

Geographic Area

This application is for the non-rural Los Angeles Continuum of Care CA-600 (LA CoC). It covers the full area of the more than 4,500 square mile CoC which lies within LA County, and includes 85 cities, numerous unincorporated areas, and nearly 10 million residents.

Leadership Capacity

1. In 2020, the LA CoC faced the challenge of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. With much of the population in dense emergency shelters or crowded encampments, the LA Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), lead agency for the CoC, faced the dual task of rapidly increasing shelter capacity while decompressing existing shelters to minimize risk of infection.

LAHSA quickly established over 40 non-congregate shelters (NCS) that safely housed over 8,800 people at greatest risk for COVID infection or exhibiting severe symptoms. This involved identifying sites to act as NCS or serve as isolation and quarantine venues; conducting outreach to unsheltered individuals; and rapidly marshalling expertise, funding and staffing across county departments (Emergency Management, Fire, Public Health, Mental Health) and over 30 non-profits to operate the sites and provide health and support services. LAHSA organized weekly information updates and coordination calls for agency leadership, shelter operators, outreach workers, and others. Within a few months, LAHSA turned to coordinating an intensive rehousing effort, committing that no one would exit from NCS to the streets. To date, over 2,000 individuals have moved into permanent housing (PH) that meets their subsidy and service needs, with thousands more matched to PH resources and working on housing plans.

This effort required extensive system level coordination and communication; braiding together of federal, state and local funding; regular evaluation of data to identify bottlenecks and racial disparities; and changes in system policies. The CES Prioritization Policy was adapted to prioritize COVID-19 vulnerable individuals for PH; outreach was increased to communities of color to address disparities in access to NCS; and the CoC's rapid rehousing (RRH) model was modified to offer more robust

subsidies and services for those with higher needs leaving NCS who could not immediately access permanent supportive housing (PSH). While researcher Dennis Culhane estimated in March 2020 that 27,750 persons experiencing homelessness in LA could become infected, with 500+ deaths, effective action by the CoC and its partners substantially reduced those numbers to date to fewer than 7,500 persons infected, with less than 200 deaths.

2. LAHSA is the YHDP lead agency and will be supported in YHDP activities by the existing CoC structure and a standing, youth-centered leadership and decision-making body to be created upon YHDP grant award. The existing structure includes: 1) *LAHSA Commission* (10 members): oversees LAHSA, establishes written standards and service performance targets, and develops funding priorities. Current tasks include procurement of new youth housing programs to address gaps. 2) *Homeless Youth Forum of Los Angeles (HYFLA)* (up to 20 members): serves as the YAB for the LA CoC. Current tasks include providing input on program evaluations; finalizing a youth needs assessment; and determining new program models. 3) *CoC Board* (17 members, 1 seat for HYFLA): establishes CoC Program standards, develops CoC NOFA policies and application, and oversees CoC Program evaluations. Current tasks include identifying youth priorities for FY21 NOFA bonus funding. 4) *CES Policy Council* (25 members, 1 seat for HYFLA): develops CES policies and procedures for all populations. Current tasks include developing a program transfer policy inclusive of youth and implementing CES refinement recommendations. 5) *Youth System Leadership Team (YSLT)* (10-15 members): Youth service providers assist LAHSA with system implementation and improvement. Current tasks include data review, system planning, and training. 6) *Los Angeles Coalition to End Youth Homelessness (LACEYH)* (30-40 members): stakeholders (providers and youth with lived experience) committed to collectively combatting youth homelessness. Current tasks include surveys on impact of COVID-19 on youth and executing the youth PIT count with LAHSA through the Youth “PIT Crew”, led by youth with lived experience.

If awarded YHDP, the LA CoC will form a *Youth System Committee (YSC)* as a standing committee charged with leading the development and implementation of the coordinated community plan (CCP) and with providing ongoing oversight of the youth housing and service system. The YSC will be composed of 20-25 members, including at least 1/3 youth with lived experience, representatives of the aforementioned CoC bodies, and youth providers and system partners (e.g., DCFS (PCWA), Probation, Local Education Agencies (LEA)).

3. The LA CoC's plan for combatting homelessness was unanimously adopted in 2016 and combines two complementary sets of strategies; service focused strategies adopted by the LA County Board of Supervisors, which has oversight of mainstream systems, and housing and service strategies adopted by the LA City Council, which has oversight of the largest housing authority and pipeline of PSH in the CoC. The CoC's Plan emerged out of a collaborative planning process that engaged over 1,100 individuals (youth and other persons with lived experience and experts and community members across 25 public agencies, 30 cities, and 100 community-based organizations). Youth-relevant entities that participated included: LA County Departments of Children and Family Services (PCWA), Mental Health, Health Services, and Probation and the Youth Coordinated Entry System (CES) lead provider agencies for each of the CoC's eight Service Planning Areas (SPAs) [See map in appendix]

The Plan includes dedicated youth-specific strategies focused on strengthening the County's Foster Care and Juvenile Probation discharge policies; bringing the Youth CES to scale; and developing a broad range of youth-focused housing and services. Significant progress has occurred since Plan passage. A youth system vision has been developed to guide system operation and implementation of the Plan's youth strategies. The CoC has a fully functional Youth CES and is progressively implementing system refinements, including establishment of a centralized Problem-Solving (Diversion) Assistance Fund and Problem-Solving Specialists at Youth CES access points to facilitate linkage of youth with low/moderate service needs to mainstream services and housing. Youth-specific housing and services have been created, or expanded, through the 2017 passage of Measure H (a

quarter cent sales tax for homeless services and housing), including housing navigation, Foster Care and Probation discharge planning liaisons, emergency shelter, transitional housing, family reconnection services, host homes, RRH, and PSH. In addition, the CoC is working to implement the recommendations of its Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness, including use of an equity lens to review aggregated data on system access and outcomes to inform youth policy and program funding to better address disparities.

4. The CoC prioritizes youth collaboration and has dedicated funding since 2017 to support engagement via HYFLA (CoC's YAB) and other youth-centered endeavors.

a. For the LA CoC, "authentic youth collaboration" includes the following elements, illustrated by quotes from youth themselves:

- **Positioning youth at the center** of planning, program development, and evaluation. *"I think that we come first because it's centered around us. They're trying to find ways to meet our needs... so you can't plan something without at least involving us."* In addition to HYFLA, more service providers should establish youth boards and councils to give youth avenues to influence agency policy and services.
- **Recognizing that youth have unique needs**, experiences, and priorities. *"Our TAY issues can be so, so different from folks even four years older. It's important to understand our needs without judging."*
- **Being accountable.** Demonstrating respect for youth perspectives means not just gathering input, but also sharing results and explaining what will be done in response.
- **Establishing meaningful involvement in decision-making.** *"It's disempowering to not be allowed to contribute to the actual decisions being made that affect youth."* Youth highlighted the importance of establishing clear relationships between agency-level youth boards and the governing board of directors, and of providing training to the youth who sit on these boards to build their leadership skills and foster effective participation.
- **Providing compensation** for their time and opportunities for employment. *"Compensation is about being respected and acknowledged."* It is important to recognize the value of youths' lived expertise and maximize opportunities to benefit from it.
- **Lifting up the full**

diversity of voices. *“People of color are constantly on the lower totem pole, especially those who are LGBTQ.”*

b. The CoC primarily solicits information from youth through HYFLA whose members are on the CoC Board, CES Policy Council, and ad hoc committees. Examples of HYFLA collaboration with the CoC include: design, execution, and interpretation of findings of the youth needs assessment; input on the CES Operations Manual and on minimum standards for youth emergency shelter; input on policy changes to address inequities in program access and outcomes; design, staffing, and data interpretation for the youth PIT Count; and design of Connect LA, a family reconnection program. Beyond HYFLA, the CoC seeks input from youth through focus groups, which are a part of all planning and evaluation activities, provider-administered surveys (LAHSA requirement), and involvement in targeted community planning (e.g., for the youth PIT Count).

c. HYFLA has a dedicated LAHSA staff person acting as a liaison and advocate to elevate youth voice and leadership across core CoC activities. This includes building in adequate time to prepare youth for meetings and other engagements; reviewing meeting agendas and terminology with youth; bringing in content experts on pertinent subjects; and debriefing after meetings to identify what worked or needs improvement. An example is the needs assessment where youth leaders facilitated peer focus groups. Beforehand, a consultant provided weekly training for six weeks to prepare each leader on focus groups, facilitation, dealing with conflict, and note-taking.

Community Need

1a. LAHSA was the lead agency coordinating the 2020-21 comprehensive youth needs assessment. Partners included HYFLA, mainstream public agencies (children and family services, mental health, health, law enforcement), County Chief Information Office, Youth CES agencies, and three evaluation and homeless policy experts each with distinct project roles: the University of Southern California, local nonprofit Shelter Partnership (SP), and Abt Associates.

1b. Youth were centrally involved with needs assessment design and execution. LAHSA and SP met with HYFLA members 17 times, starting on 1-8-2020, to provide background training and to design and implement the assessment. Three HYFLA members co-created with SP and LAHSA all focus group elements, including discussion guide, surveys, and meeting logistics. Two youth co-facilitated the focus groups and partnered with LAHSA and SP to summarize the results. A YHDP Youth Planning Committee was specially convened – with HYFLA and non-HYFLA youth – to review and interpret the assessment findings (qualitative and quantitative).

1c. The assessment covered all housing (shelter, TH, RRH, PSH) and services (diversion, outreach, etc.) within HMIS. It also covered mainstream services accessed by youth (welfare, mental health, foster care, etc.) through County record matches. Looking at the entire CoC and sub-regions therein, it documented current housing resources and gaps; housing and service usage (7,292 unduplicated HMIS records over two years); and program and system performance.

1d. The assessment identified disparities in the following areas: Rates of Homelessness – 8% of the general youth population is black, yet black youth comprise 38% of homeless youth; LGBTQ+ and transgender youth are overrepresented at 20% and 2.8% of homeless youth, respectively, compared to less than 5% and 1% in the general population. System Access/Overall – Male youth were significantly underrepresented among youth homeless system users – (46.6% HMIS vs. 60.7% in PIT Count). Also underrepresented were Latinx youth (34.5% HMIS vs. 42.6% PIT), LGBTQ+ youth (16.8% HMIS vs. 20% PIT), and transgender youth (1.8% HMIS vs. 2.8% PIT). PH Access – Male youth were underrepresented in PH access (30% vs. 50% of system users) as were LGBTQ+ youth (12.6% vs. 16.8% of system users). Housing Wait Times – Though PH placement and retention rates were comparable for black and white youth, black youth had longer wait times from assessment to move-in for RRH and PSH. For PSH, black youth waited 14 months in 2020 vs. 9 months for white youth.

1e. The 2020 PIT Count identified 4,673 youth, a 48% increase since 2018 and 10% of the national total (2020 AHAR). The count consisted of 69 unaccompanied minors, 3,029 transition-age youth

(TAY), and 1,575 family members. (LEA PIT Counts identified 423 unaccompanied youth). The CoC has a youth-specific inventory of 155 prevention/diversion slots (40 for TAY families), 453 emergency shelter (ES) beds (0 units for TAY families), 690 TH beds (81 units for families), 1,032 RRH slots/units (382 for families), and 279 PSH units/vouchers (79 for families).

Key findings include: (1) Significant Housing Gaps: LAHSA, along with USC, used HIC and HMIS data and recommended system exit pathways for different acuity levels and household types, to estimate gaps in housing resources. The analysis identified a gap of 714 prevention/diversion slots (253 for families), 340 ES beds (136 units for families), 1,491 TH beds (420 units for families), 14 RRH slots/units, and 1,697 PSH units (201 for families). (2) System Inflow Continues to Exceed Outflow: 5,678 youth entered the system in 2020 vs 4,924 positive exits (2,134 housing placements and 2,790 other housing exits). (3) Wait Time to Housing Increased: The average time from assessment to move-in to PH increased from 2019 to 2020 – for RRH, from 9.8 to 11.5 months and for PSH from 11.3 to 12.1 months. This increase occurred despite an 80% increase in rehousing capacity since 2015 (686 youth placed in PH vs. 1,237 in 2020).

2. The LA CoC would like to implement Direct Cash Transfers (DCT). DCT empowers youth by providing direct financial assistance along with other supports, allowing them to decide what is in their best interests. YHDP Youth Planning Committee members stressed the need for more flexible financial support to meet a range of needs, such as a laptop, car repairs, and prescription eyeglasses. They also spoke of the empowerment that comes from being able to make decisions that reflect their own preferences and circumstances, *“There’s a difference between receiving RRH assistance (‘It’s not my money’) and unconditional assistance where we can decide how to use the money to meet our needs.”* Youth valued the model’s flexibility, which allows the service mix and intensity to be determined individually. They also saw the model as providing a solution to the too common experience of being denied a rental unit due to their being a subsidy recipient. As one youth commented, *“The lack of opportunities for youth to find housing that accept third party checks is a huge problem.”*

The biggest barrier to this intervention is policy makers' and providers' preconceived notions and judgements about how the cash would be used (misused) by youth. Other barriers are the lack of tested national models to inform local program design and of available funding. LACEYH, Point Source Youth, and the Hilton Foundation have committed to partner with HYFLA and LAHSA for a planning process to design a DCT pilot and identify viable funding sources for operating support.

3. Youth RRH programs need to provide longer-term, and more robust, rental assistance and services support. More intensive rental assistance is vital, especially for youth with greater barriers who are often unable to achieve self-sufficiency in 12-18 months. Stronger assistance with housing search is also needed as is expanded aftercare to support long-term stability. As one youth stated, *"Getting into housing is just the start, keeping it is what matters."* Youth TH programs need improvements focused on funding and service design in order to better facilitate turnover and enhance capacity. Increased funding and greater flexibility in eligible uses, as well as lower staff-client ratios and more targeted services, would allow providers to better meet the needs of higher acuity clients. Youth would like to see improvements to roommate matching practices and to budgeting and other life skills services. Lack of availability of mental health services is also a key area of concern, as one youth said: they *"are definitely key to getting the ball rolling on everything once you've been through so much."* Across all youth-focused interventions, diversifying staffing and improving recruitment and retention practices would strengthen the system as a whole. Peer Navigator positions should be expanded. Youth stressed that: *"Often peer navigators were the only ones I could trust with something that I felt was a big deal because they weren't so far removed [from being homeless]."* There is also a need for more diverse staffing and stronger recruitment and retention practices to limit staff turnover.

Barriers to these improvements are primarily administrative and financial. The CoC's contracts with agencies do not allow providers adequate flexibility to design programs that are responsive to youths' needs. Flexible financial assistance, for example, to pay for education or vocational training, is not an eligible activity under most funding streams. Also, the resourcing and design of programs does not fully

align with the CES Prioritization Policy in that providers are expected to serve highly-vulnerable youth, but many do not have the resources to offer more robust services, increase staffing levels, and compensate staff with competitive wages.

4. Based on an analysis of PIT and HMIS assessment data and input from YHDP Youth Planning Committee members, the following factors were identified as contributing to youth homelessness locally: Systemic Racism – Black youth make up 38% of homeless youth but only 8% of the general youth population locally. American Indian/Alaska Natives are 0.6% of homeless youth but only 0.2% of the general youth population. Mainstream System Discharges – Among youth experiencing homelessness, one quarter become homeless following discharge from foster care and 62% have juvenile and/or adult justice system involvement. LGBTQ Status, Weakened Social Networks, and Family Conflict – One in five youth identify as LGBTQ+ and often experience homelessness following family rejection. Overall, 92% of youth cite a fragile social network as a primary cause of their homelessness; this is especially true for youth with multiple episodes of homelessness. Disabling Conditions – 20% of youth cite a disabling condition as causing their homelessness, especially youth with multiple episodes of homelessness.

To determine which factors beyond race are most prominent, and for whom, LAHSA used linked administrative data to compare homeless youth (7,292 unduplicated HMIS records over two years) against a comparison sample (matched by race) of at-risk, never homeless peers, ages 18-24, and engaged in mainstream services. Larger observed differences between the two groups suggest greater risk factors. The findings follow: (1) Mental health (MH) system involvement, outpatient or inpatient, is a contributing factor to homelessness (50% involvement for HMIS youth vs. 28% in the comparison group), however, acute inpatient and crisis stabilization services participation are more prominent factors than outpatient treatment for youth generally and for gender non-conforming and transgender youth in particular. (2) Child welfare involvement is a contributing factor (19% vs. 9.5%), however, removal from the home is a greater risk factor – 10% of HMIS youth were removed compared to 2.5%

of their at-risk peers. This was even more significant for homeless females who were more likely to have Child Protective Services (CPS) involvement and to have been removed from the home than their at-risk counterparts. (3) Justice system involvement in the 24 months prior to HMIS enrollment is a contributing factor for older youth that reported prior homeless histories – 33% of 23- and 24-year-olds were arrested, and 28% jailed, vs. 25% and 20%, respectively, of their non-homeless peers.

5. Per 1d above, the CoC identified system disparities in four key areas: 1) Homeless Rates; 2) Overall System Access; 3) PH Access; and 4) Time to PH Placement. Though subject to further refinement during CCP development, the CoC intends to address these disparities as follows: Homeless Rates – Work to eliminate the incarceration to homelessness “pipeline” through the County’s new Alternatives to Incarceration Task Force; continue to evaluate and improve problem-solving/diversion performance to ensure that these services are effective for all subpopulations; and advocate for expansion of right-to-counsel ordinances, recognizing that young, black households who are evicted are at greater risk of homelessness. System Access – Explore with street outreach providers and county agencies why male youth are underrepresented among system users and identify solutions; expand LGBTQ+ and Latinx cultural competency training to a greater number of agencies; and evaluate the efficacy and relevance of existing CES Triage Tools for assessing LGBTQ+ youth. Time to PH Placement – Delve deeper into RRH and PSH data using a racial equity lens, including at sub-regional levels, and identify strategies to reduce disparities (e.g., training, policy changes).

Collaboration

1a. Since 2016, the LA CoC has had a separate CES for unaccompanied, parenting, and pregnant youth – minors up to age 25. It has youth-specific access centers located in each of the CoC’s eight Service Planning Areas (SPAs), in addition to other youth-specific access points, including Foster Care and Probation Liaisons, Campus Peer Navigators, emergency shelters, outreach teams, and public and non-profit partner agencies. Each center/point has dedicated Youth CES assessors and standardized, youth-specific policies and procedures. The CoC regularly monitors and expands its network of youth

access points using Youth PIT data to identify gaps and access-related disparities at the sub-regional and subpopulation levels. For example, in 2019, additional access centers were added to ensure full CoC coverage and Foster Care and Probation Liaisons were added in each SPA as access points to improve access for system-involved youth.

b. There is a separate Youth prioritization process that follows the LA CoC's Prioritization Policy which was approved in 2018 by the CES Policy Council and is designed to raise the most vulnerable populations to the top of the list. The prioritization criteria are: (1) acuity score within population-specific assessment tool (i.e., Next Step Tool for youth); (2) length of time homeless; and (3) high risk participants as determined by case conferencing, which is often how subgroups (e.g., trafficking victims, LGBTQ+) are prioritized when acuity scores are not reflective of their vulnerability. In 2020, the Policy was altered so that 80% of PSH is made available to youth with COVID vulnerability and 20% follows the standard prioritization outlined above.

There are three primary formal pathways for exiting the youth system for those unable to self-resolve -- TH, RRH and PSH. Youth assessed as having high service needs are prioritized for PSH and TH (Note: The policy identifies multiple options due to limited PSH supply). Youth with moderate service needs are prioritized for RRH and TH. Based on feedback through the current youth CES refinement process, the CoC has implemented and is expanding a fourth exit pathway for youth with low to moderate service needs that links youth to diversion/problem-solving resources, including mainstream services, and purposefully supports self-resolution. The goal is to divert these youth as quickly as possible, ideally before they enter CES, in order to better manage system inflow. Prioritization criteria are not applied to other interventions, including emergency shelters, host homes, and Connect LA; all youth have access to these programs.

c. All homeless and at-risk youth providers that receive funding from LAHSA (e.g., CoC, ESG, ESG-CV, Measure H) are fully integrated into Youth CES as are all RHY and state-funded grantees. These providers function in one or more roles: access point or center; prevention provider; housing or

supportive services provider; and/or Youth CES Lead Agency. Mainstream and other service providers for homeless and at-risk youth (e.g., PCWA, Departments of Public Social Services (DPSS), Health (DHS) and Mental Health (DMH), and Local Educational Agencies (LEAs)) are integrated into Youth CES in various capacities: referral partners connecting youth to the CES; mainstream resource providers supporting youth while they access CES or are diverted through Diversion/Problem-Solving services; and/or after-care providers once housing is accessed. Numerous system partners (e.g., housing authorities, PCWA, Probation, DHS, DMH, and Workforce Development Boards) and their contracted providers have integrated housing and services into CES. The number of participating homeless and at-risk youth providers has grown from 15 in 2016 to more than 35 today, representing the majority of youth providers CoC-wide, including shelter, TH, PSH, intensive case management services, Section 8 vouchers, and education and employment services. Some of these resources are only accessed through CES and others are also accessed through the Diversion/Problem-Solving pathway. One area for improvement is greater integration of faith-based providers serving youth.

2. The LA CoC has prioritized efforts to eliminate institutional discharges to homelessness. Child Welfare (Foster Care) and Juvenile Justice System: Based on lessons from three 2017-18 pilot projects, the County CEO, Foster Care, Probation, and the CoC collaborated to amend Foster Care and Probation's discharge planning policies to move up the initiation of a Transition Plan to 180 days (rather than 90) prior to a youth's exit, regardless of the age of the youth. In 2019, the CoC established Foster Care and Probation Liaisons in each of the CoC's eight SPAs to connect high-risk youth exiting these systems to stable housing. In addition to their discharge-specific duties, the Liaisons and LAHSA provide regular training to staff at all levels of Foster Care and Probation on problem-solving, diversion, and housing resources outside of CES.

Transition Plans for exiting youth are developed through multidisciplinary discharge planning meetings, involving cross-department staff (Foster Care and/or Probation staff, DMH, Office of Education, etc.). Foster Care and Probation Liaisons become involved in this process when youth are

identified as being at high-risk of exiting into homelessness. The Transition Plans are designed to ensure that youth have basic needs and supports in place upon exiting care, including housing, education, employment services, and medical needs. While the team-based planning process is similar for minors and for older youth, the housing goal is different. Specifically, family reunification is most commonly the goal for minors whereas the goal for youth aging out of the system is appropriate, next-step housing. In the event that family housing instability is a barrier to reunification for a minor, a referral is made to a county-contracted nonprofit agency, 1-2 in each SPA, that will provide housing location and stabilization services (up to 18 months), coupled with flexible, time-limited financial assistance, to facilitate successful reunification.

For older youth, Foster Care and Probation Liaisons have access to a flexible Problem-Solving Assistance Fund managed by LAHSA to address barriers to housing and prevent homeless system entries. The Liaisons use their extensive tri-system knowledge and contacts (foster care, probation, and homeless system) to assist youth in meeting the requirements for various TH programs outside of the homeless system (i.e., state-funded programs). They also provide access to crisis intervention and prevention services for youth who have already exited foster care or probation. To further promote successful system discharges, since 2019, the County has significantly increased funding for dedicated TH beds for exiting youth, increasing mainstream TH for former foster youth and/or former probation youth ages 18-25 by 50%. Since 2018, the County's One Roof Los Angeles initiative has prioritized the highest risk youth for mainstream PSH resources, FUP vouchers and other PH resources. Youth dually involved with both Foster Care and Probation are referred to a specialized Foster Care division within Probation that handles development of the Transition Plan, as described above.

Adult Justice System: DHS Office of Diversion and Reentry contractors (non-profit agencies in each SPA) provide system "in reach" to inmates, including transition-age youth, who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness upon entry. The CoC worked with the County and law enforcement to design and fund this initiative through Measure H. By intervening early, these agencies help youth to develop

viable housing and service plans, work with them while incarcerated to make progress towards next-step housing (e.g., obtain birth certificates and/or IDs, complete housing applications), and provide case management and housing navigation services leading up to, and after, discharge. Depending on inmate acuity levels and needs, these contractors link youth to mainstream-funded PSH, recovery housing, and other specialized mainstream programs to prevent them from becoming homeless.

Institutions of Mental and Physical Health: The County Health Agency has discharge policies that require linkages to housing and services for youth (and other populations) who were experiencing or at-risk of homelessness upon admission to mental and physical health institutions. In 2020, DHS and DMH established a Homelessness Prevention Unit that uses predictive analytics to identify and serve high-utilizing patients of public health and mental health services who are at-risk of becoming homeless and repeatedly cycling through costly public services. Participants may receive financial assistance for an array of needs, including back/ongoing rent and overdue utilities, and be connected to other services and benefits to help them keep their housing. In addition, individuals with severe mental illness who are leaving State Hospitals and Institutes for Mental Disease and individuals with significant, persistent medical needs exiting medical facilities, who need ongoing, intensive care, are assisted in transitioning to licensed board and care facilities paid for through the County's Enriched Residential Care (ERC) program. Individuals who do not have housing to return to upon discharge and for whom ERC is not appropriate are assessed by a social worker for psychosocial needs and then provided "warm hand-off" referrals to temporary or permanent housing or to CES, if needed, along with transportation supports. DHS and DMH fund a portfolio of shelter and PSH for exiting individuals with no housing options.

3. PCWA Letter of Support: See attachment.

Youth Collaboration

The following YHDP Youth Planning Committee members discussed and contributed to questions 5-8 during Planning Committee Meetings, held on June 9, 22, and 24, 2021 and at YHDP Community

Stakeholder Sessions, held on June 30 and July 7, 2021, and edited and approved the written summary of their perspectives on July 12, 15, and 19, 2021: David Cunningham, Carolyn Etter, Dèshun Crouch, Asia Shoats, Jennifer Myers, Alex Furtado, Lacylee Newby, Jasper Thomas, Marqees Banks, Michael Don Juan, Amaris-Shiri Davy, Yerimar Rodriguez, Ashley Anderson, and Caitlin Schaefer.

1. Vision: HYFLA – the LA CoC’s YAB – envisions a unified Los Angeles free of judgement and discrimination where all youth have equitable opportunities and access to stable housing, education, employment, and other pursuits. **Mission:** HYFLA works to end youth homelessness in Los Angeles County by centering the voices of youth with lived expertise in decision-making on program development, funding, policy making, and program and system performance evaluation.

2a-c. HYFLA has operated continuously since its inception in April 2017 and currently has 9 members (100% with lived experience). To increase its diversity, HYFLA recently raised its membership limit to 20 youth (from 15) and is presently reviewing new nominations. Full-Board and subcommittee meetings are limited to HYFLA membership plus LAHSA staff and supporting consultants; however, former members may attend to provide support and mentorship and ensure continuity. The attendance at the last several meetings (including former members) was 18 on 6/9/21, 17 on 6/22/21, 11 on 6/24/2021, 7 on 7/12/21, 9 on 7/15/21, and 9 on 7/19/21. Normally, the full HYFLA membership meets monthly with additional ad hoc meetings as needed when participation in policy development, program design, or another initiative requires it.

2d. Youth, ages 18 to 24, are recruited by HYFLA through a multi-stage process consisting of nominations, interviews, and selections. All member recruitment stages are designed and executed by HYFLA members with staff support. Once 25% of HYFLA seats become available due to turnover, the nomination process opens. **Nominations:** A low barrier, electronic nomination form has been designed by HYFLA. To ensure that diverse youth across the CoC gain access to the nomination form, HYFLA, LAHSA, and CES Lead Agencies market membership openings to the general youth population and deliver targeted outreach to youth stakeholder groups, including those serving marginalized

subpopulations (e.g., legal service organizations serving system-involved youth, victim service providers, etc). Interviews: HYFLA members and LAHSA staff interview nominees - in person or remotely - that meet eligibility criteria (i.e., have lived experience, 18-24 years old, and currently reside in the LA CoC). Selection: Interviewers debrief afterwards and HYFLA makes final member selections with a lens towards ensuring equitable representation for disproportionately impacted subpopulations including youth of color and LGBTQ+ youth.

2e. HYFLA follows established protocols for decision making. In order to take action, a quorum of more than 50% of members must be present. All members, regardless of their tenure on the board, have a vote. HYFLA's stated goal is consensus-based decision making in which all present members reach agreement. The HYFLA Chair strives for this goal through meeting facilitation. However, when consensus is not feasible and a decision cannot be delayed until the next meeting, HYFLA makes decisions based on the majority vote of present members. To promote transparency and accountability and in response to member feedback in the past, members must approve agenda items requiring action in advance of the scheduled meeting. Meeting agendas and any background material must be finalized and sent to members at least 72 hours prior to the meeting, consistent with the CoC's protocol for other committees/boards.

2f. The LA CoC creates opportunities for HYFLA members to influence system planning, policy and improvement efforts for all populations experiencing homelessness. HYFLA has a dedicated seat on the CoC Board and on the CES Policy Council, both of which set policy for all populations. Members also participate in other committees. A former HYFLA member served on the CoC's Ad Hoc Committee on Black Persons Experiencing Homelessness (2019-2021) to address racial inequities within the homeless services system. Another member served as an expert panelist during one of the Committee's study sessions and several HYFLA members participated in focus groups on racial equity and youth homelessness. HYFLA members are currently participating in a research project reevaluating

the use of CES Triage Tools, based on their experiences accessing services in more than just the youth system.

2g. As part of orientation to HYFLA, members participate in training on the basics of a CoC, its rules and responsibilities, and the inter-relationships of different CoC bodies/committees. When opportunities or project-specific needs arise (e.g., NOFAs, creation of new CES policies, testifying before City Council), LAHSA and/or its partners provide background education to HYFLA members to prepare them to meaningfully contribute, including on HEARTH and NOFA requirements, evaluations, reallocation policies, eligible activities, housing types, relevant studies on homelessness, etc. To support successful participation of HYFLA's designated CoC Board member, LAHSA and its consultant meet before each Board and subcommittee meeting with the HYFLA member to discuss the agenda, explain background, and provide a safe space for questions.

3 & 3a. Comparing current HYFLA membership to the 2020 PIT Count demonstrates the membership is reflective of the homeless youth population. Youth of color make up 90% of HYFLA membership compared to 85% of homeless youth. In terms of sexual orientation, youth who identify as LGBTQ+ are significantly more prevalent on HYFLA (71%) than in the population of youth experiencing homelessness (20%). Gender non-conforming youth are more prevalent compared to the larger community of homeless youth (30% HYFLA vs 2% PIT), male-identified youth are less prevalent (30% HYFLA vs. 59% PIT), and female-identified are almost equal (40% HYFLA vs. 39% PIT). HYFLA's geographic diversity also matches that of the PIT Count, with members representing the full geography of the CoC (each SPA). Annually and when nominations open, LAHSA and HYFLA review the membership against the new PIT data to ensure that the membership remains representative. When needed, outreach and recruitment strategies are developed to address gaps (See Section 2d.).

4. Youth are incentivized to participate in HYFLA through a variety of strategies, including cash and gift card compensation (e.g., \$25/hr for YHDP application activities, including meeting preparation and attendance and application review), transportation assistance, and professional development

opportunities. LAHSA has an established compensation policy and standard practices for all HYFLA activities, including participation in regular member meetings, CoC governance and committee meetings, and special events. Transportation, parking, and/or mileage reimbursement are provided for all activities, and meals are provided at regular HYFLA meetings. Members also engage regularly in free professional development based on their interests, including conferences, training, public speaking, and internships. For FY2022, LAHSA has increased funding to support youth collaboration to \$150,000 (from \$52,000) in order to more robustly engage, develop, and compensate youth participation, both through HYFLA and other activities engaging more youth (e.g., PIT Count, Youth CES refinement workshops, and TBD youth planning activities).

5. Youth on the YHDP Youth Planning Committee shared that integrating their voice into community decision-making structures is extremely difficult due to challenges posed by 1) ageism/adultism; 2) lack of power sharing; 3) poor follow-through and accountability; and 4) insufficient coalition and partnership building. As one youth recollected, *“Ageism plays a role. When sharing recommendations for change gathered from my peers, I’ve been told by those in authority, ‘You’re too young to understand’.”* Youth felt that true integration of their voice requires power-sharing, an equal say or vote, and not just dedication of one seat on a decision-making body to youth with lived experience. As one youth voiced, *“It’s not about having us involved to say we were involved so you can check off a box. Rather, it’s about having the ability to make decisions and have a voice that is heard.”* Youth also conveyed that follow-through and accountability are critical to integrating and valuing their voice. As one youth remarked, *“How did you take what we told you into consideration? What changed as a result?”* Finally, youth shared that a single entity like a YAB is often challenged by the siloes within which it and the CoC operate. The lack of connection and collaboration across entities involved in homelessness (e.g., across youth advocacy boards; across local and state public agencies) is a real impediment to true integration of youth voice.

6. HYFLA members identified logistical concerns, ageism/adultism, tokenization, lack of transparency, and staff turnover as the biggest challenges to sustaining an active, meaningful YAB. Current/former members cited practical concerns around inconvenient meeting times, child care, unreliable WIFI, etc. as barriers to consistent participation. Members expressed how adults seem unable to respect their expertise and that the discrimination and tokenization they feel during meetings with decision-makers is disempowering and leads to disengagement. One youth said, *“The biggest challenge is the communication barrier because of ageism...[adults] not being able to leave their prejudices and biases at the door.”* A former HYFLA member shared that she felt at times *“like a show puppet, brought to meetings to demonstrate diversity [rather than for her voice].”*

HYFLA members also agreed that a lack of accountability and transparency around decision making can detract from a YAB’s sustainability. As one former member stated, *“Feedback that we provided rarely came back to us. We just became a document signer. Things were never checked back on.”* Finally, youth stated that a lack of consistent staff support due to turnover interfered with maintaining engagement and momentum: *“I don’t like having to keep reintroducing myself and my story. Can’t keep playing catch-up. That prevented us from being able to achieve things.”*

7. YHDP Youth Planning Committee members identified the biggest areas of risk as: (1) inadequate prevention services, particularly for exits from foster care and family conflict/rejection; (2) youths’ lack of knowledge of prevention and diversion services; and (3) insufficient aftercare support to prevent returns to homelessness. Youth felt that efforts to prevent homelessness were inadequate especially for youth most at-risk (BIPOC, emancipating youth, LGBTQ+, pregnant youth). They also felt that outreach and messaging around prevention and diversion services is lacking, as most had no knowledge of these services. As a former foster youth, put it, *“It wasn’t easy to learn [about these services]. I had to be personally told by a friend.”* Youth also expressed a need for more extensive aftercare support, since achieving full independence is a process that is still unfolding when they exit a RRH or TH program. As one youth said, *“I completely lost touch with my [RRH] case manager [once rental*

assistance ended] and had nowhere to turn. I received a Pay or Quit Notice and didn't know how to navigate the legal system on my own."

The LA CoC is making concerted efforts to address these risk areas. Drivers into Homelessness: Foster Care and Probation Liaisons begin developing discharge plans for at-risk youth six months before system exit. In the last 12 months, LAHSA has provided diversion and problem-solving training to all county agencies that serve at-risk youth and established a centralized Problem-Solving Assistance Fund to help resolve housing crises. In 2021, the PCWA established a Supportive Housing Division and is actively seeking mainstream housing resources from federal and state sources. Increase Awareness: LAHSA is training faith-based organizations and other non-traditional community partners who serve at-risk youth and certifying them to provide financial assistance from the Problem-Solving Assistance Fund. Along with the Foster Care and Probation Liaisons, the creation of Campus Peer Navigators, now co-located at CoC's 19 community colleges, is increasing awareness of prevention/diversion resources. Aftercare Support: Youth enrolled in any homeless program are now able to co-enroll in Connect LA, even if their housing goal is not family reunification, in order to receive longer-term support with repairing family relationships. Connect LA includes 6 months of aftercare and promotes permanent connections as an ongoing protective factor for exiting youth. The CoC is also developing a Program Transfer Policy which will provide a formalized process to continue supporting youth if the initial system intervention and associated aftercare are not enough to stabilize them in housing.

8. Youth defined success in terms of the two phases of the YHDP process: plan development and plan implementation. A successful planning process would include youth as authentic collaborators and partners, and value their contributions. As one Planning Committee member stated, *"You guys can't advocate for us without us helping you guys advocate for us."* Another youth advised the CoC to *"invite those you're serving to be at the table rather than making assumptions about what works for us."* Beyond collaboration, youth want the planning process to empower them as leaders. In order to be effective in this role, they want to receive training, regular preparation for activities, and appropriate

compensation. In implementing the plan, youth define success as new projects that directly foster their stability, safety, and self-sufficiency. Youth want to *“be able to live our best lives without constantly stressing.”* They want to be able to meet basic needs, secure permanent housing, and attain education and employment goals, but they also emphasize the importance of developing connections to the community, such as through volunteer or mentorship opportunities. This provides them with meaning and purpose, *“so that we aren’t isolated.”* Success under YHDP, therefore, would result in a system that supports youth to achieve their multi-faceted goals.

9. YAB Letter of Support: See attachment.

Data and Evaluation Capacity

1. 66% of all types of non-DV homeless beds currently participate in HMIS.

2. 77% of all non-DV youth beds, regardless of funding source, are covered in HMIS.

3. Through regular RFPs (CoC, ESG, Measure H), LAHSA seeks to increase the number of youth shelter, housing, and services only providers with which it contracts; HMIS participation is a contractual stipulation for all non-DV projects. LAHSA coordinates year-round with other homeless youth provider funders, including the LA County Health Agency (DPH, DMH, DHS), United Way, and LA Funders Collaborative, to embed HMIS participation requirements into their contracts. LAHSA identifies youth projects not participating in HMIS through the HIC and needs assessments and conducts targeted outreach to engage these agencies and also promotes HMIS participation in community meetings and CoC planning sessions. New services only providers recently added to HMIS include the LA County Office of Education and LA Unified School District.

4. The LA CoC actively supports the transition of new homeless projects to HMIS by absorbing all startup and licensing costs for agencies and providing training and TA at no cost. LAHSA’s HMIS Team assists agencies to set up new projects; establishes user accounts for designated staff; trains staff on system use; educates on data standards; and provides a HMIS User Guide along with ongoing TA (e.g., to problem-solve reporting issues) to all users via e-mail, phone, and remote sessions as well as

on-site upon request. LAHSA's Program Team conducts a quarterly, standardized Homeless System 101 Training for all new agencies and its HMIS Team conducts quarterly HMIS user forums for new and existing users.

5. The CoC gathers youth data from other sources. For almost eight years, LAHSA has had a data sharing agreement with the County CEO for the County's Enterprise Linkages Project (ELP), an information management platform, which collects data from HMIS and county systems including criminal justice, child welfare and foster care, welfare, health, substance use, and mental health. In addition to service use, patterns, and cost data for homeless youth (and other populations), the system collects geographic (home address, where services are accessed) and demographic data (race, ethnicity, age). ELP provided linked data to help identify homeless risk factors for the youth needs assessment described herein. Currently, the CEO is working on an agreement with LACOE, and soon thereafter Juvenile Justice, to incorporate education, and then probation, data into ELP.

6. LAHSA monitors youth provider performance through 1) active performance management (APM) and 2) traditional contract compliance oversight. APM allows for "real-time" problem identification and course correction – at both the system and project level - based on financial and program data entered into HMIS by providers. On a monthly basis, LAHSA Cross-Functional Teams (Finance, Contracting, Compliance, and Program) review dashboard data pulled from HMIS, including spend down, bed utilization, program access by demographics, and exit destinations, and identify areas for improvement. Using this information, LAHSA Program Teams then organize monthly learning communities by program component to review the dashboard data and provide training and TA. Program staff also meet individually with agencies with identified issues to discuss problems and jointly develop a TA Plan with performance improvement deliverables and timelines. For example, an emergency shelter with high unsuccessful client turnover might be required to have all staff attend trainings on trauma-informed care and harm reduction and to make improvements to operational procedures.

In addition to APM, traditional, retrospective contract monitoring is carried out by LAHSA's Compliance Unit (CU). Annually, the CU leadership identifies a list of agencies to receive on-site contract monitoring based on a risk assessment that considers date of last on-site review, past findings, APM dashboard data, and input from LAHSA Program Teams. LAHSA ensures that all agencies have an on-site contract monitoring at least every 2-3 years. (LAHSA oversees more than 1,000 contracts annually.) Contract monitoring criteria include both fiscal measures (eligibility of expenses, cost-allocation methodology, invoicing, record-keeping and accounting practices) and programmatic measures (participant eligibility, service provision per program scope, reasons for discharges, exit destinations, case notes, and contract performance indicators). Upon conclusion of the monitoring period (2-3 months), the agency receives a letter outlining concerns, findings, required corrective actions, and recommended TA by LAHSA's HMIS or Program Team (see above). Agencies have 30 days to address the concerns and findings and provide a satisfactory corrective action plan.

Youth are involved in performance monitoring through a number of avenues. Findings from the Compliance Unit's and Program Team's monitoring activities are synthesized and brought to HYFLA (semi-annually) for interpretation and feedback. For example, HYFLA helped pinpoint access/utilization problems stemming from certain TH programs layering on additional documentation requirements and also helped identify the cause of problems at a youth shelter that had numerous conflict resolution grievances. Outside of HYFLA, youth who are program participants are involved in monitoring through participant feedback surveys and grievance filings, which are factored into the Compliance Unit's annual identification of programs for on-site monitoring. Youth are also involved in program evaluation efforts. HYFLA provides feedback in evaluation design, helps interpret findings, and provides input on recommendations. Non-HYFLA youth contribute to evaluations through their participation in focus groups, interviews, and surveys.

7. The LA CoC has a demonstrated commitment to using data to inform strategies on youth homelessness. A prime example is the CoC's investment in TH, its largest programmatic investment for

youth. In 2017, LAHSA partnered with youth providers and HYFLA to determine how best to invest new tax revenues in expanding TH. Based on a collective review of outcome and service data, LAHSA altered the program design to extend the maximum length of assistance to 36 months and increased the funding rate to allow for more robust services. In 2020, LAHSA commissioned a third-party, mixed methods evaluation of TH to assess how the redesigned model was functioning. The evaluation found that the average length of stay was one year, indicating that youth were not taking advantage of the full time allowed; furthermore, only 29% of participants exited to rental housing, whereas 42% exited to friends or family. Most of the latter exits were to family, though many of these participants had initially said they were unwilling to do so, suggesting that youth were having trouble finding affordable housing on their own, were forced to return home, and are likely to re-experience instability. LAHSA is now working with HYFLA to investigate strategies for providing a post-TH rental subsidy (Joint TH-RRH model) and additional support in workforce development to promote greater housing choice and help youth stabilize after TH exit.

The CoC has also used data on population composition to inform its strategies. The Higher Education & Homelessness Work Group identified unmet need among community college students – nearly 20% reported experiencing homelessness and 55% housing insecurity in a 2016 survey and most had little awareness of available resources. As a result, LAHSA helped establish a pilot program (now CoC-wide) in 2019 in which Campus Peer Navigators were located at high-need community colleges to help connect housing insecure students to resources.

8. The LA CoC routinely involves youth in quality improvement (QI) conversations at the system level through HYFLA and through youth focus groups, surveys, and interviews that are part of formal needs assessments and program evaluations. HYFLA is involved with evaluation design, execution, interpretation of findings, and decision-making about recommended changes in program design or funding to improve quality and outcomes. HYFLA also helps LAHSA to prioritize limited evaluation resources. The decision, for example, to fund a robust third-party evaluation of LAHSA's TH portfolio

was driven in part by feedback from HYFLA and other youth in focus groups that spoke about the importance of this intervention. HYFLA worked with the evaluator to provide input into the design of the questions for the youth focus groups. Over 30 youth participated in focus groups or one-on-one interviews sharing their experiences in TH. HYFLA is now helping interpret the evaluation results and determine next steps for program and funding adjustments. Similarly, HYFLA, after helping design and execute the CoC's recent needs assessment described herein, is now developing recommendations to address both system- and program-level improvement. Their recommendations will go to LAHSA and the CoC Board, where HYFLA has a seat. A final example is HYFLA's participation in discussions that developed new youth emergency shelter standards to improve quality of care.

9. When convened by LAHSA on June 30 and July 7, 2021, LA CoC stakeholders (youth, Youth CES Lead Agencies, Homeless Education Coordinators, County CEO, and other county agencies) stated that they would define success as the creation of a “diverse, equitable youth homeless system that can flexibly meet the individualized needs of youth experiencing homelessness” and yield significant reductions in youth homelessness. Components for achieving this success include: (1) Expanded prevention efforts. (2) Investment in building a deep understanding and appreciation of youth and their diversity through trainings and listening sessions on youth-driven topics such as cultural competency and LGBTQ+ and racial equity. (3) Planning, policy and program development led, and informed, by the full diversity of youth, including those who the system is currently failing (e.g., emancipated youth, LGBTQ+). (4) Reduction of barriers to access among youth through improved fidelity systemwide to Housing First, trauma-informed care, and harm reduction and through outreach to engage the full breadth of the youth population in services, including through better use of technology and social media. (5) Improved re-housing timelines and increased PH placements per year. (6) Strong integration with education, income and employment resources to build youth self-sufficiency. (7) Enhanced aftercare programs to ensure ongoing stability. (8) Expansion of peer workers and peer mentoring opportunities. (9) Robust and active youth connections to the community.