

West Metro Homeless Youth Task Force

FINAL REPORT

June 27, 2007

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Executive Summary

Homeless, at-risk and precariously-housed youth who live and attend school in West suburban Hennepin County have few housing options that allow them to remain in their community while they find stable housing and appropriate services. Since 2005, Teens Alone, Inc, a social service provider working directly with these youth, has convened a number of community discussions about this gap in the continuum of services needed to support our community's youth. The first Summit, in November 2005, brought together over 50 concerned professionals and community members to identify a process to address this challenge. A year later, in December 2006, a second Summit was convened to more concretely lay out the steps needed to understand our community's needs and research and recommend an appropriate response. A five month community-driven process emerged from that Summit which has explored the needs of West Metro Homeless Youth and developed responses to those needs. This report contains the record of that process, including key recommendations and an implementation plan developed through that process.

Key Recommendations

- Provide funding to expand capacity of existing providers to offer prevention and early intervention services and support family reunification as appropriate.
- Provide funding for additional case management services to serve homeless and at-risk youth in the West Metro.
- Improve coordination of housing and services in the West Metro.
- Create 30 beds/units of emergency and short term shelter and/or housing options located within the West Metro community.
- Create 20 long-term supportive housing opportunities per year for ten years located throughout the West Metro for homeless youth.
- Ensure that future research on documenting and estimating the extent of homelessness in Minnesota, includes methodology that would permit a more accurate assessment of homeless youth in the rapidly growing suburban metropolitan area.
- Build public awareness of youth homelessness among West Metro policymakers and community members.

Summary of Findings

- **Our homeless youth.** West suburban Hennepin county communities have youth who are homeless¹ and yet continue to attend our schools, go to jobs in our cities, couch-hop and in many other ways struggle to remain in our community. An estimated 65-150 youth are homeless in any given year within the seven school districts of the West Metro communities of Hennepin County

¹ "Homeless youth" means a person 21 years of age or younger who is unaccompanied by a parent or guardian and is without shelter where appropriate care and supervision are available, whose parent or legal guardian is unable or unwilling to provide shelter and care, or who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. State of Minnesota *Runaway and Homeless Youth Act*, MN. Statutes, 256K.45.

included in this community planning process. More than 250 more are estimated to be at risk of homelessness, based on service provider estimates and other relevant reporting sources.²

- **Community provides stability.** Local and national studies have documented that youth succeed best when they remain stable in their schools and receive support from their own communities. Currently, youth in the West Metro who are homeless or at-risk, cannot obtain needed housing and services within their home communities. Instead, they are faced with the choice of leaving their community to obtain such services (and risking school and job stability) or foregoing such services and the support they offer, in order to remain in their home communities and schools.
- **Complex family issues.** Complex family issues and crises are often contributing factors to youth homelessness. Wilder Research reports that:
 - “1 in 2 homeless young people report some type of significant mental health problem;
 - “1 in 2 homeless young people have been physically or sexually mistreated; and
 - “1 in 3 homeless young people have experienced parental neglect”³

Providing assistance and services to homeless youth often means engaging the entire family in services ranging from family counseling, conflict resolution, child protective services, health care, employment, housing, etc.

- **Prevention services.** The structure of the service system in the West Metro works effectively to identify and engage youth who are at risk of homelessness or experiencing episodic homelessness. However, the system needs to expand capacity to respond to the increasing needs and demand through additional services. Existing service providers do not have the funding to expand their staff to respond to this growing need.
- **Outreach.** One gap in the West Metro homeless youth continuum of services is outreach, with a particular emphasis on times outside of normal business hours including at night and on weekends. This is often the time when youth are in crisis and need immediate shelter and/or services. The Streetworks Collaborative recently received funding from the Minneapolis Foundation for an outreach worker that has 20 hours per week dedicated to the West Metro and may begin to partially address this gap. Enhancing these types of services in the suburbs is also a stated priority of the larger county plan to end homelessness, called Heading Home Hennepin.
- **Shelter and emergency housing.** Youth experiencing homelessness in the West suburbs have no shelter or housing options that would permit them to remain in their community. Often, a youth will have a need for short-term shelter that provides a respite and space to address the precipitating crisis that led to homelessness and provide an opportunity to participate in services. For many suburban youth, remaining in the communities in which they are comfortable and feel safe is more important than receiving housing and services from providers in an urban context with which they are unfamiliar.

Currently access to shelter and housing options require these suburban youth to traverse great distances – geographic and cultural – to secure such services within the city of Minneapolis. Transportation is an additional obstacle to youth in securing services, housing and remaining in school. And as our community experiences increased youth homelessness, urban programs have also reached their capacity.

² See pages 6-7 of this report for a more detailed discussion of estimates of the number of homeless youth in the West Metro.

³ “Overview of homelessness in Minnesota 2006”, page 31 Wilder Research, March 2007

- **Long-term housing with services.** Long-term housing with services is appropriate for many of our youth who do not have a stable home to return to and who need additional supervision and services to succeed. This supportive housing would combine affordable long-term housing with services to help youth learn independent living skills and receive other case management services. This housing would be targeted to youth who can benefit from the proximity of their school, jobs, family and community to become stable and succeed in these areas but who need more supervision and support than a market-based housing option could provide.
- **Continuum of services.** Homeless youth need a continuum of services to address a range of needs and flexibility to respond to changes in needs and demand.
- **Information and resource coordination.** The array of existing services and providers are neither well known nor well coordinated among each other and other agencies that could refer youth, resulting in lost opportunities to serve youth and their families. Greater sharing of information and resources would help make the existing system more effective for youth and their families as well as provide an opportunity to identify gaps in needed services.
- **Tracking and documenting youth homelessness.** There are no common criteria used to define and track homeless youth in the West Metro. Each agency compiles the number of youth served and number experiencing homelessness differently. Without consistent methodology and coordinated tracking, it is difficult to accurately assess the number of homeless youth and develop a targeted response. Tracking is also needed to ascertain the impact of immigrant communities that may experience obstacles in accessing services because of lack of information, and language and cultural barriers.
- **Alignment with county and state efforts to end homelessness.** The State of Minnesota and Hennepin county have each established clear policy, goals and milestones for ending homelessness. The final recommendations that emerged from this community process, support the findings and conclusions from each of those processes.

Background

Purpose and outcomes

Homelessness among teens and young adults is an ongoing problem throughout Minnesota and in the West Metro communities of Hennepin County. A report by the Wilder Foundation in March 2007⁴ found that “youth are increasingly on the streets” instead of in shelters and that their overall “distress” has worsened, marked by increased reports of mental illness and cognitive disabilities. In the West Metro communities, homelessness has appeared more frequently and with more complexities than in the recent past.

Stemming from two Community Summits organized by Teens Alone on behalf of the informal West Metro Homeless Youth Task Force, a Steering Committee formed to meet five times over five months in early 2007 (February – June 2007) to develop a community-driven plan for creating housing options and supportive services for West Metro homeless youth. This report is a summary of that process and the recommendations arising from it.

Scope and process

Teens Alone, Inc., a social service provider serving at-risk and homeless teens in five West Metro school districts, initiated this process. Social service providers, school districts, police, homeless

⁴ “Overview of homelessness in Minnesota 2006”, page 3, Wilder Research, March 2007

youth housing providers, philanthropy and other community members came together to act as a Steering Committee to research, analyze and recommend responses to the needs of homeless youth. The Steering Committee outlined a process to study and understand the housing, shelter and service needs of homeless and at-risk youth in the West Metro, through “five meetings in five months”. The original outline of this process (which was later changed to include a meeting on “storytelling” to compile a profile of West Metro homeless youth) is included as Attachment E. The group discussed estimated numbers of homeless youth in the West Metro, housing models and options, service models and options, and through a “storytelling” session, compiled a profile of our homeless youth and their housing and shelter needs. The Steering Committee met five times from February through June 2007. A list of individuals (and their affiliations) who participated in this process is detailed in Attachment A. Anne Mavity, Managing Consultant with Fieldstone Alliance, was hired to help design and facilitate the meetings and to draft the final report.

Geographic scope

The geographic parameters are discussed in terms of school districts, as opposed to city boundaries (several school districts cross over many city boundaries). The following school districts comprise the geographic focus of this process: St. Louis Park, Wayzata, Orono, Hopkins, Eden Prairie, Minnetonka, and Westonka. Youth whose school district or last known address is outside the geographic focus are not intended to be prohibited from benefiting from any services that may result from these recommendations. While each of these communities is distinct, together they share an identity as “West Metro” and the challenges facing homeless and at-risk youth in these communities are similar and overlapping.

Definition and Estimate of Homeless Youth in the West Metro

Accurate estimates on the number of homeless youth in the seven school districts of the West Metro communities involved in this process are difficult to ascertain. Service providers, police, food shelves, health clinics and schools all report interactions with homeless youth. However, one discovery of this process was that each agency defines “homeless youth” differently, and most do not have any system in place to document or track these youth.

For the purposes of this community process, the Steering Committee is using the definition of “homeless youth” used by the State of Minnesota⁵:

““Homeless youth” means a person 21 years of age or younger who is unaccompanied by a parent or guardian and is without shelter where appropriate care and supervision are available, whose parent or legal guardian is unable or unwilling to provide shelter and care, or who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.”

The discussions identified several issues that complicate the process to estimate the number of homeless youth in the West Metro. These include (but are not limited to):

- The definition of homelessness used can be different for each reporting entity
- There are differences in the time period for reporting (point in time, monthly, annual, school year calendar, etc.)
- There is duplication in numbers across organizations (schools report, Teens Alone report, police report, etc.)
- Youth rarely self-report themselves as homeless, and are often fearful to identify themselves as homeless.
- While 18-21 year olds are defined in the affordable housing community as “youth”, in need of housing targeted to homeless youth, this age group is not uniformly identified by schools, police, etc as “youth”

⁵ *Runaway and Homeless Youth Act*, MN. Statutes, 256K.45

- Geographic borders, including school district parameters are not recognized by youth who may travel across these “communities” seamlessly. Thus, youth may be counted by entities within one district even while identifying themselves as from another district.

Wilder Research states that “an estimated 550-650 Minnesota youth 17 and under experience homelessness” *on any given night*.⁶ In 1992 and in 1993 the Research Triangle Institute (a national research firm) found that 2.8% of the general youth population in the United States had experienced homelessness during the past year.” In a later study, by the same authors, this figure was revised to 5%. (This is based on a survey of 6,496 youth between the ages of 12 and 17)⁷. Using such estimates would roughly suggest that approximately 644 youth throughout the seven school districts in the scope of this report have experienced homelessness, as noted in the chart below.

Number of Youth (K-12) by School District 2004 Census ⁸		Calculation	Estimate based on nationally recognized "2.8%" formula
Eden Prairie	10,897	Total school district census divided evenly by 13 (K-12 grades/year) then multiplied by six (7th grade through 12th grade) then multiplied by the 2.8% nationally used estimate.	141
Hopkins	9,104		118
Orono	2,676		35
St. Louis Park	5,081		66
Wayzata	10,101		131
Minnetonka	9,038		117
Westonka	2,911		38
TOTAL ESTIMATED HOMELESS YOUTH			644

The Steering Committee also used an informal survey of school social workers from each of the seven school districts engaged in this community process for an estimate and concluded that a minimum total of 65 teens were described as “homeless” in the past school year. This estimate is similar to the information compiled by Teens Alone, Inc. which currently works in just five of the seven districts comprising this process: Teens Alone estimates that of the approximately 400 youth they served last year, 62 were homeless while dozens more were “at-risk” of losing their housing.

Based on these varying sources and approaches, the Steering Committee has concluded that it is probable that a minimum of 65-150 youth are homeless in any given year in the seven school districts of the West Metro communities of Hennepin County included in this community planning process. More than 250 more are estimated to be at risk of homelessness, based on service provider estimates and police truancy reports.

This process also led to recommendation included in this report that improvements in defining and tracking homeless youth in the West Metro is needed to ensure that appropriate services are designed and delivered to respond to those needs.

⁶ “Overview of homelessness in Minnesota 2006”, page 29, Wilder Research, March 2007

⁷ Ringwalk, C., Greene, J.M., Robertson, M., McPheeters, M. (1998). The prevalence of homelessness among adolescents in the United States, *Am J Public Health*, 88; 1325-1329..

⁸ Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Data Integration Division, Small Area Estimates Branch

Alignment with Hennepin County and Statewide efforts

The recommendations outlined in this report dovetail with efforts and recommendations documented in county and statewide efforts to end homelessness. The West Metro Homeless Youth Task Force process -- and this report -- help spotlight the needs of West suburban Hennepin homeless youth within the larger framework of system changes and policy efforts currently underway to address and end homelessness in Hennepin county and throughout Minnesota.

State of Minnesota Business Plan to End Long-Term Homelessness: In March 2004, a broadly based working group established by the legislature at the request of Governor Tim Pawlenty completed a business plan to end long-term homelessness by 2010. The plan calls for multi-disciplinary (housing, human services, corrections), multi-sector (government, business, nonprofit), and multi-jurisdictional (federal, state, and local) strategies to address long-term homelessness. The State has outlined a plan that intends to provide housing and appropriate support service options to those experiencing long-term homelessness -- single adults, unaccompanied youth and families with children -- so they can be successfully housed over the long term.

Hennepin County – City of Minneapolis Plan to End Homelessness: Heading Home Hennepin was written in 100 days in mid-2006 by a 70-member commission representing the federal, state, and local governments, business, non-profit, faith, and philanthropic communities, along with homeless and formerly homeless citizens. The plan lays out six broad goals, 30 recommendations and more than 50 action steps aimed at developing a system so all people facing homelessness in Minneapolis and Hennepin County will have access to safe, decent, and affordable housing and the resources and supports needed to sustain it. The plan attacks the problem of homelessness from a variety of fronts – from preventing people from becoming homeless to better outreach on the streets that would help homeless people access services and attain housing. The plan has specific objectives and benchmarks to measure success (see Attachment D). The Hennepin County Board of Commissioners voted to approve this plan in November 2006 and the Minneapolis City Council approved it in December 2006.

Implementing the recommendations that emerged from the community-driven process of the West Metro Homeless Youth Task Force in 2007 will build upon the momentum and efforts of both the State and Hennepin county plans to end homelessness. Collaboration with these groups, as well as with other similar groups such as the Homeless Youth Action Group (HYAG)⁹, will be critical in realizing the recommendations in this report. As noted in the chart below, nearly all the recommendations align with the goals outlined in Heading Home Hennepin:

West Metro Steering Committee Report Recommendations	Heading Home Hennepin Benchmarks
Provide funding to expand capacity of existing providers to offer early intervention services and support family reunification as appropriate.	Goal One, Prevent Homelessness Identify new conflict resolution and service sites for youth. 2007: Explore potential sites, service models, and cost.
Provide funding for additional case	Goal Two, Provide Coordinated Outreach;

⁹ The Homeless Youth Action Group (HYAG) was established in 2004 to improve outcomes for unaccompanied youth that are currently experiencing homelessness and to work together to prevent and end youth homelessness in Hennepin County. The group is comprised of community youth service providers and Hennepin County staff and provides annual progress updates to the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners.

<p>management services to serve homeless and at-risk youth in the West Metro.</p>	<p>Create suburban youth outreach teams to serve 300 youth. 2007- 2009: Establish outreach workers in Northern, Western, and Southern suburban Hennepin to serve 300 youth. ----- Goal Three, Develop Housing Opportunities; Increase case management to serve an additional 90 youth per year. 2007: Serve 90 additional youth through case management.</p>
<p>Improve coordination of housing and services in the West Metro.</p>	<p>Goal Four, Improve Service Delivery; Develop an inventory or “map” of all services available to families with children, unaccompanied youth, and single adults. There should be “no wrong door” to accessing services. 2007: Identify lead entities; begin planning process, and access resources needed. Increase the availability of drop-in services for homeless youth. 2007: Identify funding (goal to expand in 2008)</p>
<p>Create 30 beds/units of emergency and short term shelter and/or housing options located within the West Metro community.</p>	<p>Goal Three, Develop Housing Opportunities; Produce 910 supportive housing opportunities and 60 shelter beds for youth. 40% of the housing opportunities will be new units, 60% will be achieved through “Host Homes” and Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBR). 30% of total opportunities will be targeted to long-term homeless youth. 2007: 90 housing opportunities (new units and TBR), 10 host homes, 30 shelter beds (Mpls).</p>
<p>Create 20 long-term supportive housing opportunities per year for ten years located throughout the West Metro for homeless youth.</p>	<p>Goal Three, Develop Housing Opportunities Produce 910 supportive housing opportunities and 60 shelter beds for youth. 40% of the housing opportunities will be new units, 60%</p>

	<p>will be achieved through “Host Homes” and Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBR). 30% of total opportunities will be targeted to long-term homeless youth.</p> <p>2007: 90 housing opportunities (new units and TBR), 10 host homes, 30 shelter beds (Mpls).</p>
<p>Ensure that future research to document and estimate homelessness in Minnesota, includes methodology that would permit a more accurate assessment of homeless youth in the rapidly growing suburban metropolitan area.</p>	<p>Goal Six, Implement System Improvements Develop baseline data and evaluation measures. Prepare annual evaluation.</p> <p>2007 – 2009: Develop process for collecting baseline data. Evaluate benchmarks and report progress annually.</p>
<p>Build public awareness of youth homelessness among West Metro policymakers and community members.</p>	

Attachments

Attachment A – List of Participants

West Metro Homeless Youth Task Force

Steering Committee Participants

Connie	Apple	Orono School District resident
Carol	Bergenstahl	Communities in Collaboration (WSD)
Rick	Birno	City of St. Louis Park and Recreation Department
Barb	Brooks	Hopkins-Minnetonka Family Resource Center
Imogen	Davis	Minnetonka Family Services Collaborative
Wendy	Epstein	Teens Alone
Nadia	Facey	Park Nicollet Foundation
Mary Jo	Fischer	Wayzata Schools
Nancy	Holden	PROP
Beth	Holger	State of Minnesota
Kerry	Holtmeier Hallee	Eden Prairie FamiLink Resource Center
Jaime	Kambiri	The Link
Madeline	Kastler	Office of Commissioner Gail Dorfman
Lydia	Kihm	Teens Alone
Beth	Knoblauch	Teens Alone
Katie	Lee	Hopkins Public Schools
Theresa	Morey	Office of Commissioner Linda Koblick
Larry	Nelson	Point Northwest
Monica	Nilsson	Hearthstone
Chris	Ochocki	Teens Alone
Judy	Paul	Hennepin County/Heading Home Hennepin
Wendy	Paulsen	West Suburban Teen Clinic
Amanda	Smalling	West Suburban Teen Clinic
Craig	Swedburg	Hennepin County
Sarah	Taylor-Nanista	Streetworks Collaborative
Cathy	ten Broeke	Heading Home Hennepin
Kim	Vohs	Interfaith Outreach
Rob	Ward	Teens Alone
Leah	Weycker	Westonka Family Services Collaborative
Anne	Mavity	FACILITATOR - Fieldstone Alliance

Attachment B – Storytelling: Narratives of our Youth

West Metro Homeless Youth Steering Committee

April 25, 2007

Storytelling

“There is no one who watches over me every day.”

All the names used are fictitious to protect the privacy of the people described below.

Johnny is an 18 year old junior in high school and was identified by a school counselor. He had been living with his grandparents together with his younger brother. The grandparents had recently decided to move out of state and felt that the boys could live on their own now. The grandparents gave the boys six weeks notice of the move. Johnny was a successful student who saw school as a very important place in his life, the hub of his social connections, and he did not want to leave, even though social service staff outlined services that would be available in Minneapolis through a variety of youth housing programs. In addition to basic housing needs, Johnny needed help to learn basic independent living skills like how to go food shopping, how to find an apartment, etc.

Short-term shelter needed, in addition to full range of services. Probably could handle independent living with supports. (Update: Johnny currently has two jobs and is going to school in his community – he recently graduated from high school)

George is a sophomore and recently broke up with his girlfriend when he was referred by a school counselor to a social service agency. His relationship with his girlfriend was the only relationship he had and the break-up was traumatizing for him. Generally, George did well in school, played on the football team and did other sports. At the time he was referred to services, he had been kicked out of home by his mother whose partner was very abusive to him. He was living with friends and coach-hopping. His girlfriend’s parents would not let him stay there any longer in any case. His brother lived with a teacher. Occasionally, George was able to sneak into his Mom’s house to sleep, eat and clean-up. George was getting “past curfew” tickets from the police, and starting to get into trouble.

Range of shelter options needed. Would not have been successful living independently.

Jeremy is a 14 year old boy who likes to dress “in an alternative manner”, acts anti-social, was clearly depressed and was not sleeping well. His Mom had recently lost her job and had been evicted. When Jeremy’s Mom found housing, it was an hour away from school and both Mom and son had been commuting that distance for awhile. However, she could not pick him up until long after school was out and each day he wandered the streets, with no place to go after school. Jeremy had few friends and felt hopeless and scared. He did not want to change schools and talked about running away but had no place to go.

A drop-in center would address his after-school needs; short-term shelter options also needed.

Talia is a junior in high school who has done all the rights things – AP classes, sports teams, job, etc.. Her parents have pushed her to succeed and she has done well, is college-bound, and excels in athletics. Her Coach referred her to a social service agency because of stress and anxiety that was arising from her own questioning of her own sexual orientation. When she finally “came out” to her parents as a lesbian, there was lots of tension at home and her parents kicked her out unless she would become “straight.” Instead, she slept in cars and

couch-hopped with older friends. Her parents refused to work with agency and Talia refused to go into Minneapolis for housing and other services, as she was very motivated to stay in school and continue her college-prep courses. She eventually found a friend's sibling to stay with for the summer but needed housing for her senior year in high school.

Supported independent living could be successful along with short term housing options.

Eric's problems were evident by the time he was 10 years old. He was a challenge to his mom, school counselors and others who tried to help. By the time he was 16 years old, Eric had already unsuccessfully been placed in an independent living program but was not ready for it and left. Together with his single mom and younger brothers, Eric had a whole lifetime of unstable living. He was a difficult, challenging kid with many mental health issues and just couldn't keep it all together – school, job – on a regular basis. Most recent information on Eric is that he dropped out of high school and has no stable housing.

Residential housing environment/treatment center could provide needed structure and therapeutic mental health services.

Madison was a senior in high school and looking forward to graduation. However, in the Spring before graduation, she found that she was short of credits to graduate. Madison was the youngest child in a family in which her older siblings were nearly 15-20 years older than her. Her parents were involved community members and financially well-off. They had been planning their retirement, stating quite simply that they were done raising kids, and were very disappointed that Madison was not going to graduate. Despite Madison's need to complete her schooling, her parents sold their house, moved south and left her behind. She was able to keep the expensive SUV car her parents had purchased for her and often slept in her car or couch-hopped with friends. Her arrival to pick-up food for herself at the food shelf created an oddly juxtaposed response from staff who expressed showers of thanks and gratitude to her for the recent large financial donation her parents had made to the food shelf.

Independent living services and housing could provide the short-term support needed to remain stable enough to graduate.

Larissa was referred for case management services by a Hennepin County nurse after she became pregnant at 18 years old. Larissa had just graduated from high school and was living with her boyfriend's parents since she had been put on bed rest a month previously. The boyfriend's parents had said that once the baby was born, Larissa and her boyfriend would need to find somewhere else to stay but they didn't know where to go. Adding to the difficulty was the fact that Larissa did not want to engage in any planning discussions about her options, instead choosing to hope for the best and see what comes. In the end, they could not find any kind of housing for which they could qualify or afford and were living in their car without the baby.

Assistance with first and last month's rent to secure housing as well as in-home services could provide the support Larissa and her boyfriend need to live independently and support their baby.

Devon was a 20 year old young man whose family was in constant conflict, including that his Mom was in the process of getting a divorce from his step-father. At one point, the police were called to his family's apartment and he was ordered out of the building. He had a great economic case worker at Hennepin County who served as an advocate for steering him to appropriate services. Devon did everything right – he went through every hoop to find a job,

emergency assistance, and security deposit for an apartment. Since he did not have a car, he needed to find affordable housing near his job. After exhaustive searching and rental applications, he was unable to secure an affordable apartment. Most apartments cost around \$800 and he could not afford that cost. He was couch-hopping or walking the streets at night until PROP put him up in a hotel room for several nights. Eventually he moved in with his mother again but no one involved envisions that as a long-term option.

Rental assistance to secure and maintain affordable housing could be sufficient to help Devon live independently and end the cycle of homelessness.

Caitlin is a Junior in high school. Her parents died and she has been staying with her older sister. Now, her sister has said that Caitlin must leave within a month. She has nowhere to go but wants to stay in school and with her friends.

Transitional housing could provide the supports to help Caitlin learn to live independently.

Carlos left home because of his mom's drinking. He stayed with friends that live in another school district and had no transportation to get to school. The transportation challenges quickly resulted in him dropping out of school.

Needs emergency and long term housing and ongoing chemical health counseling.

John and his parents all use drugs. When his parents were out of town, the house was trashed and he was kicked out. At first, he stayed at the Bridge for Runaway Youth. Since then he has been couch hopping.

Needs emergency and long-term housing and ongoing chemical health counseling.

Josie's Mom has no money and the whole family lives in a car. Josie and her siblings often couch-hop with friends.

The whole family needs affordable housing and support services; Josie could benefit from emergency shelter and long-term supportive housing.

Aziza is a 19 year old girl suffering from mental health issues. Her parents live out of state; her father has been suffering from a terminal disease since she was in second grade. Aziza filed with the court to take away her Mom's parental rights, which were granted. She has been couch-hopping and staying with friends. She often checks herself into the hospital with "thoughts of suicide" because she knows she will have a bed for three days. She cannot hold down a job or succeed at other independent living challenges.

Residential mental health services that combine housing and services would help provide stability. Long-term housing solution needed.

Emma does not want to leave her school or her community. This is her third time homeless in the past two years. She has been couch-hopping and was offered services through Minneapolis-based programs but feels safest living in her own community.

Tina is a sophomore from a family dealing with financial stress. She was sexually abused by her step-father and refuses to live at home. She has younger siblings at home as well. She has been couch-hopping, staying with friends whose parents travel quite a bit and therefore provide little supervision. She is becoming truant from school and feels she has no options.

Short-term shelter and family counseling could provide support and help keep her in school.

Other stories:

- A 21 year old girl with a low IQ. Lives with relatives and couch hops.
- Boy automatically kicked out when he turned 18.
- Girl kicked out and yet commutes to school from Stillwater.
- Father deported. Daughter alone.
- 17 year old Cuban-American girl. Mom is an alcoholic and drug addict. Lives with a family friend who is rarely home.
- Girl raped and impregnated by stepfather. Couch hopping.
- 17 year old African-American with chemical health and financial issues. Has been to St. Joseph's. Currently living with sports coach.
- 15 year old Korean-Caucasian. Lots of neglect, conflict, and physical violence. Couch hopping among relatives.
- Hispanic boy. Father deported. Homeless

Attachment C – Excerpt: Description of Continuum of Homeless and Runaway Youth Services

March 2007 Minnesota Department of Human Services report draft

Continuum of Homeless and Runaway Youth Services in Minnesota

The state of Minnesota does have an existing continuum of care for runaway and homeless youth mainly provided through non-profit community agencies. Although it is a very good continuum of services it does have some gaps within it and unfortunately is not funded to the extent that it could serve all of the youth who need services. The following is a description of the current continuum of services for runaway and homeless youth.

Street and community outreach and drop-in program. Youth drop-in centers must provide walk-in access to crisis intervention and ongoing supportive services including one-to-one case management services on a self-referral basis. Street and community outreach programs must locate, contact, and provide information, referrals, and services to homeless youth, youth at risk of homelessness, and runaways. Information, referrals, and services provided may include, but are not limited to:

- (1) family reunification services;
- (2) conflict resolution or mediation counseling;
- (3) assistance in obtaining temporary emergency shelter;
- (4) assistance in obtaining food, clothing, medical care, or mental health counseling;
- (5) counseling regarding violence, prostitution, substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, and pregnancy;
- (6) referrals to other agencies that provide support services to homeless youth, youth at risk of homelessness, and runaways;
- (7) assistance with education, employment, and independent living skills;
- (8) aftercare services;
- (9) specialized services for highly vulnerable runaways and homeless youth, including teen parents, emotionally disturbed and mentally ill youth, and sexually exploited youth; and
- (10) homelessness prevention.

Family Reunification Services: Family Reunification Services can vary but they typically provide one or more of the following services to families and youth who are in conflict: counseling, conflict resolution skills building, case management, emergency/respice shelter and referral services.

Case Management: Case management must be a collaborative effort with each household, and must include the following activities:

- (1) Assessment-identify, with a person, their strengths, resources, barriers, and needs in the context of their local environment.
- (2) Plan development-develop an individualized service plan, with specific outcomes, based on the assessment.
- (3) Connection-obtain for the person the necessary services, treatments and supports.
- (4) Monitoring-evaluate with the person the necessary services, treatments and supports.
- (5) Coordination-bring together all of the service providers in order to integrate services and assure consistency of service plans.
- (6) Monitoring-evaluate with the person their progress and needs, and adjust the plan as needed.
- (7) Personal advocacy-intercede on behalf of the person or group to ensure access to timely and appropriate services.

Emergency shelter program. (a) Emergency shelter programs must provide homeless youth and runaways with referral and walk-in access to emergency, short-term residential care. The program shall provide homeless youth and runaways with safe, dignified shelter, including private shower facilities, beds, and at least one meal each day; and shall assist a runaway with reunification with the family or legal guardian when required or appropriate.

(b) The services provided at emergency shelters may include, but are not limited to:

- (1) family reunification services;

- (2) individual, family, and group counseling;
- (3) assistance obtaining clothing;
- (4) access to medical and dental care and mental health counseling;
- (5) education and employment services;
- (6) recreational activities;
- (7) advocacy and referral services;
- (8) independent living skills training;
- (9) aftercare and follow-up services;
- (10) transportation; and
- (11) homelessness prevention.

Host Home Program:

A program that provides temporary shelter or longer term housing for youth by connecting a youth with adults in the community who can take the youth into their home and care for them. Sometimes these host homes will receive a stipend or per diem for providing a youth with housing.

Transitional living programs. Transitional living programs are time limited and must help homeless youth and youth at risk of homelessness to find and maintain safe, dignified housing. The program may also provide rental assistance and related supportive services, or refer youth to other organizations or agencies that provide such services. Services provided may include, but are not limited to:

- (1) educational assessment and referrals to educational programs;
- (2) career planning, employment, work skill training, and independent living skills training;
- (3) job placement;
- (4) budgeting and money management;
- (5) assistance in securing housing appropriate to needs and income;
- (6) counseling regarding violence, prostitution, substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, and pregnancy;
- (7) referral for medical services or chemical dependency treatment;
- (8) parenting skills;
- (9) self-sufficiency support services or life skill training;
- (10) aftercare and follow-up services; and
- (11) homelessness prevention.

Permanent Supportive Housing: Affordable housing linked to supportive services for residents, including employment support, mental health, chemical health, life skills training, and social services. Permanent supportive housing is designed to help those experiencing homelessness or those precariously housed in substandard or high-rent apartments obtain and maintain permanent housing. There is no time limit for permanent supportive housing for tenants. Participants agree to comply with all eligibility criteria and tenancy obligations. Programs must provide or assist in linking to supportive services for tenants. An indefinite rental subsidy is required to be provided by the housing program to tenants. The tenants are required to pay a rental equal to a flat fee or a percentage of their income. Supportive housing cover a wide variety but generally include the following basic services:

- (8) a private space with a lockable door,
- (9) a safe and barrier-free environment,
- (10) monitoring and emergency response, and
- (11) at least one meal a day or cooking/kitchen spaces available to tenants.

Youth Housing Program:

Longer term housing for youth that provides some type of rental subsidy and support services.

Permanent Housing: Housing offered to tenants or home owners in the community.

Attachment D – Heading Home Hennepin Benchmarks

2007 Benchmarks for Heading Home Hennepin

Goal One: Prevent Homelessness

Expand Hennepin County FHPAP to serve 3600 households/year.

2007: Expand service by 540 households (2140 total)

Identify culturally competent community providers to assist in distribution.

Improve the discharging of youth exiting foster care, juvenile corrections, and child protection, and in-patient treatment.

2007: Develop improved discharge planning policy and procedures and identify a Youth Discharge Coordinator.

Improve the discharging of adults exiting public institutions including corrections, hospitals, in-patient treatment, and the military.

2007: Develop improved discharge planning policy and procedures and identify an Adult Discharge Coordinator. Develop procedure to share information between the criminal justice and social service systems.

Provide assistance to help maintain and stabilize family relationships to support the offender upon release and/or create a network of support for ex-offenders without a supportive family structure.

2007: Identify existing resources and do a needs assessment about gaps in resources.

Assess ways current practices support and hinder healthy family/offender relationships while someone is on correctional supervision.

Identify new conflict resolution and service sites for youth.

2007: Explore potential sites, service models, and cost.

Expand the Parent Support Outreach Project to families with adolescent children at risk of child protection.

2007: Design expanded program.

Develop community partnerships to ensure that recently resettled refugees and asylees do not become homeless and those that are currently homeless attain stable housing.

2007: Establish partnership and identify funding.

Goal Two: Provide Coordinated Outreach

Develop a Hennepin County Outreach Collaborative to design, implement, track and evaluate the 24/7 dispatch/outreach system.

2007: Develop the collaborative and design 24/7 system and protocols.

Establish a pilot to focus year one efforts around “hot spots” established in collaboration with the Minneapolis Police Department to respond to non-criminal activity.

Support continued funding of Assertive Community Treatment teams and add additional teams based on determined need for singles, families, and youth.

2007: Conduct needs assessment.

Request that cities examine local ordinances to ensure that they are not criminalizing homelessness (outreach will reduce need/use of such ordinances).

2007: Identify appropriate city staff throughout the metro area to work with partners on this issue.

Evaluation of ordinances previously identified by community partners (Decriminalization Work Group and others) as criminalizing homelessness.

Strengthen the current Medical Respite Program.

2007: Create a Medical Respite Program Advisory Committee to design improved respite system and develop benchmarks.

Strengthen mental health services for people experiencing homelessness

2007: Build stronger collaborative among mental health providers both public and private. Assess needs and gaps.

Expand Native American medical outreach program and coordinate it with housing and “housing first” services.

2007: Support street case management and physician care for outreach to Native Americans and coordinate efforts with housing organizations. Target efforts at highest users of emergency systems. House 10 LTH Native Americans.

Create suburban youth outreach teams to serve 300 youth.

2007- 2009: Establish outreach workers in Northern, Western, and Southern suburban Hennepin to serve 300 youth.

Goal Three: Develop Housing Opportunities

Produce 910 supportive housing opportunities and 60 shelter beds for youth. 40% of the housing opportunities will be new units, 60% will be achieved through “Host Homes” and Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBR). 30% of total opportunities will be targeted to long-term homeless youth.

2007: 90 housing opportunities (new units and TBR), 10 host homes, 30 shelter beds (Mpls).

Produce 2,000 new housing opportunities for single adults. 40% will be new units. 60% of these opportunities will be developed through the use of existing housing stock and rental subsidies. Expanded use of the “housing first” model will also be applied. 50 % of total opportunities will be targeted to long-term homeless.

2007: 75 new units and 175 TBR for Long-Term Homeless.

Produce 2,090 new housing opportunities for families. 40% of these will be new units and 60% will be scattered site apartments with tenant based rental assistance. 30% of total opportunities will be targeted to long-term homeless families.

2007: 90 new units and 300 TBR for both LTH and STH.

Ensure the preservation of current affordable and supportive housing, including public housing.

2007-2016: -Track the gain and loss of affordable and supportive housing.

-Support the work of the Stewardship Council.

-Identify funding sources to preserve current affordable and supportive housing.

-Identify barriers/obstacles that impede the production of or sustainability of affordable and supportive housing.

Work with cities to identify housing opportunity sites in Hennepin County

2007: Establish a partnership with municipalities to develop procedures to identify housing opportunities.

Engage suburban staff and mayors in dialogue about opportunity sites.

Encourage municipalities to promote higher density affordable and mixed-income housing along their transit corridors.

2007 - 2008: County will collaborate with municipalities to hold Transit Oriented Development forums.

Funders will consider amending their criteria to give priority to development close to transit.

Change state and county program criteria to award additional points in competitive funding processes for homeless projects in non-impacted areas (Minneapolis funding resources are already targeted to non-impacted areas.)

2007: Review criteria for allocation of housing funds

Develop a \$1 million annual Housing Risk Pool and a "point of contact" for landlords.

2007: Explore funding sources.

Coordinate efforts with existing tenant education providers to reduce utilization of risk pool.

2007: No benchmark for 07

2008: Mandatory tenant training for all tenants potentially supported by this fund.

Pilot a family community support program that will provide a family with the support of a local faith community when they move into a neighborhood.

2007: Identify a community lead for this project and identify diverse faith communities throughout Hennepin County interested in participating. The focus will be on communities where families are being placed into scattered or single-site housing within that community

Increase case management to serve an additional 90 youth per year.

2007: Serve 90 additional youth through case management.

Expand Hennepin County's Rapid Exit Program.

2007: Expand screening and referral process for singles and high-need families. 50 additional "high needs" families served. 125 additional singles and older youth served.

Expand on existing housing inventory models to develop the most effective tool for connecting people experiencing homelessness in Hennepin County to appropriate housing.

2007: Identify lead entities, secure funding, and design Hennepin County model.

Request that municipalities reflect in their Comprehensive Plans a commitment to examine their zoning codes and ordinances concerning small units, supportive housing restrictions, SRO housing, etc. to ensure a higher flexibility of housing options.

2007: Coordinate Comprehensive Plan efforts to include commitments to reduce regulatory barriers. Provide technical assistance to cities as needed.

Goal Four: Improve Service Delivery

Open a daytime "Opportunity Center" where people experiencing homelessness can connect with multiple services in one location.

2007: Identify location. (Goal to open center in 2009)

Develop an inventory or "map" of all services available to families with children, unaccompanied youth, and single adults. There should be "no wrong door" to accessing services.

2007: Identify lead entities; begin planning process, and access resources needed.

Identify "System Navigators" to assist families, individuals and youth to obtain appropriate services and benefits and provide ongoing support.

2007: Define and establish System Navigator positions; determine how to integrate Navigators into the service system; Develop procedures and protocols to connect people experiencing homelessness to System Navigators. (Launch pilot in 2008)

Increase the availability of drop-in services for homeless youth.

2007: Identify funding (goal to expand in 2008)

Increase access to chemical dependency assessments and treatment for youth, singles, and parents with children.

2007: Increase pool of staff in non-profits trained to do Rule 25 assessments on site. Develop training for staff at treatment programs (particularly youth suburban programs) to work more effectively with people who are experiencing homelessness.

Identify veterans at all homeless service and mainstream health locations in order to connect them to veteran specific services. There should be no "wrong door."

2007: Training system in place to assist providers in identifying veterans and connecting them to veteran specific providers.

Develop models for non-punitive options for interim child care.

2007: Develop models. (goal to implement in 2008)

Goal Five: Build Capacity for Self Support

Employment specialists will match more homeless adults to jobs through the establishment of employer networks

2007: 200 adults experiencing homelessness will find employment paying \$10 or more.

City and County will adopt a model hiring process to ensure compliance with the state prohibition on discriminating against job applicants with a criminal record.

2007: City and County adopt model hiring process.

Identify existing or additional education/employment specialists to increase focus on employment and schooling for homeless youth.

2007: Engage 150 homeless, unaccompanied youth with education or employment opportunities.

Develop a pilot youth employment program with private sector employers in Hennepin County, such as the hospitality industry.

2007: Design the pilot. (Goal to begin in 2008)

Offer budgeting and money management education to people experiencing homelessness.

2007: Identify partners.

Increase education and outreach/awareness of the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Working Family Credit.

2007: Partners promote EITC and free tax-site services. Provide services at Project Homeless Connect.

Develop transportation subsidies or discounts from Metro Transit.

2007: Explore funding sources. Provide increased transportation assistance at Project Homeless Connect.

Goal Six: Implement System Improvements

Ensure efficient use of current shelter capacity.

2007: Planning group developed to design/recommend more efficient system.

Creation of a dedicated space at underutilized family shelter for homeless youth with youth appropriate services (would reduce the need for additional shelter beds for youth).

Make no county referrals to adult shelters for anyone 21 years or younger unless youth self-refers.

Provide uniform, quality service delivery to all guests in shelters.

2007: Design a central shelter intake and triage system for single adults with rapid exit screener.

Establish a "Family Housing and Services Network."

2007: Establish network.

Develop better collaborations and protocols to intervene with truant homeless youth.

2007: Develop new collaboration with the County Attorney's Office and assess best way to enhance current activities to better reach homeless or at-risk youth.

Develop a "Cultural Competency Advisory Board."

2007: Seek advice from communities of color and other disenfranchised groups on how best to develop cultural competency within the initiative to end homelessness. Establish structure that responds to their advice.

Align policies and goals of local and state plans.

2007-2009: Maintain existing avenues for regional communication and collaboration. Cities and county participate in regional efforts.

Develop baseline data and evaluation measures.

Prepare annual evaluation. 2007 – 2009: Develop process for collecting baseline data.

Evaluate benchmarks and report progress annually.

***Attachment E – Original Version, West Metro Homeless Youth Task Force
Outline of Process***

West Metro Homeless Youth Steering Committee
February – June 2007
“Five meetings in five months”

Purpose and outcomes

Stemming from two Community Summits organized by Teens Alone on behalf of the informal West Metro Homeless Youth Task Force, a Steering Committee is forming to meet five times over the next five months (February – June 2007) to develop a community-driven plan for creating housing options for west metro homeless youth.

The outcome of this effort is to develop a comprehensive report that will:

- quantify the suburban homeless youth problem
- recommend solutions
- dovetail west suburban needs with the Hennepin County Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness

Homeless suburban youth have few housing options that allow them to remain in their own community. The only alternative for them is to try to obtain housing through youth programs located in Minneapolis. There are inherent problems with this. Young people tell us, “I’ve lost my family and a place to live. Now you want me to move away from everything I know... my school, my friends, and my job? I’d rather sleep in my car.” Other problems include availability, priorities and appropriateness of services of existing urban youth housing providers; transportation; vulnerability to exploitation by Minneapolis street culture; and similar challenges.

Participation

The planning process assumes several layers of engagement.

- ***Steering Committee.*** First, 6-12 individuals/organizations will be identified and solicited to participate on the Steering Committee for the Task Force. They will represent key organizations and constituencies and will be expected to attend all of the five meetings. Together, this group will review and sift through the information provided and help formulate final recommendations.
 - ***Level of commitment:*** Attend five monthly meetings, lasting approximately 2 ½ hours each. Review materials and agenda prior to meeting (30-60 minutes/month).
- ***Experts and community resources.*** Second, individuals/organizations in the community that have expertise, unique perspectives, and/or potential resources related to homeless youth will be invited to attend one or more Steering Committee meetings to offer information and discussion related to their areas of expertise.
- ***Others interested.*** Third, individuals/organizations which are concerned about this issue but are mostly interested in the results of the discussions. They will be kept informed of the process and presented with the recommendations.

Proposed outline of topics by meeting

Meetings will be held on the 4th Wednesday of each month from 2-4:30pm at Teens Alone offices, 915 Mainstreet, Hopkins, MN. All Steering Committee members will receive an agenda and background information on the topic of discussion prior to the meeting. Steering committee members will attend all meetings. In addition, community experts on each topic will be invited to participate in meetings that cover questions in their area of expertise.

Meeting 1 – February 28th

Scope of process, participation, outcomes, research review

Additional meeting participants: experts on estimates on numbers of homeless youth in Hennepin county.

- Outline scope of report and agree on expectations
- Meeting protocols – introductions, appoint co-chairs, group processes/agenda setting, participation, etc.
- Define and agree upon geographic focus of this research/report
- Define and agree upon the focus of the report’s anticipated recommendations - who is our target group and what language best describes this focus (runaways, couch-hopping, street homeless, throw-aways, “staying at friends”, precariously housed youth, etc) Proposed focus is “unaccompanied homeless youth who are in housing crisis”.
- Review and summarize estimated numbers of homeless youth from research, existing reports (Wilder, State legislature, heading Home Hennepin, etc.), providers of housing and services, schools, truant officers, etc. Agree on working numbers/estimates and assumptions.

Meeting 2 – March 28th

Outline existing housing and services, estimate gap

Additional meeting participants: community resource experts include frontline school personnel, street outreach workers, public safety officers, service providers, etc.

- Summarize and map out housing, i.e., estimated number of shelter beds, transitional housing beds, permanent supportive housing units available to West Metro Homeless Youth. Look at accessibility (cost, transportation, culture, etc.) and estimate the gap.
- Summarize and map out services available for homeless youth. Look at accessibility (cost, transportation, culture, etc.) and estimate the gap. Where are the kids? Look at how kids are showing up in the system.
- Discuss how to integrate *existing* community assets (services, housing, schools, etc) to better identify and help homeless youth.

Meeting 3 – April 25th

Review and narrow housing options that fit for West Metro Homeless Youth

Additional meeting participants: experts on housing models for homeless youth.

- Review summary of housing models presented at the December 2006 Summit; discuss models and what gaps/youth they fit best.
- Discuss what *additional* housing is needed and lay out potential development and delivery mechanisms – conceptual framework – includes balance of housing models and geography and justification.

Meeting 4 – May 23rd

Review feasibility and considerations of housing option(s)

Additional meeting participants: housing funders; faith community; City housing officials; experts on estimates on numbers of homeless youth in Hennepin county.

- Look at realistic options for implementing such a conceptual framework – put names and organizations in the conceptual framework and discuss feasibility (pro’s and con’s) of each option.
- Estimate costs and cost shares for creating these additional housing services (possibly just for back-up support, not for distribution). Risks, liabilities, etc.

Meeting 5 – June 27th

Review and approve recommendations; outline next steps

- Develop recommendations – a timeline and outcome-based proposal – and distribute and discuss widely.
- Outline next steps, including soliciting broad community feedback (including youth), presenting recommendations to policymakers, etc.