

Ending Youth Homelessness in Austin by 2020

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About Austin:

Austin is a community fiercely committed to ending homelessness. Over the past several years, Austin worked to minimize the incidence and duration of homelessness by redesigning its approach to service delivery and introducing a centralized point of entry for accessing services. More recently, Austin has shifted its focus to improving system coordination among youth-serving providers and institutions to ensure there is a clear pathway for young people experiencing homelessness to swiftly access critical services, as well as increasing the resources dedicated to meeting the specific needs of these youth.

Efforts to end youth homelessness have been led by two agencies within the community:

- **LifeWorks** is the lead youth service agency in Austin that provides a full continuum of housing and wraparound supportive services to transition age youth.¹
- **Ending Youth Homelessness Coalition (ECHO)** is the Austin/Travis County Continuum of Care lead agency.²

The Challenge:

- In 2016, at least 607 unaccompanied youth between the ages of 18 and 24 experienced literal homelessness in Austin/Travis County.
- In 2016, Travis County public schools identified 1,944 students experiencing homelessness.
- Among youth experiencing homelessness in Austin:

82%

have
inadequate
access to
healthcare

76%

have been
involved in foster
care or juvenile
justice systems

59%

are not
engaged in
school or
employment

56%

have
experienced
trauma or mental
health issues

55%

of females
are pregnant
or parenting

It all started with an idea... Let's end youth homelessness in our community.

Timeline of Progress:

September 2016–December 2016: Austin was chosen by *A Way Home America* and *Rapid Results Institute* to participate in a community-wide 100-Day Challenge to permanently house 50 young adults (18–24 y/o) experiencing homelessness.⁴ LifeWorks, ECHO (the lead agency of the Austin/Travis County CoC), and the Texas Department of Family Protective Services co-led the effort. The Challenge, which concluded on December 19th, 2016, created an effective and urgent youth-centered approach to improving coordination among providers and addressing the needs of youth experiencing homelessness. The 100-Day Challenge brought together a broad range of stakeholders, many of whom had not previously worked together to tackle the system challenges and barriers to preventing and ending youth homelessness. Weekly case staffings were conducted utilizing a list of youth identified (by name) as experiencing homelessness. Ten local organizations worked together to coordinate services and to prioritize youth by level of vulnerability. Agencies committed to provide housing and wraparound support for each youth on this list. **Austin successfully provided permanent housing to 53 youth in 100 days.**

January 2017: The 100-Day Challenge expanded the community's network of providers, data resources, and shared mission and accountability to end youth homelessness. Building upon the momentum from the 100-Day Challenge, LifeWorks and ECHO jointly submitted a competitive application to the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) to implement a *Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP)*. The application was submitted with the support of over 50 local agencies, including state and city offices, local businesses, faith community, school districts, and service agencies, including housing, workforce development, education, and physical and mental health providers. In January 2017, Austin/Travis County was chosen to be one of ten sites across the county to end youth homelessness by 2020.^{5,6}

January 2017–Present Day: HUD granted Austin a 6-month planning grant. During this time, the community rapidly organized into sub-committees, including a Leadership Council composed of leaders from around the community, a Youth Advisory Council consisting of youth with lived experience with homelessness, and six working groups (Housing Partnerships/Landlord Outreach, Data/Evaluation/Outcomes, Best Practices and Program Design, Addressing Disparities, Coordinated Entry and System Triage, & Institutional Prevention). This structure has allowed the community to better understand the needs of youth and investigate best practices for serving some of the most vulnerable youth. As a result, Austin has created a *Coordinated Community Plan to End Youth Homelessness*, which is currently under review by HUD. The plan outlines the key strategies, goals, and outcomes that will define success in ending youth homelessness.

Looking Forward, 2018 – 2020: The *Community Plan* outlines key projects and resources needed to meet the housing and support services the youth require. In the next year, local agencies will apply for project funds. By 2020, youth homelessness in Austin will be rare, brief, and nonrecurring.

More Resources:

1. LifeWorks Website: <http://www.lifeworksaustin.org>
2. Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO) Website: <http://www.austinecho.org>
3. Austin/Travis County Youth Homelessness Needs Assessment: <http://www.austinecho.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/161214-FINAL-youth-homelessness-needs-assessment-1.pdf>
4. A Way Home America 100-Day Challenge Website: <http://www.awayhomeamerica.org/100-day-challenge-overview>
5. HUD Youth Homelessness Demonstration Website: <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/yhdp/>
6. United States Interagency Council on Homelessness – Ending Youth Homelessness Website: <https://www.usich.gov/goals/youth>