



National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)

Operating the U.S. Department of Education's technical assistance center for the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program

nche.ed.gov

Incorporating Education into Coordinated Community Responses to Youth and Young Adult Homelessness: Lessons from the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program

This NCHE program profile

- explores the role of education in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP);
- summarizes key education outcomes in, lessons learned in, and technical assistance provided to YHDP communities; and
- shares cross-system innovations and promising practices for preventing and ending youth and young adult homelessness in urban, suburban, and rural communities.

About the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program

In May 2015, Congress appropriated \$33 million to fund Round 1 of a federal Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP), to be administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Since then, Congress has appropriated funding every federal fiscal year for additional YHDP rounds. As of the time of this publication's release, 44 Continuums of Care (CoCs)¹ — including 17 rural CoCs — across three rounds have leveraged YHDP funding to develop and implement a coordinated community response to youth and young adult (YYA) homelessness. Furthermore, Congress appropriated federal funding in fiscal years (FY) 2019, 2020, and 2021 for three more YHDP rounds with a possible additional 75 funded CoCs.

YHDP requires communities to

- bring together a wide variety of partner systems, including housing, child welfare, education, workforce development, juvenile justice, and behavioral and mental health;
- convene Youth Action Boards (YABs), comprised of youth who have current or past lived experience of homelessness, to lead YHDP planning and implementation;

¹ A Continuum of Care (CoC) is state, regional, or local planning and administrative body that coordinates housing and services funding for youth, families, and single adults experiencing homelessness.

- assess the needs of special populations at higher risk of homelessness, including racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ youth, parenting youth, youth involved in the foster care and juvenile justice systems, and youth victims of human trafficking; and
- create a coordinated community plan (CCP) that assesses the needs of local youth at-risk of and experiencing homelessness, and address how they will use the money from the YHDP grant, along with other funding sources, to address these needs (HUD, 2020).

To support YHDP communities in carrying out these requirements, HUD and the U.S. Department of Education (ED) provide communities with dedicated YHDP technical assistance (TA). ED’s [National Center for Homeless Education \(NCHE\)](#) has provided education-focused TA to YHDP communities since Round 1.²

The Role of Education in YHDP

As part of their CCPs, YHDP communities must address four core outcomes of YYA experiencing homelessness: stable housing, *education and employment* [emphasis added], permanent connections, and well-being (U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness [USICH], 2015). In its education-focused TA to YHDP communities, NCHE has emphasized the importance of education as a **partner** (system-level planning, functioning, and coordination) and a **pathway** (youth-level supports for educational access and success).

Education is a critical system **partner** to involve in coordinated community responses to YYA homelessness, given that

- public education is one of the most far-reaching U.S. public systems, with more than 98,000 public preK-12 schools (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019b) and 1,600 public institutions of higher education in urban, suburban, and rural communities across the country (NCES, 2019a);
- federal statute requires preK-12 public schools to enroll and serve children and youth experiencing homelessness under the Education for Homeless Children and Youths (EHCY) program (subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C § 11431 et seq);³
- many states have enacted statutes that support higher education access and completion for students experiencing homelessness, including those attending technical colleges, by providing priority for enrollment or on-campus housing, financial or emergency monetary aid, or additional forms of housing or other assistance (SchoolHouse Connection, 2020b);
- many students and families experiencing homelessness view schools as a community institution, and express that the sense of routine and services provided by schools can be pillars of stability in an otherwise chaotic time of homelessness (Atwell, Bridgeland, Ingram, & Reed, 2016, p. 4); and
- many young people experiencing homelessness share that school provides them with a sense of hope for a future free from poverty and homelessness (NCHE, 2021; SchoolHouse Connection, 2020a).

As a **pathway**, education’s return on investment is well-established. People with higher levels of education

- have higher levels of income (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019),
- are more likely to move up the socioeconomic ladder (College Board, 2019, p. 5),
- are more likely to have access to employer-provided benefits (College Board, 2019, pp. 31-32),
- are more likely to be able to afford housing (National Low Income Housing Coalition [NLIHC], 2020),
- are less likely to be unemployed (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019), and

² For more information, download NCHE’s [Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Round 1: Lessons Learned on Partnerships with Education](#).

³ During the 2017-18 school year, the most recent year for which certified data is available at the time of publication, U.S. public schools reported enrolling 1,508,265 children and youth experiencing homelessness. Download NCHE’s [Federal Data Summary: School Years 2016-15 through 2017-18](#) or more information.

- are less likely to rely on public assistance (College Board, 2019, p. 5).

Examining the specific relationship between educational attainment and homelessness, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago found that young people without a high school diploma or GED were at a 346% higher risk for homelessness than peers who had received a high school credential (Morton, Dworsky, & Samuels, 2017).

Education Engagement and Outcomes in YHDP

Given the value of education as a partner and pathway, there is a growing education footprint in many YHDP communities. Key education outcomes in YHDP are categorized by “phase of development” and summarized below.

Coordinated Community Plan (CCP) Development

- **Education stakeholder engagement:** Upon being awarded YHDP funding, communities embark on a period of intensive stakeholder engagement and cross-systems planning to inform the development of their CCP.⁴ HUD recommends YHDP community partners include early childhood development and child care providers, local and state educational agencies, and institutions of higher education (HUD, 2019). Many YHDP communities engage a full spectrum of education partners — including early care and education, K-12 education, and postsecondary education — through education and cross-systems partnership convenings as part of their CCP development process. These convenings allow YHDP sites to leverage the insights of the education system in their planning process and ensure that their CCP includes an intentional focus on education supports for local young people who will be served by the YHDP.
- **Statements of need:** An important part of each YHDP community’s CCP is its statement of need, which must provide a numeric estimate of the number of local unaccompanied youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness, including those who are pregnant or parenting, and must discuss the needs of these youth in the areas of housing, education, employment, and well-being (HUD, 2019). Education partners play an important role in the development of local need statements through contributing data on the prevalence of YYA homelessness and insights into their education needs.⁵ In many sites, education partners also helped inform the development of education-focused goals, objectives, and action steps to ensure that identified needs are addressed through the CCP and funded projects.

Partnerships Across the Rural Montana CoC YHDP Site

The Montana Statewide CoC was one of eight rural sites awarded funding in YHDP Round 3. Through the diligent work of local champions, the site has built and maintained strong partnership across the youth homeless response and education systems. Likely the product of consistent partnership among CoC leadership, the State Coordinator for Homeless Education, school district local homeless education liaisons, YAB members focused on education, and HUD- and ED-funded TA providers, the site funded three school districts and one institution of higher education to administer a variety of supportive service only projects. Services to be provided to local YYA experiencing homelessness — including K12 and higher education students — include case management, education and employment supports, and connections to housing and other community assistance. See Appendix A for more information on rural education projects.

⁴ Communities in Rounds 1, 2, and 3 of YHDP had 12, eight, and eight months of planning time, respectively.

⁵ Sources of information included K-12 Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program data (e.g. number and primary nighttime residence category of unaccompanied homeless youth enrolled during most recent three school years) from schools within each CoC’s geographical bounds; supplemental K-12 data, including Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) data, where available; and local higher education data on students experiencing basic needs insecurity, such as the Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education’s report entitled *Examining Housing Insecurity Among Pittsburgh-Area College Students*. Readers also may find the information available in NCHE’s *CoC-LEA-RHY Program Crosswalk* — including crosswalked Continuum of Care (CoC), local educational agency (LEA), and Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) program contact information, and basic homeless education data — to be helpful in informing cross-systems work.

- **Governance structures:** HUD requires YHDP CCPs to describe the site’s YYA homeless response system’s governance structure, including how decisions are made regarding YHDP funds and who is involved in the decision-making (HUD, 2019). Many sites elevated the voice of education by including education representation in their leadership bodies and/or working group structure. Additionally, many sites included K-12 and/or postsecondary education students in their YAB membership, which served to lend YYA voice in support of the importance of education.

Project Planning and Implementation

Based on their CCP, sites invite local organizations to apply on a competitive basis for YHDP funds to implement projects that address the needs and goals identified in the CCP. Education partnerships and pathways have played a role in YHDP projects in the following ways.

- **Project request for proposal (RFP) development, review, and rank:** When competing YHDP funds, YHDP site leadership and select community stakeholders develop an RFP that describes the project types for which local organizations may apply and the criteria that will be used to assess project applications.⁶ YHDP site leadership also establishes a neutral body of proposal reviewers screened for any conflicts of interest to score and rank submitted project proposals based on established criteria. Many YHDP sites included education stakeholders in their project process from beginning to end, including serving on the RFP development committee and/or as project reviewers. Having education stakeholders serve in these roles helped ensure that education-focused criteria were included in application scoring rubrics and that the “voice of education” was represented when assessing the extent to which project applications addressed the education and employment core outcome.
- **Project planning and implementation:** As YHDP site leadership and project recipients began finalizing project design details and preparing to launch project operations, many sites convened funded projects and education partners to discuss how they might work in a coordinated manner to address the housing, education, and other needs of local YYA experiencing homelessness. Common areas of focus during stakeholder convenings during the CCP and project planning and implementation phases included accessing and using education data to inform practice, growing awareness of the value of education in coordinated community responses, ensuring a robust system of identification and referral of youth experiencing homelessness across systems, strengthening cross-systems partnerships in support of educational access and success for young people, and building a cohesive and seamless cross-system network of support for young

Partnerships Across Urban CoC YHDP Sites

HUD funded a total of 15 urban sites in YHDP Round 3. While youth homelessness and education partnership varied across sites, several patterns emerged. Firstly, two Round 3 and one Round 2 urban CoCs funded education projects (Prince George’s County, MD, San Diego County, CA, and San Antonio/Bexar County, TX; see Appendix A for details). Many Round 3 YHDP urban communities also included education committees as part of their governance structure, with the committees holding quarterly gatherings during project planning and implementation. At least two Round 3 YHDP urban communities (Prince George’s County, MD, and Springfield/Hampden County, MA) partnered with local career and technical education (CTE) programs to support greater CTE pathway access and success for YYA experiencing homelessness. While the form of local partnerships varied across urban sites, they all served to strengthen cross-systems collaboration in support of meeting the housing, education, and other needs of YYA experiencing homelessness. See Appendix A for more information on urban education projects.

⁶ See pages 7-10 of [Appendix A: Project Selection Process](#) of HUD’s FY2018 YHDP Notice of Funding Availability (NoFA) for a list of eligible YHDP project types. Each YHDP community may fund some or all eligible project types based on local needs identified in the CCP.

people in need. In addition, NCHE developed its *Education Goals and Supports: A Guided Discussion Tool* to support case managers, service navigators, educators, and other community partners in helping YYA clients identify and take next steps towards their education and career goals.

- **Education-focused projects:** In response to identified needs, a growing number of YHDP communities have funded projects that are administered by education agencies and/or are focused on supporting YYA experiencing homelessness who wish to pursue education. At the time of this publication’s release, eight education-focused projects had been funded by Round 2 and Round 3 YHDP communities. Please see Appendix A for more information on education-focused projects.

Key Lessons Learned

In partnering together in YHDP, CoCs, YABs, youth homeless response systems, and their education partners have learned valuable lessons on increasing the effectiveness of cross-systems collaboration, as summarized below.

- **Early partner engagement:** Education and other partners should be engaged early in cross-systems work. Early engagement, beginning as early as helping develop the CoC’s YHDP application to HUD, ensures that partners feel included in shaping the community’s coordinated response to YYA homelessness. While engaging education partners later in the “YHDP trajectory”, such as during the project implementation phase, is valuable, early engagement helps to maximize collective impact.
- **Schools as system partners:** Schools often function as de facto community hubs, particularly in rural communities; as such, schools are natural conduits for sharing information about community resources widely with a broad cross-section of local partners. Schools also have frequent and ongoing contact with students attending their schools; as such, schools can serve as vital partners in identifying YYA experiencing housing insecurity, including YYA with lived experience of homelessness who may wish to serve on local YABs.
- **Selection of partners and representation:** When considering who should represent education in partnering with YHDP, it is important to consider role and capacity. Communities will want to engage education representatives who not only have an interest in addressing youth homelessness, but who also have decision-making authority and a connection to front-line practice to ensure “ground-level” work informs community decision-making. It also may be helpful to engage multiple representatives of education and other systems to avoid placing the full burden of leadership on a single person, and to represent the diversity of that system. Diversity considerations should intentionally seek to ensure representation across various role and demographic groups among partner systems and the young people they serve. In large geographic service

YHDP Education Technical Assistance

The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) has provided education-focused TA to YHDP communities since Round 1. Key NCHE TA supports include

- hosting monthly YHDP calls on topics related to education partnerships and pathways;
- helping plan and host site-specific cross-systems convenings;
- providing homeless education data to help inform sites’ statements of need;
- assisting sites with education partner outreach and communication;
- drafting and/or reviewing education-focused portions of sites’ Coordinated Community Plans (CCPs);
- assisting sites with developing community-facing cross-systems partnership resources; and
- hosting an education-focused project community of practice (see Appendix A for additional details on education projects).

For more information about NCHE’s YHDP education technical assistance, contact homeless@serve.org.

areas, support from regional education service centers and [State Coordinators for Homeless Education](#)⁷ can be pivotal to gaining wide-scale engagement and participation.

- **A focus on mutual benefit:** When approaching partnership across the youth homeless response and education systems, it is critical that partners work towards a “give-and-take” partnership, wherein each participating system is able to articulate its challenges and needs, while also articulating what it can contribute to coordinated efforts. Ensuring mutual benefit across partners will enable each partner to sense a return on their investment of time and effort. Benefits may take many forms, including improved system function and/or improved outcomes for the young people each partner system serves.
- **An asset-focused approach:** Preventing and ending YYA homelessness is a goal that requires local partner systems — many of which already face internal staff capacity and resource challenges — to direct some of their organizational capacity towards building a coordinated community response. Developing mutually beneficial, sustained partnership across systems is most likely to occur when each system approaches coordination with an asset-based lens wherein the value of each partner is articulated clearly and affirmed.

NCHE thanks ED, HUD, and YHDP communities for partnering to bring
greater focus to the educational needs of young people experiencing
homelessness.

March 2021

⁷ Under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, every state education department must appoint a State Coordinator for Homeless Education to serve as the department’s key homeless education contact, and to oversee the Act’s implementation in local educational agencies (LEAs) across the state [42 U.S.C. §11432(d)(3)]. Some states also use regional models wherein regional bodies — including intermediate units (e.g. Allegheny Intermediate Unit in the Allegheny County/Pittsburgh YHDP site), regional service centers (e.g. the Region 20 Education Service Center in San Antonio, TX), or county offices of education (e.g. the San Diego County Office of Education in San Diego County, CA) — serve as intermediary planning and administrative bodies between local school districts and the state education department.

References

- Atwell, M., Bridgeland, J., Ingram, E., & Reed, B. (2016). *Hidden in plain sight: Homeless students in America's public schools*. Retrieved from [file:///C:/Users/User%20Profile/Downloads/HiddeninPlainSightFullReportFINAL_0%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/User%20Profile/Downloads/HiddeninPlainSightFullReportFINAL_0%20(1).pdf)
- College Board. (2019). *Education pays 2019: The benefits of higher education for individuals and society*. Retrieved from <https://research.collegeboard.org/pdf/education-pays-2019-full-report.pdf>
- Morton, M., Dworsky, A., & Samuels, G. (2017). *Missed opportunities: Youth homelessness in America. National estimates*. Retrieved from <https://voicesofyouthcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/VoYC-National-Estimates-Brief-Chapin-Hall-2017.pdf>
- National Center for Education Statistics [NCES]. (2019a). *Degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by control and level of institution: Selected years, 1949-50 through 2019-20*. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20_317.10.asp?current=yes
- National Center for Education Statistics [NCES]. (2019b). *Public elementary and secondary schools, by level of school: Selected years, 1967-68 through 2017-18*. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_216.10.asp?current=yes
- National Center for Homeless Education [NCHE] (2021, February 3). *Education partnerships and pathways in YHDP*. [Webinar]. National Center for Homeless Education.
- National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC). (2020). *Out of reach 2020: The high cost of housing*. Retrieved from https://reports.nlihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/OOR_2020.pdf
- SchoolHouse Connection. (2020a). *Homelessness and the pandemic: Five youth share insights*. Retrieved from <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/homelessness-and-the-pandemic-five-youth-share-insights/>
- SchoolHouse Connection. (2020b). *State laws that support college students experiencing homelessness*. Retrieved from <https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/state-laws-supporting-college-students-experiencinghomelessness/>
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2019). *Unemployment rates and earnings by educational attainment*. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/emp/chart-unemployment-earnings-education.htm>
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD]. (2019). *Coordinated community plan assessment worksheet*. [Unpublished]
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD]. (2020). *Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program*. Retrieved from <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/YHDP-Fact-Sheet.pdf>
- U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness [USICH]. (2015). *Preventing and ending youth homelessness: A coordinated community response*. Retrieved from https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Youth_Homelessness_Coordinated_Response.pdf

Appendix A: Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) Education-Focused Projects

The education-focused projects below were awarded in YHDP Rounds 2 and 3 with dual goals of supporting increased education and housing access, stability, and success for YYA experiencing homelessness. By supporting increased educational attainment, these projects aim to equip YYA served with the skills and credentials needed to secure living wage employment and make a sustainable exit from homelessness.

Table 1: Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) Education-Focused Projects

Continuum of Care	Project Recipient	Project Description
Louisville/Jefferson County (Round 2)	<u>Family Scholar House</u>	Family Scholar House was awarded Supportive Services Only (SSO) project funding to provide tailored educational supports to YYA experiencing homelessness to increase their high school and postsecondary education credential completion rates.
Prince George’s County (MD) (Round 3)	<u>Maryland Multicultural Youth Center</u> (subrecipient: <u>University of Maryland’s Fostering Terp Success program</u>)	The Maryland Multicultural Youth Center was awarded joint Transitional Housing-Rapid Rehousing (TH-RRH) project funding to provide short- and long-term housing support and wraparound services to YYA experiencing homelessness who are pursuing higher education. As a subrecipient, the University of Maryland provides gap housing to University of Maryland students who don’t have access to safe and stable housing when dormitories close over extended school breaks.
San Antonio/Bexar County (Round 3)	<u>University of Texas, San Antonio</u>	The University of Texas, San Antonio was awarded Rapid Rehousing (RRH) project funding to provide rental assistance and wraparound services to YYA experiencing homelessness, including those who have a history of child welfare involvement and are pursuing higher education. The project is part of the <u>Bexar County Fostering Educational Success Pilot Project</u> .
San Diego County (Round 2)	<u>San Diego County Office of Education</u>	The San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) was awarded SSO project funding to provide tailored educational supports to YYA experiencing homelessness to increase their high school and postsecondary education credential completion rates. The project also connects YYA served to supports from partner systems, including homeless response, workforce, and mental and behavioral health, as needed.
State of Montana (Round 3)	<u>Browning Public Schools</u> (part of the <u>Blackfeet Nation</u>)	Browning Public Schools was awarded SSO project funding to provide services to divert YYA experiencing homelessness from entering the homeless response system. Diversion services include case management, peer support, family reunification, education and employment supports, host homes, and connections to other community assistance. The project primarily serves Native American YYA.
State of Montana (Round 3)	<u>Dawson Community College</u>	Dawson Community College was awarded SSO project funding to provide systems navigation assistance to YYA experiencing homelessness, including those pursuing higher education.
State of Montana (Round 3)	<u>Hays Lodgepole Schools</u> (part of the <u>Fort Belknap Indian Community</u>)	Hays Lodgepole Schools was awarded SSO project funding to provide services to divert YYA experiencing homelessness from entering the homeless response system. Diversion services include student-focused outreach, case management, and connections to housing and other community assistance. The project primarily serves Native American YYA.
State of Montana (Round 3)	<u>Kalispell Public Schools</u>	Kalispell Public Schools was awarded SSO project funding to provide tailored educational supports to YYA experiencing homelessness to increase their high school and postsecondary education credential completion rates. The project also connects YYA served to supports from partner systems, including homeless response, workforce, and mental and behavioral health, as needed.