

THE NEW DEAL TO END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS



HOUSING
JUSTICE
PILLAR

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW DEAL TO END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

A Way Home America is working with young people to craft a national policy platform to transform how youth and young adults are supported in our society. Led by the demands of young people and backed by the nation's leading advocacy organizations, this New Deal to End Homelessness is the most comprehensive proposal of its kind. It will span five system-oriented pillars with an unflinching commitment to racial justice in each. The five pillars are:

1. **Housing Justice**
2. **Child Welfare Justice**
3. **Legal Systems Justice**
4. **Economic Justice**
5. **Immigration Justice**

ROADMAP TOWARDS TRANSFORMATION ¹

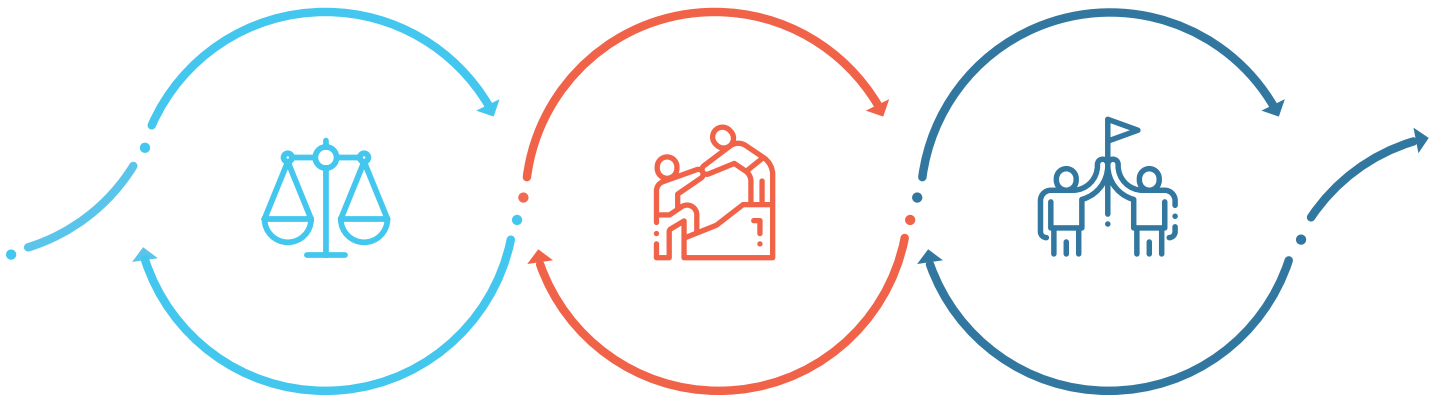
The New Deal is a national roadmap that radically reimagines the systems outlined in the five pillars. It builds on the hard-fought efforts already underway and reorients them toward justice for youth and young adults. Each pillar will outline three types of efforts, which can occur simultaneously in many cases:

- **Reform:** Immediate opportunities to reduce harm, improve access, and produce positive outcomes even while working within a system that is rooted in structural racism and bias against young people.
- **Transformative Edge of Reform:** Pushing the edge of what's possible under our current system by challenging power, listening to young adults, and removing barriers to transformation.
- **Transformation:** Reorienting our systems toward justice by redistributing the resources and the power young people need to thrive

These efforts help transform our *current state* to the *future or end state* we strive for within each pillar.

¹ Adapted from Steve Williams' Demand Everything: Lessons of the Transformative Organizing Model: http://www.rosalux-nyc.org/wp-content/files_mf/williams_transformative_organizing.pdf

REFORM TRANSFORMATIVE EDGE TRANSFORMATION



HOUSING JUSTICE PILLAR

Future State of Housing for Youth:

Housing is a human right, an entitlement, so that no young person, family, or individual experiences homelessness. People have access to the housing supports they need and the services they want to bolster their housing stability.

TRANSFORMATIVE ACTION 1:

Abolish the Need for Shelters by Creating Crisis Housing that Meets the Needs of Youth and Young Adults

Current State of Crisis Housing for Youth and Young Adults:

- In most communities around the country, congregate shelters are the only option available for people experiencing homelessness who need immediate housing. There are often few or no options that are dedicated to youth (under the age of 18) and young adults.
- Many congregate shelters have harmful and restrictive policies rooted in racism, homophobia, and transphobia that make them an unsafe option, an option of last resort, or completely keep many Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Queer youth, particularly **Trans²** youth,

locked out. Examples of harmful and restrictive policies include those that restrict safe entry or retention of shelter due to drug or alcohol use, immigration status, and/or gender identity.

- There is not a fully funded and organized prevention system that can serve youth or young adults and their families to ensure that those who want to remain with family (chosen family and birth family) have the resources and services needed to reunify or stay together, particularly for LGBTQ youth experiencing rejection and family conflict. These services are often fragmented across the child welfare system, runaway and homeless youth (RHY) providers, and other nonprofits serving youth and families.
- Youth under the age of 18 who are experiencing homelessness separate from their families face major barriers in accessing crisis options. Many states and federally funded programs have requirements around parental notification and permissions that can lead to young people not being able to access crisis services and being at higher risk of sleeping on the streets or becoming trafficked. There is also a lack of connection between family homelessness services and youth homelessness services which leads to older teenage youth in families being separated from the rest of their family experiencing homelessness in order to access services.

Trans² is a term that is used to refer to both transgender identified individuals while also creating space for other gender-expansive identities people have who may not identify as explicitly transgender but are often have similar experiences with gender-binary systems

- For these reasons, many youth and young adults are forced to choose to live unsheltered and in unsafe doubled-up situations where they are exposed to exploitation and violence. For many years youth who have experienced homelessness have told us that shelters cause harm and that we must create new crisis housing options that offer a safe and dignified way to receive immediate housing and services, including the services needed to return to or remain with birth and chosen families.

End State of Crisis Housing Rooted in Justice:

There are no longer shelters and any young person who needs it has immediate (same day) access to crisis housing of their choice that offers privacy, dignity, and safety, and leads to long-term housing of their choice within 30 days.

No shelters means no longer using facilities that lack private rooms/units without access to places to cook, provide for self hygiene, secure belongings, and access 24 hours.

The Path to our End State of Crisis Housing Rooted in Justice:

Crisis Housing Reform Efforts

To mitigate the harm of large congregate shelters and offer more crisis housing options to youth and young adults, advocates have pushed several reform efforts. Although these reforms have led to thousands of more youth gaining access to immediate housing while in crisis, the efforts often still rely on congregate shelter options that lack privacy and safety and are still not built to scale to ensure all young people have access to the option of their choice.

Examples of Crisis Housing Reform Efforts:

- Shelters that exclusively serve youth and young adults, offer more comprehensive services and are operated using housing first principles, including having low or no barriers to entry and to retaining the shelter bed.** Although these options offer a less harmful alternative, there are still few of these shelters in existence around the country and even those with the best Housing First policies still end up not being welcoming places for all youth, particularly Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Queer youth.
- Emergency transitional housing that offers more private space, similar to an independent apartment or private room in a house, and moves young people quickly to safe and stable housing.** Although this option offers young people crisis housing with more privacy and dignity, there are far too few units to meet the need, leading to eligibility and prioritization requirements that leave many young people locked out of these options.
- Basic Center Programs (BCPs) that return to the original intent of the program - supporting youth and their families to remain together and reunify with supports and utilizing small, home-like shelters as a last resort.** Some communities are doing this and these reforms include offering host homes of a youth's choice, more robust and longer term family supports, and youth-driven case planning.
- Host home programs that recruit volunteer hosts who can offer crisis housing options for youth and young adults in their homes.** This has proved to be a successful option for some youth but many others have rejected the idea because it takes away their agency to live with someone that is known and trusted.

Crisis Housing Efforts on the Transformative Edge of Reform

Recently there has been an attempt to push the system to the edge of transformation by giving youth the resources they need to seek crisis housing of their choice with known kin and to create a more coordinated and flexible prevention system for youth under the age of 18.

Examples of Crisis Housing Efforts on the Transformative Edge of Reform:

- Direct financial assistance and optional supportive services to a young person's kinship network to support emergency housing with kin of their choice.** Several communities are implementing this strategy through a federal grant program called the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) and others with the support of Point Source Youth. This effort is helping to re-imagine how we can support youth and give them autonomy in deciding how and where they seek crisis housing. However, these efforts still operate with restrictions due to the regulations of the system and have not been scaled up to meet the needs of any youth who needs the support.

2. Coordinated and flexible family-based services for youth under the age of 18 through the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP).

Several communities have coordinated resources and services across child welfare, juvenile justice, RHY, and CoC programs to ensure that youth under the age of 18 and their families have access to services and supports that can assist with avoiding shelter stays, foster care placements, and detention. These services are youth driven and offer support to birth and chosen families.

Crisis Housing Transformation Efforts

As we imagine a new way to offer immediate crisis housing options, we must push for true transformation. Most of these ideas have never been attempted or have not been fully implemented by the homelessness response system.

Transformation Efforts Needed for Crisis Housing Rooted in Justice

1. Direct cash transfer to young people experiencing homelessness, coupled with optional housing navigation assistance, with no conditions, to meet their emergency housing needs as they choose.

There is currently a [pilot project](#) offering direct cash assistance through the University of Chicago's Chapin Hall in partnership with Point Source Youth.

2. Immediate access to an emergency housing voucher for any youth that needs emergency housing without eligibility restrictions or prioritization factors, and at a value that can be utilized on the private market for hotel/motel, temporary apartments, or with friends/family. This would also include a change to laws and regulations that allow for youth under the age of 18 to consent to their own crisis housing without parental permission.

3. A robust and coordinated youth and family prevention system that pulls in resources from a transformed housing, child welfare, legal, and economic justice system to ensure that any youth and their family (birth and chosen) has a single point of access to the economic resources and supportive services needed to reunify or remain together in order to avoid the need for crisis housing. The system must respond to the needs of LGBTQ youth and their families to navigate family rejection and conflict and it must be able to serve youth and their families as they present in order to end family separation in families experiencing

homelessness with older teenagers. The system must also move across borders of cities and counties to ensure the entire regions in which people live and move have equal access to the prevention resources needed.



TRANSFORMATIVE ACTION 2:

Make Housing an Entitlement for Youth and Young Adults under age 30 through Rental Assistance, Dedicated Affordable Housing Units, and Homeownership Support.

Current State of Crisis Housing for Youth and Young Adults:

- The housing system in this country is rooted in structural racism that can be traced back to the literal theft of Indigenous land to build homes for white people, the redlining that kept generations of Black and Brown people locked out of homeownership and generational wealth, and the housing discrimination rampant today among housing developments and landlords. The system is also rooted in distrust of providers and people receiving services, which has led to over-regulation of homeless and housing funding in a way that does not allow for flexible and quick use of funds to house people in spaces of their choice.

- Decades of disinvestment in affordable housing and homelessness assistance has led to the current scarcity of resources within the homeless response system. This scarcity leads to harmful practices of pitting youth against other subpopulations for the few resources available, often resulting in few young people being prioritized into rental assistance programs for people experiencing homelessness such as Rapid Rehousing (RRH) and Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). And once prioritized into housing, young people face time-limits, income requirements, and a lack of staffing and other supports that make it difficult to successfully retain housing. The programs, at best, are keeping young people at or below the poverty line with no room to make safe mistakes without losing their housing.
- The scarcity of resources within the homeless response system also leads to the need to categorize and prioritize the types of housing instability and homelessness experienced, which leads to too many young people being boxed out of any form of assistance from the homelessness response system.
- There are still far too few dedicated affordable housing units for youth and young adults and little to no assistance to support homeownership for youth. The supports available are often concentrated in certain neighborhoods leaving youth with little to no choice in the location of their housing. And for youth (ages 16-21) who reside in transitional living programs, there is still not a secure bridge to long-term housing, causing many young people to “age out” of those programs into homelessness.
- Youth under the age of 18 who are seeking housing independent of their families face legal barriers to renting or accessing housing programs without parental consent and the pathway to emancipation is often complicated and long. These barriers lead to many young people under the age of 18 having limited to no access to long term housing when they have become disconnected from families.

End State of Long-Term Housing Rooted in Justice:

All youth and young adults under 30 have access to a variety of housing subsidies, including homeownership supports and family-based services, that allow for safe, accessible housing of their choice, in neighborhoods of their choice, at less than 30% of their total annual income.

There have been significant changes in market conditions that create a supply of less-expensive market-rate rental units, combined with a sustained federal investment in creating housing for people at all income levels, including zero income.

The Path to our End State of Long-Term Housing Rooted in Justice:

Long-Term Housing Reform Efforts

The homelessness response and affordable housing systems have attempted several reform efforts to increase youth's access to housing assistance, including family-based services to ensure family reunification and preservation as a long-term housing option. These efforts have led to thousands of youth being housed in rental assistance, public housing, voucher programs, and through family reunification and preservation (birth and chosen). However, these efforts have not led to the housing at the scale that is needed, provided the full array of housing options youth are seeking, reduced all the barriers to accessing housing assistance, or offered the full flexibility needed to support long term family preservation and reunification.

Example of Long-Term Housing Reforms

1. **Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) a federal grant program that has led to the creation of hundreds of** new dedicated housing units; long-term, family-based services for youth and young adults experiencing homelessness to ensure family reunification and preservation; and community-wide and cross-systems planning to address the needs of youth and young adults. The program still operates within a system that is actively causing harm to young people and is not funded to, nor do the regulations governing the program allow communities to serve all young people experiencing homelessness.
2. **Time-limited housing, including Transitional Living Programs (TLP) and other transitional and bridge housing programs.** Programs around the country have worked to increase the support that bridge youth to long-term housing. These efforts include *giving youth choice* in the types of housing they live in, including living with roommates, in their own apartment or in group settings; *transitioning leases to youth* to ensure they can remain in a unit after the program ends; and *implementing youth-led case planning* that helps to ensure that no young person exits from time-limited housing to homelessness. These programs still operate

within a system that is actively causing harm to young people and is not funded to, nor do the regulations governing the programs allow communities to serve all young people experiencing homelessness. There are also very few time-limited housing programs that are operating with these types of reform efforts.

3. **Family Unification Program (FUP) and Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) housing vouchers for youth and young adults.** There is a dedicated, but limited, set of federal housing choice vouchers for youth and young adults with a child welfare history. There are still far too few vouchers available to meet the need, the vouchers lack adequate access to supportive services, and are only available to youth who have been involved in the child welfare system.
4. **Public Housing Authority preferences for youth and young adults on public housing and voucher waiting lists.** Some communities are giving priority to young people on their local housing authority waiting lists. Limited amounts of PHAs are using this method and waiting times to receive housing support are often years long.
5. **City, state, and federal tax incentive programs for affordable housing developers to rehab or build new affordable housing units for people experiencing homelessness.** These tax credit programs are limited and do not lead to production at the scale needed or at the speed in which they are needed. They also often do not lead to production at the affordability levels needed, as they are developed through the private market with developers who still need to make a profit off of the production of the units, and with landlords, many who still discriminate against youth.

Long-Term Housing Efforts on the Transformative Edge of Reform

There has been an attempt to push the system to the edge of transformation by further breaking down the barriers to accessing housing and offering the options that match youth and young adult's desired living situations.

Examples of Long-Term Housing Efforts on the Transformative Edge of Reform

1. **Direct financial assistance and/or rental subsidy and optional supportive services to youth's kinship networks to offer permanent housing options.** Several communities are implementing this strategy, some

through YHDP and others with the assistance of Point Source Youth. Although there has been much success in these recent efforts, they still operate under restrictions due to the governing regulations of the programs and have not been scaled up to meet the needs of any youth who needs the support.

2. **Landlord incentive programs that offer financial bonuses to landlords who rent to youth and young adults experiencing homelessness.** There are several communities doing this alongside RRH and voucher programs to ensure young people have more immediate access to housing units with their subsidies. Although it ensures more direct access to housing, it still exists within housing affordability limitations that often must rely on predatory landlords.

Long-Term Housing Transformative Efforts

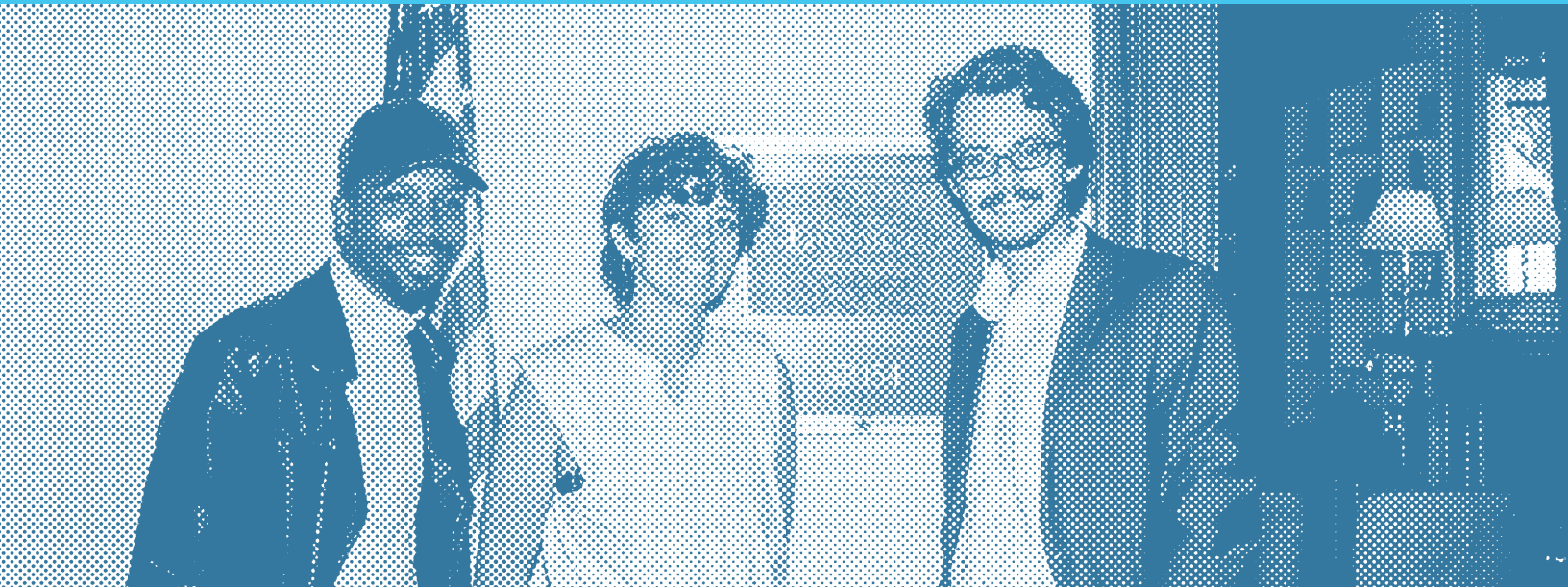
As we imagine a new way of distributing housing resources in this country, we must push for true transformation, and demand housing as a right for all.

Transformative Efforts Needed for Long-Term Housing Rooted in Justice:

1. **Direct cash transfer with no conditions to young people experiencing homelessness, coupled with optional housing navigation assistance, to locate safe, accessible, and affordable long-term housing of their choice.**
2. **A full-scale federal investment in the rehabilitation and production of affordable and accessible housing units and homes that meet the housing demands of the affordable housing crisis around the country; starting in historical marginalized communities in order to re-distribute wealth and opportunity to Black, Brown, and Indigenous people who have had generations of stolen wealth and opportunity due to structural racism.**

Strategies should include:

- Production of new accessible affordable housing across the country that is dedicated to youth and young adults, particularly Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Queer youth, and is owned and operated by local jurisdictions, including housing authorities and community-based organizations, in order to remove private landlords from the system.



- Rehabilitation of vacant homes and properties, particularly in Black and Brown neighborhoods, and transfer of ownership of homes to individuals and families.
 - Rehabilitation of rental units that are not up to housing code and transfer of ownership to tenant groups, local jurisdictions, housing authorities, and/or community-based organizations to remove private landlords.
 - Homeownership supports that ensure young people, particularly Black, Brown, Indigenous, and LGBTQ have access to the financing and subsidies to purchase homes and/or their rental unit and build back generational wealth stolen through generations of racist housing policies.
3. **A dedicated housing voucher program for youth and young adults that is not restricted by eligibility or prioritization requirements**, can be used in any jurisdiction, and does not have time-limits or income requirements or restrictions; can be flexibly used to support housing of a youth's choice including with friends, family, roommates, and rented rooms in shared housing; and available on-demand for any young person in need of long-term housing.
 4. **Laws that allow for youth under the age of 18 to live independently in housing of their choice and the legal support to access their right.** Law changes and legal support include pathways to emancipation, the right to consent to housing and services, and the right to rent in the private and public housing market.
 5. **Comprehensive income discrimination protections with funded enforcement measures that include legal supports for youth** to ensure that no landlord can refuse housing based on the source of a youth's income.
 6. **A Federal Bad Landlord Enforcement Program** that includes comprehensive enforcement of building code and anti-discrimination policies and a pathway to tenant ownership of buildings with chronic code or landlord discrimination violations.
 7. **Re-creation of federal, state, and local funding regulations to ensure that funds can be used flexibly to support the full spectrum of housing options described in the Housing Justice Pillar.** The re-creation is centered on ensuring quick and flexible access to funds without overburdening individuals or families trying to access the funding or organizations trying to administer the funds. The re-creation also ensures that the rights of those trying to access the funds are protected and that the funds are being used in the best interest of those they are meant to serve.
 8. **Re-creation of local land use and zoning regulations to address the systemic racism** throughout the regulations and laws and ensure Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities have access to buy, build, and develop land in their communities and throughout the country.

TRANSFORMATIVE ACTION 3:

Make Supports an Entitlement and have the Systems and Services Governed by, and in Collaboration with Black, Brown, Indigenous and LGBTQ Communities that Meet Youth's Employment, Education, Transportation, and Health Needs

Current State of Supports for Youth Experiencing Homelessness

- Structural racism, homophobia, and transphobia are embedded in all of the systems that youth interact with when trying to access services and supports needed to obtain and retain housing. At the systems level, the funding and policy decisions shaping the supports are still being made by majority white leadership who do not have the lived experiences of homelessness. This leads to young Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Queer youth without the employment, education, transportation, and health supports that are critical to thriving in this country.
- The majority of supportive services are underfunded; are not provided through a positive youth development framework; are not designed or provided by Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Queer providers that reflect the identities of those they serve or provided in the languages needed; and have a set of requirements and restrictions that either lock them out completely or only offer them enough resources to barely survive, leaving them no room to make mistakes without losing their housing.
- The limited amount of assistance in homeless rental assistance programs often restricts youth to low-income neighborhoods that lack access to support services, contributing to a lack of engagement in services.
- Access to health insurance is limited across the country, leaving youth experiencing homelessness without access to health care or limited access, paid for under homeless services dollars, that could be better used to house youth if there were universal health care.
- Black, Brown, Indigenous and LGBTQ young people also face structural racism and discrimination within the workforce, leading to fewer employment opportunities and lower earning. Employment assistance services are



limited and often lead to minimum wage jobs that leave youth without the ability to pay rent at market rates.

- Higher education is increasingly unaffordable, with limited government assistance, leading to few higher education options and increased personal debt; and there is a lack of adequate trade schools and job training programs. Supports for youth to stay in high school and/or obtain a GED are often underfunded, fragmented, and vary across the country, with some parts of the country having little to no educational services available to youth experiencing homelessness in high schools.
- Transportation services across the country are often absent, underfunded, or not accessible for those living with disabilities, leaving youth with limited ability to get to school, jobs, or supportive services.
- There are very few programs around the country focused on building the natural supports Black, Brown, Indigenous and Queer youth need in a community. Natural support opportunities include building on social connections, faith connections, and other social capital that can assist youth in successfully accessing future opportunities afforded to youth in non-marginalized communities.

End State of Youth Supports Rooted in Justice:

All youth have access to:

- Affordable, quality health care (physical and mental) in their neighborhood from providers that look like them (Black, Brown, Indigenous and Queer) with experiences similar to them;
- Career opportunities that pay a living wage, and a universal basic income when not employed;

- Fully supported high school, alternative education, and GED programs and free higher education opportunities (undergraduate and graduate level), career training programs, and entrepreneurship opportunities;
- Accessible transportation that ensures they can get to school, jobs, and necessary supports; and
- Neighborhoods that are thriving and can offer the natural support and social capital needed to thrive.

The Path to our End State of Youth Supports Rooted in Justice:

Youth Supports Reform Efforts

In an attempt to weave together the support and services available for youth to thrive, the homeless response system and other human services systems have attempted a series of reforms to break down barriers to access and offer more youth-driven services. These efforts have had varying levels of success in ensuring more quality supportive services that lead to thriving young people but are still embedded in racist systems that cause harm to many Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Queer youth.

Examples of Youth Support Reforms

1. **Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP)** has embedded positive youth development, housing first, and more robust budgets for supportive services like education and employment services in many programs. It has also led to increased cross-system partnerships to broaden access to employment and health services within the workforce and health care system. Many providers are still struggling to move the YHDP principles forward and to prioritize service funding when so many housing units are needed. The funds are also often still going to larger non-profits that are not representative of those they serve such as Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Queer youth. And though cross-system partnerships have increased, the workforce system is underfunded and not built to meet the specific needs of youth, the health care system still requires access to health insurance, and higher education remains financially unattainable for most marginalized communities.
2. **McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act** gives states and local school districts funds to serve children and youth experiencing homelessness in school. Some districts have used these funds to coordinate services across the homeless response and social services system, giving young people access to housing and support needed to remain housed or quickly regain housing. However this program has been historically underfunded leaving most school districts with too few dollars to offer robust services or to coordinate with other systems and community organizations, leaving many youth in schools experiencing homelessness unserved.
3. **The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)** gives states and local areas funds to deliver a comprehensive array of services to help prepare in-school and out-of-school youth ages 14-24 for post-secondary education and employment opportunities, attain educational and/or skills training credentials, and secure employment with career/promotional opportunities. Out of school youth and in-school youth are the target populations and both include homelessness status as eligibility criteria. A minimum of 75% of the youth funds allocated must be used to provide services to out of school youth with extended eligibility criteria. This has had a positive impact by creating new employment support opportunities for youth but the services still have numerous access barriers for many Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Queer youth.
4. **Affordable Health Care Act** created a stronger safety net for unaccompanied homeless youth by expanding access to health care insurance and ensuring parity for behavioral health treatment. The ACA requires all states to provide Medicaid coverage for most youth aging out of foster care until the age of 26. Additionally, the ACA prohibited insurance companies from excluding children (through age 18) from coverage based on preexisting conditions. Although this increased access for some young people, large numbers of young people are still not able to access through their parents or on the open market leaving thousands without coverage and at risk of health issues and financial debt.
5. **FAFSA offers pathways to student aid for young people who have experienced homelessness in high school.** This had led to young people accessing low-interest government loans to pursue higher education. However, there are still many barriers to access FAFSA, proving homelessness status, and accessing other financial supports needed to pay for supplies, food, and other needs.

6. **One-Stop-Shop:** Several communities have moved towards offering an array of supportive services from case management to employment support through one single entry point (virtual and/or physical) in order to more quickly connect youth to services across systems.

savings for high cost users to house individuals. This has shown promising results in sharing the cost of the housing across the system and in improving access to quality health care and housing for some of the most vulnerable.

Youth Support Efforts on the Transformative Edge of Reform

There has been an attempt to push some of the supportive services to the edge of transformation by employing young people to provide the services, offer more flexible and direct financial support to youth and their families, and connecting housing directly to educational supports and/or health care.

Examples of Youth Support Efforts on the Transformative Edge of Reform

1. **Providing dedicated and supported employment opportunities for youth with lived experience within homelessness programs.** These positions can further a youth's career while improving access and engagement with services for other youth who can see their identities within the provider. YHDP has helped to increase these types of funded positions across the country but there are still far too few and they are often still lacking support within the agencies they are working.
2. **Subsidized wages/job incentive programs** that allow youth to take entry-level jobs to gain employment experience while still making a living wage.
3. **Supported housing connected to higher education.** Several communities around the country have created supported housing programs for youth experiencing homelessness that is directly linked to educational opportunities. These include free-year round dorm rooms on university campuses and free housing for youth and families that are connected to high schools around the country.
4. **McKinney-Vento Homeless Student funding for housing.** The state of Illinois is testing a new innovation within McKinney-Vento program in high schools that will allow for funds that are usually dedicated to transporting youth experiencing homelessness across town to their high school to be used for direct housing support for youth and their families.
5. **Connecting health care and housing.** There has been movement across the country to utilize health care

Youth Supports Transformative Efforts

As we imagine a new way of providing the support available for youth to thrive, we must push for true transformation, and demand health care, education, employment, and transportation as a right for all. And we must support Black, Brown, Indigenous and LGBTQ communities in governing the systems that make funding and policy decisions that affect these supports and in designing and implementing the supports.

Transformative Efforts Needed for Youth Supports Rooted in Justice: Edge of Reform

1. **Make federal, state, local, and private investments in neighborhood and community-based organizations led by Black, Brown, Indigenous, and LGBTQ folks.** These investments must include support to the organizations to accept and operate the funding streams and give the organizations the flexibility to design and implement supports at the levels, lengths of times, and amount of times that can support youth in making safe mistakes while retaining their housing.
2. **Support for Black, Brown, Indigenous, and LGBTQ communities to govern the systems that operate the supports.** This must include representation on boards and in leadership positions; and it must include a new way of governing the systems that defuses the decision-making power across a broader range of community stakeholders to ensure that no one set of leaders holds the power within these systems.
3. **Federally funded universal health care benefits** that allow for all youth and young adults access to comprehensive coverage to physical, mental health and substance use service providers and financially incentives providers to offer services within marginalized communities by practitioners from marginalized communities. Services should also work to shift the culture and normalize access and utilization of mental health services and self-care.



4. **A federal living wage that is adjusted according to the cost of living within an area**, ensuring that youth and young adults entering the job market for the first time can earn enough to allow for less than 30% of their income to go to housing costs.
5. **Universal basic income** that ensures that youth who do not have access to the job market, are unemployed, or pursuing higher education have access to a basic income that allows less than 30% of their income to go to housing costs. This should be coupled with comprehensive employment services to assist youth in entering or reentering the job market and returning to a living wage.
6. **Federal savings program connected to housing** that assists youth, who choose to participate, in saving a portion of their rental income and/or mortgage payment into a federally backed savings and match program until the age of 30.
7. **Fully supported education and career pathways** connected to housing, food, and other basic human needs for all youth and young adults that includes:
 - national free college tuition and student loan debt forgiveness; free tuition to complete trade schooling and job training programs; and robust, fully funded, pathways to high school graduation that include adult learning strategies for older youth. And financial support to pursue entrepreneurship ideas and careers of a young person's choice.
8. **Investments that support digital equity.** This includes access to free broadband and digital devices that enable young people to participate in the economy and pursue educational activities.
9. **Support young people in building social capital**, including investing in programs and strategies that engage and support a young person's community. These include family, social, cultural, and faith connections, in order to build social connections that can assist with employment opportunities, social-emotional well-being, and access to financial support.

For more information:

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