



## Legislation Text

---

**File #:** 2019-0443, **Version:** 1

---

**To:** Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

**Department or Agency Name(s):** Human Services & Community Development Commission

**Staff Name and Phone Number:** Nick Honey, 565-4343 & Regina de Melo, 565-4346

**Vote Requirement:** Informational Only

**Supervisorial District(s):** All

**Title:**

Housing Needs and Resources for Transition-Age Youth

**Recommended Actions:**

Accept Presentation on Housing Needs and Resources for Transition-Age Youth. (Informational Only)

**Executive Summary:**

In February 2019, the Board of Supervisors requested information on the housing needs and resources available to Sonoma County's transition-age youth. On any given night, approximately 505 transition-age youth are homeless in Sonoma County. This gives the Santa Rosa/Petaluma/Sonoma County Continuum of Care (CoC) the second highest number of homeless youth in CoCs of its type in the U.S. (2018 Annual Homeless Assessment Report). Approximately 230 beds are available specifically for homeless transition-age youth through various community-based organizations and other programs. On any given night, there are not enough shelter beds for 30-40% of the homeless youth. The Human Services Department, Community Development Commission, and community partners are working collaboratively with youth to help address this housing crisis.

**Discussion:**

**Homeless Youth in Sonoma County**

Recent data from the **2018 Point In Time Homeless Count (PIT)** for Sonoma County, provided by the Sonoma County Community Development Commission (CDC), shows that 505 transition-age youth ages 18-24 were found during the one-day homeless count in 2018. This represents an increase from the 416 homeless transition-age youth on any given night identified in 2017. The term "transition-age youth", often shortened to "TAY", is used slightly differently across various social service programs. The term generally refers to the very vulnerable age range from 16-25 when a young person needs the support of a caring family, caring community, or social service supports in order to become the highest functioning and healthiest adult possible.

The attached table summarizes housing resources currently available to transition-age youth in Sonoma County. The majority of these programs offer supportive services including connection to community resources, life skills development, employment resources, mental health resources, and permanent housing options.

When all of the housing resources are fully utilized, there are approximately 230 beds available for youth. The

2018 Homeless Youth Needs Assessment (HYNA) conducted by the Homeless Youth Task Force indicated approximately 415 beds are needed to adequately house Sonoma County's homeless youth ages 18-24. This accounts for turnover in beds and estimated length of stay in permanent beds. The CDC recommends that the additional needed beds should include a mix of permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing for 18-24 year old youth. Additional findings included a need for greater housing resources for LGBTQ youth (35% of homeless youth) and youth of color (43%), increased Recovery Housing/Housing First programs, and trauma-informed services.

### **Critical Supports for Foster Youth**

Approximately 24% of homeless youth in Sonoma County are former foster youth, which is the lowest percentage of foster youth in four years. Sonoma County Human Services Department's Family, Youth and Children Division (FYC) makes every effort to place youth with family or stable adults with whom they have a previous connection. FYC representatives participate in the Homeless Youth Task Force and monthly Runaway Round Table meetings to identify homeless and potentially homeless foster youth. Through contracted partnerships with local Community-Based Organizations, FYC provides several placement resources and housing options to help prepare youth for independent living and to avoid homelessness, especially upon exiting foster care.

### **Other stressors that lead to homelessness for transition-age youth in Sonoma County**

A young person's needs increase when they struggle with mental health issues or experience family instability and involvement with child welfare services. It is a time when disconnection from the education system or workforce (which often leads to a disconnection from stable housing and consistent healthcare) has proven to dramatically increase the risk of lifelong changes in their trajectory related to income, health, housing status and much more. Approximately 6,000 (<http://www.measureofamerica.org/DYinteractive/#County> ~~<~~<http://www.measureofamerica.org/DYinteractive/>~~>~~) transition-age youth in Sonoma County are considered "Disconnected", neither in school or working. Youth disconnection was also named as a major theme in the *Portrait of Sonoma County* and highlighted as a precursor to youth homelessness.

**The following data was collected through the Youth Survey conducted as part of the Point-In- Time Count (PIT):**

**Family Conflict:** Family conflict was the most frequently reported cause of homelessness among youth in Sonoma County. The percentage of youth who stated that an argument with a family or friend who asked them to leave was the cause of their homelessness was 32% in 2017 and 34% in 2018.

**History with the Child Welfare System:** In 2018, less than one-quarter (24%) of homeless youth surveyed reported spending time in the foster care system. The percent of homeless youth that reported spending time in foster care was 39% in 2017.

**Eviction and Lack of Housing:** Eviction was the primary cause of homelessness for 7% of youth in 2018, down from 11% in 2017.

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Issues/Experience with Domestic Violence:** Often intimately tied to family dysfunction, substance abuse and mental health challenges contribute to and perpetuate youth homelessness. In 2018, 33% of homeless youth reported current or prior drug or alcohol abuse, and 34%

reported current or prior psychiatric or emotional conditions. Community partners cite a lack of Substance Abuse Treatment services for transition-age youth is one of the most sweeping gaps in services for this vulnerable population.

**Criminal Justice System Involvement:** Justice System involvement is a major contributing factor to youth homelessness in Sonoma County. Justice-involved youth face barriers to education and employment, and often have difficulty reintegrating with their families and/or communities. In 2018, 44% of homeless youth reported justice system involvement and spending a night in jail, up from 34% in 2017.

**Poverty and Chronic Homelessness:** The majority of the County's runaway and homeless youth come from families living at or below the poverty line. According to *Portrait of Sonoma County (2014)*, 12% of the population lives below the poverty line and 35% of homeless transitional-age youth have reported being homeless five or more times in the last three years, indicating an increase in chronic homelessness for this vulnerable population.

**High Cost of Living:** In 2017, 30% of homeless youth surveyed completed some college and 29% were employed. 46% of county households are rent-burdened, spending more than 30% of their income on housing. The loss of over 5,000 units in the 2017 wildfires has significantly exacerbated this problem. The Transitional Housing Plus (THP+) program administered by True to Life Children's Services (TLC) has noted that in reality, rent expense is typically 50-55% of a youth's total budget upon exit from the program. The high cost of living and lack of affordable housing in Sonoma County exponentially increases the difficulty for youth to establish permanent housing and connection in this community.

#### **Youth Input on Housing Needs**

The Sonoma County CDC has set up a permanent structure to collect and utilize youth input on homeless issues. The Homeless Youth Task Force (HYTF) has been the CDC's primary means of garnering youth feedback since it was established in 2011. Homeless and formerly homeless youth attend the HYTF's meetings and provide feedback for the annual Homeless Youth Needs Assessment, as well as for the annual youth survey administered as a component of the PIT. In addition to staffing the youth count, youth advocates from a peer-run youth organization, VOICES, and staff from housing provider Social Advocates for Youth (SAY) attend quarterly meetings. Homeless and formerly homeless youth from the Coalition for Foster Youth assist in asset mapping and inventorying beds for foster and homeless youth.

#### **Prior Board Actions:**

June 11, 2019: Board approved two contracts for Housing for transition-age youth for FY 2019- 2020 -- SAY Contract for Stepping Stone (\$200,000) and TLC Contract for Transitional Housing Plus (\$512,000).

June 11, 2018: Board approved two contracts for Housing for transition-age youth for FY 2018-2019 -- SAY Contract for Stepping Stone (\$200,000) and TLC Contract for Transitional Housing Plus (\$512,000).

#### **FISCAL SUMMARY**

| <b>Expenditures</b>                | <b>FY 19-20<br/>Adopted</b> | <b>FY20-21<br/>Projected</b> | <b>FY 21-22<br/>Projected</b> |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Budgeted Expenses                  |                             |                              |                               |
| Additional Appropriation Requested |                             |                              |                               |

|                           |          |          |          |
|---------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>Total Expenditures</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> |
| <b>Funding Sources</b>    |          |          |          |
| General Fund/WA GF        |          |          |          |
| State/Federal             |          |          |          |
| Fees/Other                |          |          |          |
| Use of Fund Balance       |          |          |          |
| Contingencies             |          |          |          |
| <b>Total Sources</b>      | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> |

**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

N/A

| <b>Staffing Impacts:</b>        |  |                               |                               |
|---------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Position Title (Payroll)</b> | <b>Monthly Salary Range (A - I Step)</b> | <b>Additions<br/>(number)</b> | <b>Deletions<br/>(number)</b> |
|                                 |  |                               |                               |
|                                 |  |                               |                               |
|                                 |  |                               |                               |

**Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):**

N/A

**Attachments:**

Table - Housing Resources Currently Available

**Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:**

N/A