted with homeless veterans (Veterans Assistance, Primary Health Care, Institute for Community Alliances, Iowa Homeless Youth Centers, Central Iowa Shelter and Services, and CoCB representatives) met every other week to address this issue as a collaborative group. Agencies shared ownership of eliminating veterans experiencing homelessness in our community. The community identified veterans who were experiencing homelessness, established a list based on prioritization of need and worked towards active housing plans for all identified veterans. Over the course of 14 months, the work team of community providers and advocates met twice a month. During these lengthy meetings (sometimes 3 hours), summary data were reviewed, but more importantly the work team utilized a shared list of all known veterans experiencing homelessness in Des Moines. The status of each veteran was discussed and a service plan and follow-up plan set in place. This strategy brought the collective resources of our community to bear in ending these veterans' homelessness. At the next Ending Veterans Homelessness meeting, the updated list was reviewed and the process continued. The report used by the work team provided them the fundamental tools to understand the veterans they were serving and to measure their progress and success. At every meeting the committee knew how many veterans had exited homelessness, how many new veterans had

entered the system, and if any had returned, with all data broken out both from the date of the original count and since the last meeting date. This real time data was crucial to the work group successfully ending veteran's homelessness in Polk County.

The data also provided the work team with information about how long the veteran had been homeless and the length of time it took to place the veteran into housing.

In early January of 2015, this work team's efforts resulted in the City of Des Moines meeting all the criteria of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness to achieve "effective end" to veteran's homelessness in Des Moines.

- The January 2015 point in time count reported a total of 112 veterans homeless in Des Moines. Since that time, all of those veterans exited homelessness. As of January 13<sup>th</sup> of 2015 an additional 240 veterans were identified as homeless, were served and exited homelessness.
- During this time the average number of days from identification of the veteran to when housing was secured was 49 days – well below the Federal benchmark of 90 days.
- Another important benchmark of success is that the number of veterans exiting homelessness to housing is vastly outpacing the number of new veterans entering the homeless system in our community.

These community organizations continue to meet twice a month to work toward housing all homeless veterans in Polk County.

**YHDP Lead Agency:** The Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) lead agency will be Iowa Homeless Youth Centers (IHYC). IHYC, a community-based service center of YSS, Inc., was established in 1985 and focuses specifically on at-risk or homeless youth between the ages of 16 ½ to 24. IHYC works to eliminate homelessness among children, youth and young mothers in Central Iowa. IHYC believes, with support and assistance, homeless individuals and families can live independently and attain self-sufficiency. This agency's website is

[www.iowahomelessyouth.org](http://www.iowahomelessyouth.org). IHYC works with youth through five key areas of focus: employment, education, living skills, positive community engagement and safe housing.

Programs include:

- **Supportive Housing Program** – The Buchanan Transitional Living Program is a co-ed program that serves youth ages 16-21; the Lighthouse Transitional Living Program serves pregnant and parenting homeless young women, ages 16-25 (and their children).
- **Iowa Aftercare Services Network** – IASN provides case management and support to youth (ages 18-21) who have aged out of the Iowa foster care system. IHYC provides the Aftercare services for youth that age out of the foster care system in Polk County. IHYC's parent organization holds the statewide contract for this program.
- **Street Outreach / Drop-in-Center Program** – The IHYC Youth Opportunity Center (Drop-in-center) is a hub of crisis counseling, service referrals and emergency need fulfillment for homeless youth, ages 16-21. The IHYC Street Outreach Team goes into the community and engages homeless youth that are sleeping in locations not meant for habitation, reconnects them with community resources and helps facilitate their entry back into our community.
- **Youth Focused Emergency Bed Program** – within the IHYC Youth Opportunity Center facility is our 9 bed emergency housing program for transition age youth between the ages of 18-21. The average length of stay is 30 days.
- **Post-Secondary Education Retention Program (PSERP)** – Works with youth as they complete their two-year associates degree at DMACC and/or transition into a 4-year college degree at either Grandview or Drake University. Program components include case management, financial coaching, mentor matching, a study table and a monthly financial stipend.

IHYC Director, Toby O’Berry, will co-lead the YHDP in coordination with Mark Phillips, the CoCB Board Executive Director. IHYC will dedicate a full time position in support of the YHDP. IHYC has actively supported ending youth homelessness in our community. This agency was an integral partner in the planning and implementation of a centralized intake process in our community. IHYC staff participates in our community’s ongoing work group to end chronic homelessness and also serves both on the Polk County Directors Council and the Polk County Service Member Council in support of ending homelessness in our community. IHYC has just designed a youth focused rapid re-housing program in Polk County that they will be looking to implement during the next HUD grant funding award period.

**Proposed YHDP Team**

**Mark K Phillips** - Polk County CoC Board Executive Director – Co YHDP Team Leader

**Toby O’Berry** – Iowa Homeless Youth Centers Director - Co YHDP Team Leader

**Margo Miller-Ramirez** – Primary Health Care Advocacy Program Manager – Centralized Intake; CoC Housing Committee member

**Julie Eberbach** – Associate Director, Institute for Community Alliances – HMIS/Data Lead Agency

**Darin Thompson / Jane Huff** - DHS Primary Contact – Youth age PCWA homeless liaison

**Sam Fink** – Youth Advisory Board Member

**Dr. Ehren Stover-Wright**– Director of Research, Institute for Community Alliances – CoC Performance Committee Member

**Charles Hill** – Iowa Legal Aid – CoC Coordinated Services Committee Member

**Chris Johansen** – City of Des Moines Representative

**Suzanne Mineck** – Mid Iowa Health Foundation – liaison to community funding sources

**Eric Burmeister** - Polk County Housing Trust Fund Executive Director - CoC Board Member

**CoC Structure relating to ending youth homelessness in Polk County:** The Polk County Continuum of Care Board (CoCB) is committed to this initiative of eliminating youth homelessness in Polk County, Iowa. The CoCB will play an active role in this initiative and will provide support and guidance throughout the entire community led approach to ending youth homelessness. A minimum of three CoCB board members will participate on our Homeless Youth Work Group and will represent the following CoCB committees.

- **Housing Committee** (11 members sit on this committee)
  - Committee Objective: Recommend strategies to develop affordable housing resources to meet the needs of households at-risk of homelessness.
  - Youth focused tasks:
    - The committee member who is also on the YHDP work group will be the connection for the CoCB and the work group to help communicate Housing Outcomes specifically involving youth and youth focused programs
    - Report quarterly to the full CoCB on youth Performance Outcomes
- **Performance Committee** (17 members sit on this committee)
  - Committee Objective: The Performance Measures Committee will establish, monitor and evaluate performance goals and measures of evidence of progress toward meeting the goal of reducing homelessness. The Committee will ensure that the CoCB will comply with federal guidelines related to system-level and individual project performance measures. The committee will establish strategies, systems and

mechanisms to measure indicators of the community's overall performance in reducing homelessness.

o Youth focused tasks:

- The committee member who is also on the YHDP work group will be the connection for the CoCB and the work group to help communicate Performance Outcomes specifically involving youth and youth focused programs
- Report quarterly to the full CoCB on youth Performance Outcomes

● **Coordinated Services Committee** (20+ members sit on this committee)

o Committee Objective: The Coordinated Services Committee will develop a plan to coordinate and maintain a centralized intake system within Polk County. The system will include a centralized intake system to provide assessment, diversion and homeless assistance. The committee will develop community strategies of improving service delivery, efficiencies and cost effectiveness in reducing homelessness.

o Youth focused tasks:

- The committee member who is also on the YHDP work group will be the connection for the CoCB and the work group to help communicate Coordinated Service Outcomes specifically involving youth
- Report quarterly to the full CoCB on youth Coordinated Service Outcomes

Board members from the CoCB have been active members of our YHDP grant application / Ending Youth Homelessness Community Response committee, providing input and support during this community led application to end youth homelessness.

**Youth Advisory Board (YAB):** A Youth Advisory Board (YAB) has been established, comprised of youth who are currently, or have prior experience being, homeless in Polk County. Youth who were in the foster care system also participate on this YAB. Our YAB has met multiple times prior to this grant submission and will continue to meet monthly during the next year while our community works to eliminate youth homelessness. The first meeting provided a time for youth who serve on this advisory board to brainstorm and share their experiences struggling with homelessness and to discuss how our community could have better supported them during that time.

One member of the Youth Advisory Board will serve on our YHDP Team and will be the connection between the YHDP Team and the Youth Advisory Board. The CoCB will work to having a Youth Advisory Board member to serve on its board to further strengthen the connection between the CoCB and the Youth Advisory Board.

The YAB holds meetings at the IHYC Youth Opportunity Center. Included within this grant application is the signed MOU between the Youth Advisory Board and the CoCB. The Youth Advisory Board will participate in ranking and scoring all program applications submitted in response to our community being selected for this demonstration grant. The YAB and the CoCB Grant Committee will coordinate review of all program applications and make recommendations jointly for selection of programs that receive funding from this grant. Another benefit of the YAB is incorporating training and education surrounding SOAR (*SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access*



*and Recovery*) opportunities for homeless youth. Efforts will be made to make sure youth that have experience with the SOAR process are represented on the YAB.

**CoCB's engagement of Youth Providers not involved with the CoCB:** The CoCB is committed to, and currently engaging, all youth service providers in our community to help best meet the needs of homeless youth. We have invited youth providers not currently active within our CoCB to participate in our Homeless Youth Work Group. Four youth providers that were not formerly active within the CoCB are now participating in our Work Group Meetings and are at the table helping plan our community response to ending youth homelessness. In addition to the four groups now helping to craft our community's response to ending youth homelessness, we have invited all youth providers to join our CoC's membership. We hold monthly, open to the public, meetings, and post all meeting minutes for our community to review on the CoCB website.

**CoCB's plan to engage other entities not currently working on youth homelessness:** Our CoCB is committed to bringing everyone together to work on designing a community approach to ending youth homelessness. The Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Polk County Juvenile Court Offices (PC JCO) have agreed to participate in our Homeless Youth Work Group meetings and are an important piece of the puzzle for solving youth homelessness. While DHS and PC JCO's do not directly work on the full spectrum of youth homelessness, their work is directly tied to our community efforts to wrap supportive services around both system and non-system involved youth who experience homelessness.

## **2. Current Resource Capacity:**

The Polk County CoC Crisis Response System for Youth is included in this grant application as an attachment. The following 5 agencies constitute our communities Crisis Response System for youth and provide mainstream resources for unaccompanied, pregnant/parenting homeless youth, or youth at risk of homelessness in our community: Youth Emergency Shelter and Services (YESS), Orchard Place, Iowa Homeless Youth Centers / YSS Inc., CSA, and Wildwood Hills.

The attachment labeled - Youth Crisis Response System goes into greater detail on the services, funding sources, types of intervention provided by each agency, types of services offered by each agency, subpopulations served, and methodologies that the above entities incorporate into our communities response system for youth.

### **3. Community Need:**

Our CoC has not yet completed a youth specific homelessness community needs assessment.

Discussion related to developing a homeless youth community needs assessment will occur during the next calendar year. It is very difficult to identify and accurately count homeless youth in our community. That being said, the numbers from the January 2016 Point In Time (PIT) are:

- 37 unaccompanied youth (24 or younger) - sheltered
- 49 parenting youth (24 or younger) - sheltered

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- 2 unaccompanied youth (24 or younger) - unsheltered
  - 0 parenting youth (24 or younger) - unsheltered

Our community does not conduct a separate youth specific PIT count, but instead incorporates all youth identified in one single homeless count. Iowa Homeless Youth Centers (IHYC) operates a Street Outreach Program in our community. The IHYC Street Outreach Team is

trained in identifying and engaging homeless youth who are currently living on the streets or in places not meant for habitation. IHYC's Street Outreach Program staff actively participates in the Polk County, community-wide annual PIT count. Specifically, IHYC street outreach staff participates in a "street count," where they visit unsheltered homeless people, including runaway and homeless street youth, map their location and add them to the count. Also during our annual PIT homeless count, the IHYC Street Outreach Team operates their Mobile Outreach Homeless and Runaway Youth (MOHRY) Van service. MOHRY vans are driven by our Street Outreach Advocates to find and identify homeless youth during our PIT count. Age is documented for all individuals and families identified as homeless during the PIT count. Another way we reach out to homeless youth during the PIT Count is with social media. Multiple agencies post on their Facebook pages the day/time for the PIT Count and help generate awareness that the PIT is occurring in our community. Iowa Homeless Youth Centers has a youth specific Facebook page that hundreds of homeless or formerly homeless youth use to receive status updates on youth focused services available in Polk County. This youth specific Facebook page is another way our community notifies youth about the annual PIT Count. Going forward our community will designate an IHYC representative be the Youth PIT Count Coordinator. This individual will work closely with Primary Health Care, the lead Centralized Intake agency & agency that also leads our communities PIT Count.

### **Homeless youth identified by Polk County Schools (CoC's Local Education Agency)**

For the 2015/2016 school year, Polk County school districts reported 295 unaccompanied homeless youth to the Iowa State Department of Education. This constituted 23.6% of the total unaccompanied homeless youth identified within public schools in Iowa.

**Factors contributing to youth homelessness:** Our YHDP work group has discussed in depth the factors currently contributing to Youth Homelessness in our community and the factors listed below are at the community level, not specifically case-by-case. We collect data during PIT and from youth that access community resources. We also collect contributing factor data during the intake process for all youth that access services in Polk County.

- **Factor #1 – Unsafe family dynamics/structure** - this is the primary root cause disclosed during our centralized intake process for reasons that youth are homeless. Our Street Outreach team has identified this factor as the #1 reason for the youth they work with being homeless.
- **Factor #2 – Poverty** - this factor is a significant contributing cause of youth homelessness in our community.
- **Factor #3 – Limited affordable housing** - this is a community wide struggle finding affordable housing for youth to access once they are close to being financially independent.
- **Factor #4 – Low barrier mental health services** - wait times for youth to access safe and appropriate mental health services is a challenge in our community. Youth disclose that due to trauma they experienced it is hard to trust adults causing them not to access mental health services due to trust issues.
- **Factor #5 – Limited employment** - youth struggle with securing housing and financial independence due to limited employment opportunities that pay a livable wage.

#### **4. Capacity for Innovation**

**New System Wide Change:** Starting in 2012 our community of homeless service providers came together to start the planning process for implementing a Centralized Intake process in Polk

County for all individuals and families that experience homelessness. We initially met quarterly and then monthly, as a group, working on this system-wide change. Even prior to a community RFP (Request for Proposal) 90% of our community homeless service providers signed a Data Sharing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to simplify the process in which homeless individuals and families access services in our community. The community rallied around the need before the funding was in place to fully implement a Centralized Intake process. The Lead agency that was awarded the contract to manage our communities Centralized Intake process was the Agency – Primary Health Care (PHC). Primary Health Care won the award and our community started to implement a Centralized Intake process prior to receiving 100% of the funds required to operate this improved system-wide methodology for working with homeless participants in Polk County. Our community came together to fund this program, with funders representing county, city, corporations, and local foundations all helping to fund this system change model. Service providers and local funders all came together to make this change because ingrained in our community is the philosophy to “always do what’s best”. Our community approach is to put our participants first when looking at program policies and procedures. We made this system change for three reasons:

- 1) Minimized the stress placed on homeless participants by having to search between many homeless service providers looking for program opening.
- 2) Reduced participant trauma by not having to retell and answer the same emotional/sensitive intake questions at multiple agencies
- 3) Better record data and performance numbers surrounding homeless participants by tracking the issues on a macro – community level instead of by smaller individual agencies. Homeless data is entered live – with real time occupancy and referrals

To implement this change, Primary Health Care started initially with individual homeless participants and then expanded to serve homeless families within a Centralized Intake System.

The hardest part of implementing our Centralized Intake system change, was closing the back door to homeless participants entering homeless program services - on an agency level. For this to be successful, we had to make a cultural shift as homeless service providers. The community agencies had to give up some control on the front end of providing services, by not controlling individualized program referrals. This operational and philosophical change was minimal when compared to the vastly improved experience our homeless individuals and families go through with the community implementation of Centralized Intake in Polk County. We as a community always put our participants first and we as a community came together to make this system-wide change to better serve the needs the homeless community. Service providers in Polk County are excited to continue this system wide approach of Centralized Intake for all people experiencing homelessness in Polk County.

**New Youth Focused Community Resource or New System:** Our community has struggled with allocating sufficient resources to transition-age youth when identified by Centralized Intake as experiencing homelessness and in need of safe emergency shelter. We have two excellent adult shelters (Central Iowa Shelter and Services and Bethel Mission) in our community, but they are typically full and not always the best option for transition age youth between the ages of 18-24. Homeless youth are at an elevated risk of being taken advantage of by older homeless individuals either physically, financially, or emotionally. As a community response to this issue, the Lead Agency, Iowa Homeless Youth Centers opened a “new to the community” youth focused emergency bed program that consists of 9 low-barrier emergency beds located at the IHYC Youth Opportunity Center in downtown Des Moines. Our community was motivated to

add this supportive emergency housing service for transition-age homeless youth when the elevated risk of homeless youth accessing our adult shelter was recognized. Our community came together to plan, design, and fund this new community resource for homeless youth. Securing funding to operate this expansion of support for homeless youth in Polk County was the main challenge to adding this additional youth focused emergency bed program. Our community was fortunate to be awarded a 3-year VOCA (Victim of Crime Act) grant plus Emergency Services Grant (ESG) funds to operate this 9 emergency bed program specifically for homeless youth. We opened this new youth focused community resource in August of 2016. As of November 2016, we have served 44 youth in this emergency bed program.

**Youth Rapid Re-housing Program in Polk County:** In our most recent CoC competitive funding application (2016), a youth focused rapid re-housing program was ranked partially in tier 1 (\$105,695) and partially in tier 2 (\$50,011). This new program will serve 12 homeless youth annually coming from either the streets or emergency shelter locations. Iowa Homeless Youth Centers and Conlin Properties, a local real estate developer and landlord have agreed to partner on this project. Conlin Properties will allocate up to 12 units across their entire portfolio of 1-bedroom apartments for homeless youth who participate in this rapid re-housing program. The leases will be in the youth's name and they can remain in their apartment as long as they want. This youth focused rapid re-housing program will utilize a housing first model when placing participants in apartments. Our community is excited to hopefully bring this new youth focused rapid re-housing program online in 2017 and will wrap supportive services around the youth that access this program from the time they enter the program and up to 12 months after they exit. This intervention is not currently operating in our community, but with our local CoC ranking this rapid re-housing program in tier 1 for our 2016 funding application, it speaks to the

emphasis our community places on supporting homeless youth that access services in Polk County. Our community would like to increase the number of rapid re-housing programs that serve all subpopulations of homeless youth - including pregnant and parenting, LGBTQ, unaccompanied single youth, and potentially minors. This first rapid re-housing program that serves youth will be a good start for our community to increase over time the amount of rapid re-housing services offered to transition age youth.

**Willingness to question existing models and test new methodologies:** Our community is always looking to “do what best for those experiencing homelessness”. This includes having tough conversations and making decisions that impact service providers in our community. The CoCB here in Polk County has twice made the difficult, but well thought out reallocation of community resources for new community projects during our CoC program competition. We as a community have prioritized serving chronically homeless individuals and also utilizing 1) a housing first model for all CoC funded programs, and 2) placing greater emphasis on PSH (permanent supportive housing) and RR (rapid re-housing) programs when working with homeless individuals and families in Polk County. One of our youth-focused agencies, Iowa Homeless Youth Centers, last year lost funding for a transitional living program that served youth. Instead of giving up, the next year this agency, after researching best practices nationally surrounding youth rapid re-housing models, designed a rapid re-housing program, applied for new funds in support of a rapid re-housing program focused on youth, and was ranked in tier 1 for the 2016 PC CoC funding application. Another agency in our community made the switch from a transitional living program to one that provides rapid re-housing to families. Our community of service providers is willing to make changes in how we deliver services. It’s not always easy, but when we see positive results from RR and PSH programs; our community



recognizes the benefit in questioning our current delivery models for working with homeless participants and is willing to improve programming as a result of better program methodologies.

**Aftercare Program:** Our community is focused on providing the best possible support systems for transition age youth. Our youth support system also includes youth who age out of foster care. The State of Iowa designed a program to specifically meet the needs of youth aging out of foster care, after recognizing that youth that age out of foster care are at a higher risk of becoming homeless after they leave the foster care system. The Iowa Aftercare Services Network (IASN) is a group of non-profit organizations across the state of Iowa that work together to support youth who have aged out of foster care. Aftercare Services are voluntary, individualized support, designed to help youth transition successfully to adulthood. Participants meet at least twice a month with an IASN Self-Sufficiency Advocate (SSA). The Advocate works with youth to set and achieve goals, attain new knowledge and master the skills needed to live on their own, make sure their basic needs are met, and provide support, encouragement and connections, much like what a parent provides a young adult. The Aftercare Program is not funded by our CoC. Our Aftercare program help youth that age out of foster care apply for Supplemental Security Income. The Polk County community of service providers provides support to 200+ Aftercare youth annually.

**Post-Secondary Education Retention Program:** One key to youth (18-24) making a successful transition to adulthood and becoming financially self-sufficient is completion of post-secondary education. However, for young people with barriers to education and career success, the decision to enroll in college is the first step of a journey that is frequently difficult and too often ends prematurely. Iowa Homeless Youth Centers **Post-Secondary Education Program (PSERP)** is a United Way of Central Iowa funded initiative that assists youth in successfully completing

post-secondary education. To help ensure participant success, PSERP offers five key components: Case management to address the unique needs of each participant, a financial incentive (monthly stipend) for attending classes and program participation, mentors and/or tutors to provide individual support in the participant's field of interest, a weekly study group, and financial planning and career coaching. Eligible participants for PSERP: Are 18-24 years old, have obtained a high school diploma or GED, have never attended college before, are at-risk or currently experiencing homelessness, are classified within a low income bracket, and are open and willing to receive guidance and academic support for a commitment of two years.

Nationally, the graduation rate after 3 years at a community college is on average 25%. From our first group of at-risk or homeless youth in the PSERP program after 3 years, 70% obtained their AA degree, a professional certificate, or transitioned onto obtaining a 4 year degree. Education is one of the best ways to help homeless youth secure a livable wage. It takes a long term approach, but the PSERP program one way our community has recognized a program and designed a support system to help homeless youth with a creative, new community program.

**Youth System Map:** The Polk County Iowa Youth System Map is included in our appendices. It shows how homeless youth access, interact, and navigate services in our community. The youth is in the center of the map with 3 circles radiating outwards from the youth. The circle closest to the Youth is divided into two groups 1) Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) and 2) Primary Health Care (Centralized Intake). From their referrals and services are broken down into three categories: Housing/Health/Support. The top half of the page depicts how homeless minors that have been abused, neglected, or under the care of juvenile court that access services in our community via DHS and the bottom half of the Youth System Map shows how homeless youth 16 ½ up to 24 receive community support via Primary Health Care (Centralized

Intake). The 3rd circle surrounding the youth is the Youth Advisory Board. Starting in 2017, all youth that enter our homeless youth system will be invited to participate on our communities Youth Advisory Board. This board is a peer support system that allows homeless youth to have a voice on services provided in our community.

## **5. Collaboration**

**CoC's plan/strategy to end homelessness:** The CoCB strategic plan was developed during fiscal year 2016 and adopted the very beginning of fiscal year 2017. This plan is designated to work on the overall homeless population in Polk County by focusing on marshaling community resources by defining a community wide approach, review policy changes that are data driven, resource for homeless information, and work on sustainability for the organization.

The short term goals were to complete the following:

- Develop mini-work teams similar to our Veterans work team that focus on other populations such as the chronic population as well as our families/children and youth.
- Centralized Intake: It started January 2015 and we are now in the process improvement and data interpretation stage. Our community is committed to making centralized intake the best it can be and we will continue to make changes along the way that benefit our agencies and clients.
- Data driven decisions: Set community wide performance goals for our agencies, identify what our baseline is for each goal, and develop a dashboard that will track our progress quarterly and can be understood within our agencies and to the general public.

Our mid-term goals are as follows:

- Prepare and coordinate the January 2017 Point in Time
- Evaluate our CoC applicants and assist them in making adjustments if needed

- Review our progress towards our performance goals
- Sustain and support our work for our Veterans and Chronic work teams
- Work on developing a discharge plan for our community
- Identify policies that need to be updated and align with our performance goals

Our long term goals:

- Identify and implement on a community visioning process that will affect change for homelessness throughout Polk County.
- Continued development of our strategic plan for long term organizational sustainability
- Review of overall system wide policies and procedures on an as need basis

Over the next 18 to 24 months the goal for the organization is to have a strong foundation so that we can sustain the policy side while developing and implementing new ideas/partnerships that will affect positive change for homelessness in Polk County.

**Stakeholders participating in the community plan to end youth homelessness:** Included in the appendices is our stakeholder's chart that lists each community partner that has agreed to participate in our community wide effort to create and implement a plan to end youth homelessness. A variety of stakeholders are represented and include all listed types of stakeholders described in the NOFA, including our Child Welfare Agency, Youth Advisory Board, Runaway and Homeless Youth Program, Local Education Agency, CoC/ESG Homelessness Programs, Local Governmental agencies, and a many other important agencies that interact with homeless youth in our community. We are excited for the breadth of community stakeholders that have signed on to help end youth homelessness in Polk County, Iowa.

**Coordinated Entry Process for Youth:** Our community's Centralized Intake, operated by Primary Health Care (PHC) provides an access point designed for all persons presenting for assistance, including youth. A VI-SPDAT tool specific to each subpopulation (individual, family, youth) is used for screening. The PHC-run Centralized Intake process utilizes the TAY-VI SPDAT for all youth ages 16 ½ to 24, to generate a vulnerability score. The higher the TAY-VI SPDAT score the higher the need assigned to that specific homeless youth. PHC can then refer all homeless youth to the appropriate community referral based on each youth's individual vulnerability score. Using the TAY-VI SPDAT also allows our community to ensure that all youth and young adults are treated equitably in prioritization when making community referrals and to best match youth homeless needs with our community resources. Our Centralized Intake process for youth also incorporates SOAR best practices (*SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery - SOAR*) when working with homeless youth to connect them to financial supports. Below is a list of CoC and ESG community funded programs that homeless youth can access in our community:

- 1) Central Iowa Shelter and Services - Emergency Shelter (ESG funded program)
- 2) Iowa Homeless Youth Centers - Lighthouse Transitional Living Program (CoC funded program)
- 3) Primary Health Care - rapid re-housing program (CoC funded program)
- 4) West Des Moines Human Services - rapid re-housing program (CoC funded program)
- 5) Hawthorn Hill - family emergency shelter (ESG funded program)
- 6) Anawim Housing - PSH provider - (ESG and CoC funded programs)

**System Level Discharge Strategy:** Our CoC does not have a formal discharge policy in place yet, but as a community we are working on implementing one in 2017. The local hospitals,

Primary Health Care, CoCB representatives, Central Iowa Shelter and Services, and mental health providers have been meeting in 2016 and are currently drafting a community wide discharge policy. Below is a portion of the **draft** of our community discharge policy:

I. Guiding Principles

In order to develop recommendations for this discharge practice the following principles were developed:

- 1) Homelessness is unacceptable in Iowa.
- 2) Every effort must be made through careful discharge planning to work with the client and area resources to seek adequate, permanent housing. In no instance should a person be discharged from a state or public facility with directions to seek housing or shelter in an emergency shelter without having first made every effort to secure permanent housing.
- 3) If “temporary” shelter placement is unavoidable, the reasons for this should be well documented.
- 4) If after having exhausted all efforts to engage the client in a discharge plan, if the client continues to refuse services, the efforts will be noted and the client will confirm his or her refusal with their signature.
- 5) If a client receiving out-patient services becomes homeless, the state or public facility should work actively with the client and community resources to locate suitable housing.

**Procedures**

- 1) Adoption of Guiding Principles: all agencies and institutions serving the homeless population in Iowa shall adopt the guiding principles outlined in II, above.
- 2) Agency Adoption of Discharge Practice: All agencies and institutions within Iowa shall develop and implement a discharge practice that includes the following:

- a. Individual Discharge Plan: Upon entry, begin planning an individual discharge plan that includes resident involvement and buy-in.
- b. Collaboration and partnerships: A variety of forms of partnerships and collaborations are needed to achieve an effective discharge planning system. It is the responsibility of each agency to partner and collaborate with other agencies in the Continuum of Care to ensure the best outcome for Iowa residents.
- c. Adequate information systems and tracking: All agencies shall use a relevant data tracking system. Agencies receiving HUD funding are required to participate in the Continuum of Care Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). For agencies not required, HMIS is preferred in order to improve communication, facilitate access to resources, and track completion of the discharge plan. Please note the Domestic Violence agencies are exempt from this requirement, as described in the Domestic Violence disclosure rules.
- d. Integration of Community Resources: all agencies shall collaborate to reduce the duplication of services. Effective discharge planning procedures and practices shall be supported by all relevant community planning documents including but not limited to, the Consolidated Plan, 10-year plan to end homelessness and mental health and public housing authorities' strategic plans.
- e. Develop adequate funding strategies: In order for discharge planning to be successful, it needs adequate funding for the resources and programs deemed likely to be most successful in assisting a resident's re-entry into the community.

**Role of PCWA in working with homeless youth:** Our community's PCWA - The Department of Human Services (DHS) - works with homeless youth under 18 that meet Iowa Code for being

abused or neglected or in judicial court care. Homelessness by itself does not qualify for DHS services. If they are homeless due to abuse or neglect, then DHS will participate in the care of the youth that is under 18. Youth under 18 enter DHS care and are placed at Youth Emergency Shelter and Services. Any youth that discloses that they are fleeing their primary residence because of abuse or neglect will have their case reviewed by DHS. Currently, DHS interacts with homeless youth that are between the ages of 18-21 in their Aftercare program that provides supportive services for 3 additional years to youth that age out of foster care. DHS also provides supportive apartment living (SAL) housing for youth up to age 19 in our community. We are excited to have a signed MOU between DHS and the CoCB to strengthen the discussion on how best to serve homeless youth in our community.

**6. Financial Resources:**

Our community is currently holding discussions on funding the 6 month planning process for ending youth homelessness. Included with this application are Letters of Support and Cooperation from Mid Iowa Health Foundation, City of Des Moines, Polk County Board of Supervisors, Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines, Polk County Housing Trust Fund, United Way of Central Iowa, and Telligen Community Initiative. Our community is willing to provide financial resources for planning our community’s response to ending youth homelessness.

**Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP)  
Polk County Coordinated Community Planning Budget (6 months)**

Salaries		Comments
YHDP Program Coordinator Salary	\$18,50	1 FTE = \$37,000
YHDP Outreach Advocate	\$15,000	50% of 1 FTE = \$30,000
Lead Agency Leadership	\$ 7,500	Lead Agency Leadership Time / Supervision
YHDP Admin Support Staff	\$ 6,500	Office Manager / Admin
<hr/> salary subtotal	<hr/> \$47,50	



Benefits (@28%)	\$13,300	
Other Expenses		
Travel Expense	\$ 4,500	mileage & gas
Printing	\$ 2,800	Brochures
		20 youth receive \$15 convenience station gift cards - 12
Youth Advisory Board Gift Cards	\$ 3,600	meetings
Youth Advisory Board food	\$ 1,200	12 meetings over 6 months @ \$100/meeting
Postage	\$ 1,000	provider mailer
Office Supplies	\$ 750	misc. office supplies
Laptop (x2)	\$ 2,200	laptop @ \$1,100 x2
		cellphone @ \$600 x2 + \$50 monthly service x2 for 6
Cellphone (x2)	\$ 1,800	months
other expenses subtotal	\$17,850	
<b>Total Planning Budget (6 months)</b>	<b>\$78,650</b>	

## 7. Data and Evaluation Capacity

**Indicate the percentage of all types of homeless beds, excluding beds provided by victim service providers, which currently participate in HMIS.** The most recent CoC review of HMIS bed coverage for the Polk County Continuum of Care shows the following results:

- Emergency Shelter Families: 91%
- Emergency Shelter Individuals: 96%
- Transitional Housing Families: 85%
- Transitional Housing Individuals: 97%
- Permanent Housing Families: 87%
- Permanent Housing Individuals: 100%

Our community is proud to be exceeding HUD's goal of 85% participation in HMIS. We continue to engage all service providers that are not yet using HMIS and help transition them onto our community system if required.

**Indicate the percentage of all types of youth beds, excluding beds provided by victim service providers that are covered in HMIS, regardless of funding source.**

- Youth ES Beds – Unaccompanied: 100%
- Youth ES Beds – Parenting: 100%
- Youth TH Beds – Unaccompanied: 100%
- Youth TH Beds – Parenting: 100%

100% of all youth designated program beds utilize and track program participants using Servicepoint, our community HMIS system.

**Describe how the CoC actively recruits new homeless projects to HMIS for youth-dedicated projects.** Polk County’s HMIS Lead Agency, working collaboratively with the Polk County CoC contacts any newly identified projects and provides a comprehensive orientation to the HMIS network, the data collection system, the training and ongoing support services provided by the HMIS lead, as well as demonstrations of available customized reporting and the role of the HMIS system in support of the CoC’s Centralized Assessment and Intake System.

**Describe how the CoC supports the transition of new homeless projects to HMIS, including financial resources, technical resources, and training.** Any new homeless projects that are required by funding source to participate in HMIS are immediately connected with Polk County’s HMIS Lead Agency, the Institute for Community Alliances (ICA). ICA staff provides comprehensive system training and issue user licenses to the HMIS network. This response occurs within 15 – 30 days of notification of funding. The Polk County HMIS funding covers any needed training expenses and costs of user licenses as well as ongoing technical assistance, reporting assistance and any system upgrades. New homeless programs that are identified, but not compelled to participate through funding requirements are also actively invited to participate in the HMIS network. ICA contacts that agency and provides an onsite orientation to the HMIS network, its data collection capacity, customized reporting products and the use of HMIS to

support Polk County's Centralized Assessment and Intake System. These new homeless programs are provided all supports in the same way as any funded agency that would participate in HMIS.

**Indicate whether the CoC met all HUD data reporting requirements in the past 12 months, including the submission of PIT and Housing Inventory data into the HDX (Homeless Data Exchange). If the CoC has not met all data reporting requirements, explain why the CoC was unable to submit data accurately and on time.** The Polk County Continuum of Care has met all required reporting requirements; Point in Time, Housing Inventory Count, and Annual Homeless Assessment Reports completely and well within the required timelines.

**Indicate whether the CoC submitted AHAR table shells to HUD and if those AHAR table shells were accepted.** For the most recently completed AHAR reporting period, All twelve table shells for the Polk County CoC were submitted to HUD ahead of the required deadlines and all shells were accepted for use. The CoC has fully participated in the AHAR since its inception.

**In addition to gathering youth data in HMIS, indicate whether the CoC gather youth data from other sources (i.e., education, juvenile justice, child welfare, etc). If the CoC does gather youth data from other sources, please describe the data collected, the system(s) the data is collected from and the system(s) in which the data is stored.** The Polk County CoC has a strong, collaborative working relationship with the Department of Education and has access to aggregate homeless data on a "building by building" basis upon request. The Department of Justice, local juvenile justice agency and child welfare systems have a demonstrated history of working closely with local community based homeless programs and will continue to do so.

There have been unsuccessful efforts to create a local data-warehouse solution. The difficulties around the complexities of the data sets and various regulatory hurdles have stymied these

efforts. On a project by project basis, the HMIS Lead agency has successfully combined data with corrections system data for analysis and reporting. This youth grant would provide, in part, the resources to pursue a homeless youth data warehouse that would benefit and inform the community.

**Describe the performance measures the CoC has implemented throughout all of its homelessness assistance programs.** The Polk County CoC has committed to the use of the HUD System Performance Measures and has adopted those measures through formal action of the CoC Board. The target data point and universe corresponds to the design of system performance measures as outlined by HUD.

#### **Polk County System Performance Targets**

- 1. Reduction of the Overall Homeless Population (based on PIT Count):** 15% reduction each year, Ultimate target – reduction by 50% by 2020
- 2. Reduction in the Length of Time Homeless:** 10 % reduction in length of time, Ultimate target 20 days or less
- 3. Reduction in returns to homelessness:** 20% reduction in the number of person who return to homelessness each year, Ultimate target of 5% or less return to homelessness, (24 months following an exit to Permanent Housing)
- 4. Jobs and Income Growth – CoC Funded Programs:** 10% increase in the number of persons who have increased employment/income at exit
- 5. Reduction in Persons/Households who become homeless for the first time:** 20% reduction in the number of persons/households who become homeless for the first time.

**Demonstrate how the CoC has used data, either data regarding the composition of the local homeless youth population or the effectiveness of various interventions for serving homeless youth, in developing a strategy to prevent and end youth homelessness.** Our community reviews all APR or other annual program reports for CoCB and ESG funded youth programs when comparing outcomes for programs that serve homeless youth in Polk County. Our community also looks at 3 metrics when comparing youth programs and tracking successful outcomes: 1) Participant exit to Permanent Housing 2) Average length of stay in program and 3) Average monthly income at entry and exit from program.

**If selected as an YHDP community, describe your proposed demonstration outcome measures and how your community would define success.** We as a community have held several open meeting discussions surrounding youth homelessness and how best to start the conversation on ending youth homelessness. Our community will establish goals within our community plan to end youth homelessness that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely. Our communities response and plan to end youth homelessness will be successful as we track the below outcome measures.

Community Outcomes Measures:

- a. Number of youth housed
- b. Housing retention
- c. 6 month , 12 month, and 24 month review if youth access services again
- d. Reduced average length of homelessness
- e. After identified, how long till stably housed
- f. Wage increase from time of entry to time of exit
- g. Positive adult relationship – exit survey for each youth

Our community will continually review, evaluate, and track progress towards achieving our stated goals and outcomes during this YHDP grant period. We will track and evaluate program outcomes monthly during YHDP work group meetings, utilizing HMIS data and a list that identifies youth requiring additional services in our community. Data driven outcome benchmarks are key to tracking our progress as we implement our community response to ending youth homelessness. Senior leadership from the CoCB and community service provider program staff will come together to review and monitor indicators of progress towards our defined outcomes.

**Community Plan to End Youth Homelessness:** The Polk County Continuum of Care Board, all service providers, the Youth Advisory Board, PCWA (DHS), and all other stakeholders are 100% committed to designing and implementing a community wide approach to ending youth homelessness in Polk County Iowa. We have demonstrated our ability to think outside the box and push boundaries for providing the best possible support to homeless individuals and families. Our community successfully ended Veterans homelessness, implemented Centralized Intake, and has designed a rapid re-housing program specifically for homeless youth. The next step in our process is to finalize a community approach to ending youth homelessness by bringing together traditional partners (agencies funded by homeless dollars) with nontraditional partners (local and state child welfare agencies, schools, the juvenile justice system, and other governmental entities). We are excited to be submitting an application for this youth focused NOFA and look forward to finalizing our community-wide response to supporting homeless youth as they become self-sufficient adults in our community.