

RESEARCH IN BRIEF

Uncovering Challenges and Opportunity in Addressing Youth Homelessness in Southern Nevada: Community Comparisons

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Nevada is home to a persistent trend of leading the nation in the rate of unaccompanied, unsheltered homeless youth. The purpose of this paper is to explore how metropolitan communities with high and low rates of unaccompanied, unsheltered youth homelessness compare in their response to the problem with the goal of informing a more effective response that can reverse this trend. Using publicly available data and documents supported by provider interviews, we present common and unique challenges facing communities in their efforts to decrease youth homelessness. In addition we explored potential innovations that may address the problem in new ways.

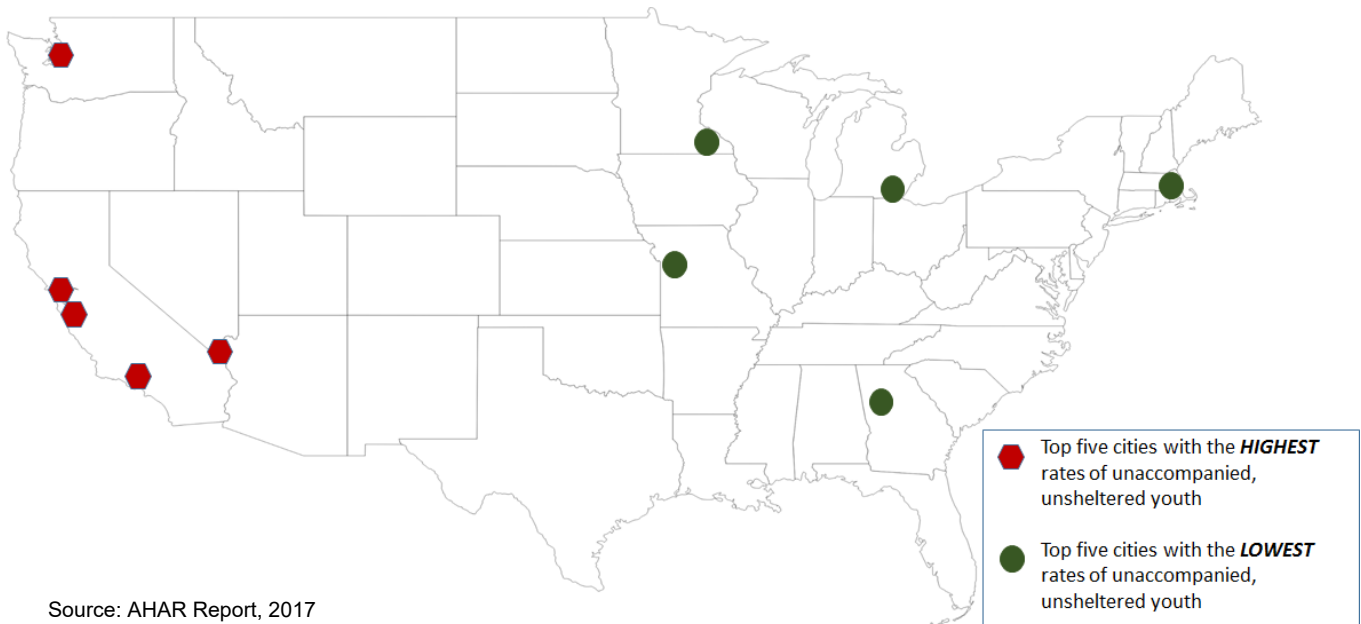
Background

Recognizing the need to respond to the trends in our state and region, in November 2017 providers, community leaders, and advocates came together for the first Southern Nevada Youth Homelessness Summit launching a new movement to reverse the trend and end youth homelessness in Southern Nevada (<https://nphy.org/themovement/>). In the year following the summit the primary goal was to create a dedicated plan specifically focused on ending youth homelessness in Southern Nevada. This goal is guided by the desire to make youth homelessness in Southern Nevada **rare, brief, one-time, and the response equitable**. A fundamental question facing the movement is how to craft a more nuanced response to youth homelessness that will be effective at reducing the rate of youth homelessness. This paper focuses on unsheltered homeless youth as they are considered particularly vulnerable and are defined as living in a place deemed not fit for human habitation.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Nevada has had the highest rate of unsheltered homeless youth in the nation over the past five years.
- The top five major cities CoC's with the highest rates of unsheltered, unaccompanied homeless youth are all located in the west with four of the five cities on the list for the past five years.
- Resources need to be designed for youth based on their developmental needs as they move toward and into adulthood.
- Housing affordability and accessible pipelines to career opportunities are key components to making youth homelessness rare, brief, one-time and equitable in the response.
- Inadequate data systems impede our evaluation of services, particularly for vulnerable subpopulations.
- Innovative and optimized use of multiple funding mechanisms, including new uses of public/private partnerships are essential to supporting strategies that can meet the need.

Figure1: 2017 Major City CoC's with Highest and Lowest Rates of Unaccompanied Youth Homelessness



Source: AHAR Report, 2017

Methodology

In order to compare metropolitan communities we used the most recent Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress prepared each year by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (Henry et al., 2017). This report served as a basis for selecting cities with high and low rates of unsheltered, unaccompanied homeless youth.

City selection. Each year the AHAR report ranks states, cities, and Continua of Care (CoC's) on the number and rate of unaccompanied and unsheltered homeless youth. For the purposes of this research report, we reviewed the rankings of the rate of unsheltered unaccompanied youth for CoC's in major cities from AHAR report released in 2017. From that report we selected the top five cities with the highest rates of unaccompanied unsheltered youth in 2017 and the top five cities with the lowest rates of unaccompanied unsheltered youth. These cities were used to compare available data and homeless planning documents. We constrained our comparison cities to those CoC's in major metropolitan areas as these CoC's are in the same category as the Las Vegas/Clark County CoC. Selecting cities using the rate (percentage) of unsheltered unaccompanied youth rather than the raw number of homeless youth adjusts for population effects for cities smaller or larger than Las Vegas.

According to the 2017 AHAR (Henry et al., 2017), COC's in major cities with the **HIGHEST** rates of unaccompanied unsheltered youth include:

- San Jose/Santa Clara City and County 96.3%
- Las Vegas, Clark County 92.6%
- San Francisco 82.6%
- Los Angeles City and County 80.4%
- Seattle 76.2%

According to the 2017 AHAR (Henry et al., 2017), COC's in major cities with the **LOWEST** rates of unaccompanied unsheltered youth include:

- Atlanta 9.0%
- Minneapolis, Hennepin County 8.6%
- Kansas City, Independence/Lee's Summit/Jackson/Wyandotte Counties 6.5%
- Boston 3.7%
- Detroit 3.0%

Data Sources. Several publicly available data sources were reviewed to compare communities. These include Point in Time (PIT) homeless census counts, Housing Inventory Counts (HIC), US Census Bureau data and Bureau of Labor (BLS) statistics data. Plans to end or respond to homelessness and reports on trends in housing availability for states and comparison cities were also reviewed. In addition we conducted interviews with providers from comparison cities.

The Geography of Unsheltered Unaccompanied Youth

By mapping the cities with the highest and lowest rates of unaccompanied unsheltered youth it becomes immediately apparent that there is a geographical pattern: Higher rates of unsheltered homeless youth are a western phenomenon in the United States (see Figure 1). A second pattern can be tracked by comparing the top five highest and lowest ranked cities over time. The cities with the highest rates of unsheltered unaccompanied youth have not changed in the recent past. As shown in Table 1, the three cities with the highest rates, namely Las Vegas, San Jose, and San Francisco, have remained the top three cities since before 2013. Los Angeles has occupied the number 4 spot since 2014. For cities with the lowest rates of unsheltered unaccompanied youth, the list is far more dynamic (Henry et al., 2017). A third pattern relates to a state's share of the homeless youth as a percentage of the total US youth homeless population. In states with higher rates of unsheltered homeless youth, their share of overall youth homelessness in the US is greater. Nevada and Washington have a 3-6% share of the homeless youth population while in California the share is greater than 6%. In the states that are home to the five cities with the lowest rates of unsheltered unaccompanied youth (Michigan, Massachusetts, Missouri, Minnesota, and Georgia), the share of homeless youth make up 1-2.9%. In Kansas (which shares Kansas City with Missouri) the share is less than 1% (Henry et al., 2017).

Table 1: AHAR Major City Rankings of Unsheltered Unaccompanied Youth 2013-2017

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Rankings of COC's in Major Cities With the Highest Rates of Unaccompanied Unsheltered Youth					
San Jose	1	2	3	2	1
Las Vegas	2	3	2	3	2
San Francisco	3	2	1	1	3
Fresno	4	5	5		
Los Angeles	5	4	4	4	4
Long Beach				5	
Seattle					5
Rankings of COC's in Major Cities With the Highest Rates of Unaccompanied Unsheltered Youth					
Omaha	1		1	1	
Charlotte	2				
Cleveland	3	3	5		
Raleigh	4				
Minneapolis	5		3		4
Nashville		1			
Virginia Beach		2	2		
Milwaukee		4			
Indianapolis		5			
Memphis			4	3	
Detroit				2	1
Atlanta				4	5
Miami				5	
Kansas City					3
Boston					2

Source: AHAR Reports 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017

Unique Features of Nevada

Population. Compared to the other communities in this report, Nevada does have some unique features. Aside from the northern communities of Carson City/Reno and the southern city of Las Vegas, Nevada is extremely rural. Seventy five percent of the population of Nevada lives in Las Vegas/Clark County. Approximately 13% live in the Carson City/Reno area and surrounding county. The balance of the population lives in the remainder of the state (US Census Bureau, 2015). Of the communities compared, Clark County was the only destination that is listed in the top 25 most popular places to retire (Wilson, 2017).

Industry. As an internationally renowned vacation destination Las Vegas' primary industry is tourism. In 2017, over 42 million people visited Las Vegas (LVCVA Research Center, 2017). While this provides the economic engine for the city, it also engenders concern that homeless youth can be invisible and indistinguishable from young visitors in the city for vacation. This can have the effect of making outreach more difficult and heighten the vulnerability of homeless youth to predatory behavior. Outside of the metropolitan areas, mining and ranching are prominent industries.

Legalized Prostitution. The presence of legal prostitution is unique to Nevada. State law prohibits licensed brothels in counties with populations over 700,000 persons. It is illegal in Clark, Washoe, Carson City, Pershing, Douglas, Eureka and Lincoln counties which includes Las Vegas, Reno, and Carson City. Even with these limitations the connection between legal prostitution in the state and sex trafficking is a concern particularly for homeless youth who are at heightened risk for trafficking. Of the cities compared in this report, Las Vegas is second (behind Los Angeles) in the total number of calls to the National Human Trafficking Hotline between 2007-2016. Of the comparison cities, Las Vegas was second only to Atlanta in calls per capita to the hotline during that same period (National Human Trafficking Hotline, 2017).

Youth Homelessness. Nevada is the state with the highest rate of unsheltered unaccompanied homeless youth since 2013 (Henry et al., 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, & 2017). Recent Point in Time (PIT) count data for the Southern Nevada region found that over 66% of unaccompanied homeless youth interviewed were living in Clark County prior to becoming homeless and 28.6% of youth interviewed were from out of state. This suggests that while Las Vegas is a community of transplant residents who move to the state rather than being raised in it, over two-thirds of homeless youth surveyed recently were living here prior to being homeless (Blifocus, 2017).

Table 2: Race/Ethnicity for Comparison Cities

	Las Vegas/Clark County, NV	San Jose/Santa Clara & County, CA	San Francisco, CA	Los Angeles City & County, CA	Seattle/King County, WA	Detroit, MI	Boston, MA	Kansas City, Independence, Lee's Summit/Jackson		Minneapolis /Hennepin County, MN	Atlanta Continuum of Care, GA
								MO	KS		
Total Population	1,951,261	1,836,911	4,335,391	12,828,837	3,439,809	4,296,250	4,134,036	1,188,988	846,346	3,154,469	5,268,860
White	60.9%	47.5%	51.7%	52.8%	71.9%	70.1%	77.2%	76.9%	80.7%	80.4%	55.4%
African American	10.5%	2.6%	8.4%	7.1%	5.6%	22.8%	7.9%	15.4%	8.4%	7.7%	32.4%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.7%	0.8%	0.6%	0.7%	1.1%	0.3%	0.3%	0.5%	0.5%	0.7%	0.3%
Asian	8.7%	31.1%	23.2%	14.7%	11.4%	3.3%	6.9%	1.5%	3.3%	5.9%	4.8%
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	0.7%	0.4%	0.7%	0.3%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%
Hispanic Or Latino	29.1%	27.8%	21.7%	44.4%	9.0%	3.9%	9.7%	6.7%	10.3%	5.5%	10.4%

Source: Census Bureau, 2015

Comparison City Demographics

Race and Ethnicity. Two characteristics of census data on race and ethnicity stand out for cities with high rates of unsheltered unaccompanied homeless youth. First, four of the five cities with higher rates also have significantly higher rates of persons who identify as either Hispanic or Latino. Second, cities with high rates of unsheltered homeless youth also have higher rates of the population who identify as Asian than the comparison cities with low rates of unsheltered unaccompanied homeless youth. Two cities with low rates of unsheltered homeless youth, Detroit and Atlanta have significantly higher rates of African American residents (Census Bureau, 2015).

Demographically Las Vegas is home to a population that is nearly 30% Hispanic/Latino, 10.5% African American, and 8.7% Asian according to Census Bureau (2015) estimates. Comparing population census data to Point in Time (PIT) Count data we find that unaccompanied homeless youth had higher rates of youth who reported they were African American (35.7%), somewhat lower rates of youth who reported they were Hispanic/Latino (23.8%), and slightly lower rates of youth who reported they were Asian. The rate of unaccompanied youth in Las Vegas who identified as native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5.9%) and American Indian or Alaskan Native (5.9%) was much higher than the general population. Both are reported by the census data as 0.7% of the population in Las Vegas (Bitfocus, 2017; US Census, 2015). The diverse background of unaccompanied unsheltered homeless youth suggest that services must be sensitive to the cultural differences of youth accessing them.

Youth Age. Major cities with the highest and lowest rates of unsheltered homeless youth do not differ significantly on the percentage of the general population under age 24. In these communities

between 25-30% of the population are under age 20. Between 5.5-7.5% of the population are ages 20-24 (Census Bureau, 2015). While Las Vegas has been deemed a popular retirement destination, the youth population is comparable to other cities we assessed.

Gender. These communities also do not differ significantly in the breakdown of youth and transition age adults who are male and female (Census Bureau, 2015). There is no reliable accessible comparable data of transgender youth and transition age adults that would allow for an examination of community differences.

Other demographic characteristics. Like age and gender, there were also no significant differences across comparison communities in average household or family size (Census Bureau, 2015). No reliable, accessible data to compare demographic differences related to sexual orientation of youth is available.

Comparing Infrastructure to Address Youth Homelessness

As part of our examination of the comparison cities, we reviewed three aspects of how services for homeless youth are being designed including: planning processes, funding strategies, and use of data.

Planning Processes. The 2012 release of *The Federal Framework to End Youth Homelessness* (USICH, 2013) marked the start of heightened efforts to focus on responding to particular challenges associated with being an unaccompanied homeless youth. Working to create a dedicated plan specifically designed to respond to youth homelessness places Las Vegas on the innovative end of planning activities. Most cities we researched did not have a

dedicated comprehensive plan specifically focused on youth homelessness and few have publicly declared the framework of making homelessness rare, brief, one time and equitable as a guiding concept. In April 2018, the mayor of Boston launched an effort to create a dedicated plan to end youth homelessness in their city with plan development currently underway (City of Boston Mayor's Office, 2018). guided by a process that is similar to the planning development process recently completed in Las Vegas.

Providers highlight the importance of recognizing that homeless youth have a unique set of circumstances that require strategic planning of a response designed for, about, and with youth. One provider highlighted how her role as a parent shaped her thinking about the design of services for unaccompanied youth. She described her reflection of what it took to support her child's transition from living at home to successfully launching into the world as an adult. Her recognition of how her son faced challenges and periodically needed support which she was there to provide crystallized her vision of a service delivery system that steps in with those supports for unaccompanied youth as they face the normal challenges of transitioning to adulthood. This developmental approach recognizes homeless youth need support that follows them across time.

Funding Strategies. Another outgrowth of the launch of the *Federal Framework to End Youth Homelessness* (USICH, 2013) has been "...an unprecedented increase in collaboration, both among federal agencies and between the government and locally-driven efforts to end homelessness among unaccompanied youth under age 25 (USICH, 2018a, p. 1)." A product of this new level of collaboration has been the creation of several new competitive mechanisms for funding to address youth homelessness in recognition that communities need additional support to create and test new solutions. We did not find any clear differentiation of communities with low and high rates of unaccompanied youth in their receipt of these newer competitive opportunities. Clark County CoC and its partners have been active in applying for funding to drive innovation and respond to the federal challenge. Examples of the new major funding opportunities in responding to homeless youth include:

The 100 Day Challenge. In 2016 a new initiative, "100 Day Challenges to End Youth Homelessness" was launched that is designed to provide training and technical assistance to accelerate efforts to address youth homelessness in participating communities. Of the comparison cities, Los Angeles participated in the inaugural cohort (2016) and Minneapolis (Hennepin County) participated in the 2017 cohort. The challenges are currently funded by HUD

(USICH, 2018a). The Southern Nevada CoC was invited to participate in the 2018 cohort.

Youth Homelessness Demonstration Projects (YHDP). These grants are HUD funded initiatives that have been awarded competitively to select states to receive 2 years of funding and intensive technical assistance to develop innovative solutions for ending youth homelessness. Two of the cities ranked as having the highest rates of unaccompanied unsheltered youth received funding in the 2016 inaugural cohort including San Francisco and Seattle. Boston, one of the cities ranked as in the top five cities with the lowest rates of unaccompanied unsheltered youth, was awarded a 2017 YHDP grant (USICH, 2018a). As this is a highly competitive grant mechanism, cities are finding that they need to apply multiple years to be competitive. Las Vegas/Clark County CoC has applied but they have yet to be awarded this grant.

Across comparison communities, providers were unified in their awareness that use of existing funds and funding mechanisms is not sufficient to solve the problem. Innovative development and use of funding was highlighted across communities as essential to create needed supports that make youth homelessness rare, brief, one-time and equitable in its response. The few highly competitive federal mechanisms for innovative program and service design and testing is not adequate to address the magnitude of the problem.

Providers highlighted the need for targeted use of different funding strategies as key to redesigning solutions that more adequately address the complexity and scope of the problem. One provider described the value of different funding sources to address different needs. Federal funding, such as HUD funds for instance, provides a solid and predictable foundation for funding services. Private funding, while more episodic in its availability allows for more flexibility in its use. Public private partnerships as a source of funding for the incubation, design, and pilot of new strategies is a new area that cities are cultivating to try new responses.

Use of Data. Comparison cities have been getting increasingly more sophisticated in their use of data to address youth homelessness. Las Vegas, like other cities, has worked to establish coordinated entry and assessment, a process that both streamlines housing assessments to assist in efficient connection of youth to housing and services and captures uniform data on homeless youth. A common perspective of providers is that although youth focused data capture is getting

more sophisticated, data systems are not currently adequate to meet their needs. They highlighted the need for data systems that would aid in writing grants, seeking funding, evaluating programs, advocating for needed services and policies, and making data driven decisions. Among the enhancement providers need:

- Data dashboards that can provide real time access to information
- Data on homeless youth that are not in the service delivery system
- Program evaluation data for evaluation of intervention strategies
- Prevalence and evaluation data of subpopulations of homeless youth such as LGBTQ, transgendered and immigrant youth
- Longitudinal data that tracks outcomes both while and after youth are homeless
- Cost analyses

As communities align their work to meet the federal priorities and local aspirations to end homelessness, there is a realization that current data systems are not adequate to meet benchmarks that have been identified as necessary to meet that goal (see USICH, 2018b for a description of guidance on important benchmarks).

Comparing Availability of Needed Services

A review of available shelter and housing shows that communities with high rates of unsheltered unaccompanied homeless youth have significant challenges with both available beds for youth and affordable housing overall.

Shelter Availability. Data on available beds for

Table 4: 2017 CoC Reported Available Shelter Beds

	Emergency Shelter Beds	Percent of Emergency Beds Available for Total Estimated Homeless Youth	Emergency Shelter + Transitional Housing Beds	Percent of Shelter Beds Available for Total Estimated Homeless Youth
Las Vegas	57	2.8%	168	8.2%
San Jose	12	<1.0%	87	3.4%
San Francisco	96	7.5%	123	9.7%
Los Angeles	228	4.4%	1081	20.9%
Seattle	210	14.0%	534	35.6%

Sources: Housing Inventory Count Report, 2017 and AHAR, 2017

homeless populations are reported annually by CoC's to HUD and are compiled into the Housing Inventory Count (HIC) report. Table 4 shows the number of available youth dedicated shelter beds and the percent of the total unaccompanied homeless youth that these beds could shelter at a given time for the cities with the highest rates of unsheltered homeless youth. According to HIC data (2017) available shelter beds only cover a small percentage of the estimated homeless youth population.

Housing Availability. Availability of affordable housing, and particularly affordable housing accessible to homeless youth and transition age adults is a major concern across communities. The data on housing affordability and availability in Las Vegas demonstrates that we rank at the bottom of the list for the most vulnerable renters. According to data from the National Low Income Housing Coalition (2018) a higher percentage of extremely low income (ELI) households in Las Vegas/Clark County have a severe housing cost burden than ELI households in other communities. Table 5 shows the percentage of severe housing cost burden for the bottom four categories of income earners. As

Table 5: Severe Housing Cost Burden for Households in Comparison Cities 2018

	Las Vegas/Clark County, NV*	San Jose/Santa Clara City & County, CA*	San Francisco, CA*	Los Angeles City and County, CA*	Seattle King County, WA*	Detroit, MI*	Boston, MA	Kansas City, Independence, Lee's Summit/Jackson, MO and KS*	Minneapolis/Hennepin County, MN	Atlanta, GA*
At or Below ELI	84%	70%	70%	81%	72%	74%	61%	67%	66%	79%
31% to 50% AMI	44%	36%	36%	55%	33%	31%	31%	18%	21%	39%
51% to 80% AMI	12%	11%	12%	22%	6%	6%	9%	2%	4%	6%
81% to 100% AMI	1%	2%	3%	7%	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%

*MSAs that have less than the national level of affordable and available units per 100 households at or below the extremely low-income (ELI) threshold

Source: National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2018

Table 6: Affordable and Available Units per 100 Households for Extremely Low Income Renters 2018

	Las Vegas/ Clark County NV*	San Jose/ Santa Clara City & County CA*	San Francisco CA*	Los Angeles City and County CA	Seattle/ King County WA*	Detroit MI*	Boston MA	Kansas City, Independence, Lee's Summit/Jackson MO and KS*	Minneapolis Hennepin County MN	Atlanta Continuum of Care GA*
Number of Units	10	31	30	17	28	31	46	34	40	24

* MSAs with have less than the national level of affordable and available units per 100 ELI households

Source: National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2018

Table 6 shows, Las Vegas also lags far behind other communities in the number of affordable and available units available for ELI renters. With only 10 units available for 100 households Las Vegas ranks last in the nation.

Taken together the data highlights that all communities compared are struggling with a lack of shelter and housing options to meet the need, but no one as much as Las Vegas. While the Southern Nevada CoC and its partners have worked diligently to shift to a rapid rehousing model that streamlines the process of getting youth placed into housing, the reality of a lack of enough viable temporary and permanent housing options stymies successfully helping youth move out of homelessness.

Coupled with the lack of housing availability, providers in cities with high rates of youth homelessness are concerned about where in the city youth housing is placed. The combination of city sprawl and public transportation challenges leaves youth being asked to relocate to areas of the city or surrounding suburbs that they are unfamiliar with and have no support network in. This loss of neighborhood creates a new and difficult barrier for youth and providers to negotiate. For this reason designing a strategy to help homeless youth stay in the area of the city they know is a desired innovation.

The process of helping youth successfully secure housing is an area in which communities are trying to streamline the process. This has been marked by a move toward a Housing First strategy rather than a focus on transitional housing created a need for the adaptation of Housing First and rapid-rehousing (RRH) models to meet the needs of homeless youth. Three challenges of applying this housing strategy to homeless youth have been identified. They include:

- Finding and accessing homeless youth
- Adaptation of assessment and referral to youth
- Negotiation of rental assistance and case management related to housing issues that is designed for youth taking into account their developmental needs as they enter the housing market (Bitfocus, 2016b).

The shift from transitional housing to coordinated entry and rapid rehousing has been negotiated differently across comparison communities. Data on available youth beds show some cities retaining more transitional housing beds than others (HUD, 2017). Southern Nevada has been active in making the shift to rapid rehousing models.

The recognition that homeless youth are inexperienced entrants into the housing market fuels the motivation of providers to strengthen services to help them negotiate the process. Some communities have put in place pilot programs using housing navigators for homeless youth to assist in housing placement.

While streamlining access to existing housing is important to providers, of paramount concern is the lack of enough housing options to address their community's need. Host homes is a strategy that several communities are moving toward as a housing option. Some communities are in early pilot testing of host homes while others are in the process of designing a pilot. Various models of a host home program exist and their development and use is in its early stages. Among providers there is a recognition that innovation in how to develop affordable housing options that are accessible to youth is desperately needed.

Workforce Development. The successful transition into the workforce is another daunting challenge for homeless youth and particularly challenging for unsheltered youth. A major concern of providers is not just that youth gain employment but that they are equipped with skills and employment options that will introduce them to a career trajectory.

Table 7 presents data on minimum wage standards in comparison communities. In some communities minimum wage policies vary can depending on the size of the company, the provision of benefits (particularly health care) and policies related to the receipt of other compensation such as tips. As shown in Table 7, Las Vegas lags behind most communities in wage policies. The lack of affordable housing coupled with a low minimum wage can act together to challenge a youth's ability to afford housing and basic needs. Without a long

Table 7: Current Minimum Wage in Comparison Communities^a

	Las Vegas/ Clark County NV	San Jose/ Santa Clara City & County CA	San Francisco CA	Los Angeles City and County CA	Seattle/ King County WA	Detroit MI	Boston MA	Kansas City, Independence, Lee's Summit/Jackson MO and KS	Minneapolis Hennepin County MN	Atlanta GA
Minimum Wage	\$7.25- \$8.25	\$12.00- \$13.25	\$15.00	\$12.00- \$13.25	\$11.50- \$15.45	\$9.25	\$11.00	\$7.85	\$10.25- \$11.25	\$7.25 - \$13.00

^aWage ranges vary due to policy variations in employer provider benefit or size of employer

term education and employment strategy youth can get stuck in low wage employment.

Innovative partnerships with local corporate partners is one strategy that providers highlight as helping to create a workforce pipeline. In one model of partnership, companies help to create internal training for jobs with the potential for promotions and earnings increase. Other partnerships offer offset of education expenses while working. The goal is to look beyond helping youth get a job to helping them begin their entry into a viable career.

Diversion Programs. Comparison communities were unified in their desire to increase collaborations and funding for diversion programs. Diversion programs exist across service delivery systems. For instance some diversion programs exist to reduce the likelihood youth will enter shelter while others may have the goal of reducing youth's involvement in the juvenile justice system. While different diversion programs have different goals they share a common goal of promoting the well being of youth. Successful diversion of youth from becoming homeless is predicated on strong collaboration across service delivery systems including but not limited to juvenile justice, child welfare, homeless services, education, and behavioral health.

One community is currently exploring the use of one case manager models in which a case manager follows a youth across providers. While complex in design it is an example of a solution that recognizes the difficulty youth may have in negotiating across system and offers the possibility of streamlining collaboration in a manner that is youth centered.

Designing The System We Need: Making Youth Homelessness Rare, Brief, One Time, and Equitable

Armed with a new plan and a movement that continues to grow in membership, Southern Nevada is poised to take on its persistent pattern of leading the nation in unsheltered unaccompanied homeless youth. The development of a plan dedicated to ending youth homelessness shows the region is forward thinking in responding to the problems we face. But the realization of this plan will require bold action driven by an

entrepreneurial spirit to create solutions that do not currently exist. Real movement of the rate of youth homelessness in Southern Nevada is going to require tackling the hardest of the challenges to create a system designed for youth rather than retrofitted to youth.

Rare: Rethinking Homeless Prevention. All the cities profiled in this comparison have the difficult task of needing time and resources to create effective prevention strategies while current need to intervene with youth overwhelms the day. Historically homeless prevention has most often been defined as monetary assistance when eviction is imminent, a definition normed at helping adults who are at risk of homelessness.

True prevention for unaccompanied homeless youth must involve the seamless identification of youth at risk across systems and a funded ability to work across those systems to divert (prevent) the outcome of becoming homeless. For youth who cannot live at home it requires viable options for shelter and housing of the scale that matches the need. In Southern Nevada the data is clear. The shelter and housing availability does not come close to meeting the need. To move to true prevention of homelessness we must find an answer to the question: **What are the scalable, fundable solutions to affordable housing?**

Brief and One Time: Ensuring Accessible Resources

Across cities providers questioned the effectiveness of adapting services designed for homeless adults. They fairly ask the question: **What would the service delivery system look like if it was designed for and with youth?**

Once created that system has to have resources to give. The work that Southern Nevada has done in recent years to begin coordinated entry and intake has been instrumental in streamlining the queue for housing and referral to services. But without sufficient resources the queue cannot be used in the way it is needed. As was noted in this report the successful acquisition of

new federal dollars is essential but not sufficient. A key insight from this analysis was the need to diversify strategies for seeking and using funding. To proactively meet this challenge we must answer the question: **How do we optimize the use of federal dollars and public/private partnerships to fund and evaluate the services we need?**

Essential to the idea that if a youth experiences homelessness it would only happen once is the ability to set youth on a path that would ensure that they can provide for their needs over the long term. Across communities, providers are creating innovative partnerships to ensure education and career opportunities that train and follow youth into the world of work. This should be a particular focus in Southern Nevada where minimum wages are comparatively low and are unlikely to sustain youth who have been homeless. It compels us to ask: **What are the viable local opportunities to partner with industries to create educational and career pipelines?**

In addition, to adequately track progress on the entrance, exits, and brevity of youth homelessness data which can be regularly assessed and included in decision making needs to be available. In addition regular adoption of evaluation across programs is needed to understand the impact programs are making. This would allow for decision making on enhancing and adapting programs to meet target goals. In sum we need to decide: **How can we create the data system enhancements that we know we need in order to measure success?**

Equitable. The comparison of youth homelessness in Southern Nevada to other communities has heightened awareness of two types of equity concerns: geographic equity and equitable access of resources for vulnerable subgroups.

It is clear there is a western phenomenon of higher rates of unsheltered unaccompanied homeless youth. Given that geographic difference a helpful step might be to look for opportunities to craft solutions that can work to respond to youth homelessness in the region. The creation of opportunities to innovate and learn together could accelerate the diffusion of effective strategies shortening their time to impact in our community. Based on the geographic phenomenon we ask: **How can we create opportunities to address the regional problem of high rates of homeless youth without shelter?**

As noted above, we have very little information on the outcomes of different subgroups of homeless youth receiving services in Southern Nevada. This is

particularly concerning given the fact that we know some homeless youth, such as LGBTQ and transgender youth, have heightened vulnerability to homelessness and violence victimization. In addition, comparing youth homeless census data to overall population data in our region suggests that youth of color are overrepresented in the homeless population. This leaves us with the final question: **What immediate steps can we take to enhance data on how vulnerable subgroups of homeless youth are accessing and experiencing services?**

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