Lead Agencies Interview Protocol

Note: prior to the interview, this protocol will be tailored for the YHDP project or the comparison site and completed as much as possible from existing documents. For example, YHDP communities are required to describe their governance structure in their CCPs, so interviewers should review those sections prior to the interview. Different people at the lead agency likely will respond to different questions in the protocol. For the Year 2 and Year 4 interviews, this protocol will probe for changes and additional challenges since the previous interview.

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to talk with us today. As you know, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has contracted with Westat to conduct a cross-site evaluation of the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project (YHDP).

[YHDP sites] As you know, _____ is one of the communities involved in the demonstration. In each of the demonstration communities, we are interviewing a number of people to learn more about the community's efforts to serve youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and how the YHDP is unfolding there. In the interview today, I am especially interested in learning about your organization's involvement in the YHDP, although I also want to learn about the entire homeless service system for youth. In preparation for this interview, we have reviewed your plan and would like to build on that knowledge to learn more about your community's service system for youth experiencing homelessness.

[Comparison sites] As part of this evaluation, we are also visiting other communities across the country that are not implementing a YHDP to learn about their efforts to serve youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. In the interview today, I am especially interested in learning about your organization's involvement in the youth homelessness system.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average two hours per response for the Lead Agency Staff interview. HUD may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection information unless that collection displays a valid OMB control number 2528-xxxx, expiring xx-xx-xxxx.

The information requested under this collection is protected and held private in accordance with 42 U.S.C. 1306, 20 CFR 401 and 402, 5 U.S.C.552 (Freedom of Information Act), 5 U.S.C. 552a (Privacy Act of 1974) and OMB Circular No. A-130.

Before I get into more of the specifics of the interview, do you have any questions for me?

[See if there are any questions, comments, concerns.]

We'd like to record the session to make sure we get your answers accurately. Following our visit, the recording will be transcribed and used for analysis. At the end of the study in 2021, we will give copies of the transcription without names or any identifying information to HUD for their records. The recordings will be destroyed. You can ask us to turn off the recording at any time if you would prefer to talk about something and not have it recorded. Do I have your permission to record the interview?

[If permission is granted, turn on recorder.]

A. Background

I would like to begin with a few questions about your background and role in the system.

A1. What is your position in the organization? How long have you been in this position? *[Ask of all lead agency staff in interview.]*

A2. What role do you and your organization have in *[select the appropriate term]* the YHDP/youth homeless system?

A3. What is your role within the CoC?

A4. What is the mission or focus of this organization?

A5. *[IF A SERVICE ORGANIZATION (i.e., Alaska, Cincinnati, Santa Cruz)]*
  o What is the nature of the population served, such as age, eligibility criteria, service needs?
  o What services are provided?

B. Defining youth homelessness

My first few questions focus on how your community is defining homelessness and at risk of homelessness for youth.

B1. Is there a consistent definition of youth homelessness used in your system?
  o *[If yes]* What is it? Does your definition follow the HUD definitions? *[Probe for how youth is defined and how homelessness is defined.]*
  o *[If no]* What are the different definitions used and by which agencies? *[If so, use table below for response. If not, write in response.]*

Definition	Agencies Using
HUD Category 1: Literally homeless Individuals and families who live in a place not meant for human habitation (including the streets or in their car), emergency shelter, transitional housing, and hotels paid for by a government or charitable organization	
HUD Category 2: Imminent risk of homelessness Individuals or families who will lose their primary nighttime residence within 14 days and have no other resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing	
HUD Category 3: Homeless under other Federal statutes Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with children and youth who do not meet any of the other categories but are homeless under other Federal statutes, have not had a lease and have moved 2 or more times in the past 60 days and are likely to remain unstable because of special needs or barriers	
HUD Category 4: Fleeing domestic violence Individuals or families who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking and who lack resources and support networks to obtain other permanent housing	
Other (specify)	
Other (specify)	
Other (specify)	

B2. Is there a consistent definition for at risk of homelessness in your community?
  o [If yes] What is it? Is this definition used for eligibility for all services?
  o [If no] What are the different definitions used and by which agencies?

B3. What services are youth at risk of homelessness eligible for?

B4. What is the composition of the population of youth experiencing homelessness in your community? Are there specific subgroups of note (e.g., LGBTQ, pregnant/parenting, minors, exiting foster care or juvenile justice, youth of color, commercially sexually exploited, other)? What data or studies support your understanding of the population? Do you have any data on youth who are at risk of homelessness?

B5. *[If site participated in Chapin Hall's 2016 national Voices of Youth Count as ascertained prior to site visit]* How are the Voices of Youth Count findings informing your work?

C. Plan Development, Overview, and Implementation

[YHDP sites] As I mentioned earlier, we have reviewed your plan but would like to know a bit more detail about its status, development, and current implementation.

[Comparison sites] Do you have a community plan for addressing youth homelessness? *[If so, continue with C1. If not, go to Section D.]*

Overview and Structure

C1. Prior to the YHDP/community plan, was there a strategic plan for addressing youth homelessness? Who developed it? When? What institutions and organizations were covered by the plan? Can we obtain a copy?

C2. Can you give us a brief overview of the key components; that is, the programs/initiatives you are planning to implement or modify as part of the community plan? We will go into more detail about each of these later.

C3. Which organizations are/were involved in the plan's development? Can you describe the various roles these organizations played? For organizations that are no longer involved, what were the reasons they stopped being involved?

Youth Involvement

C4. Were youth involved in the planning process? *[Prompt for their involvement at both the systems and organizational level.]* How were they identified and selected? How are/were they engaged? What impact did their involvement have?

C5. Are youth involved in the plan's implementation? *[Prompt for both their involvement at both the systems and organizational level.]* How are they engaged? Are they the same youth as those involved in the plan development?

C6. Describe the _____ *[name of Youth Board]* and the role it plays. Was there a youth board prior to the YHDP?

o When did it start? How are members selected? Are there terms? How many are on the YAB? Is it the same youth as those involved in the plan development? What role does the board play in the system? Does it have decision-making power? How often does it meet? Are there workgroups or subcommittees? How does it interact with other governance and leadership structures? Does the board reflect the diversity of the youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness in your community? In what ways?

Technical Assistance

C7. Have you received any technical assistance (TA) on developing and implementing your plan? Who provided it?

o What TA was useful? How has it influenced the efforts? *[Probe for topics, type of assistance, such as in-person vs. calls vs. convenings, when it was provided.]*

o What TA was not as useful? Why?

o How did you feel about the frequency of the TA? The knowledge of your provider? The appropriateness of the TA to your efforts?

o What types of TA would you like in the future?

Challenges

C8. What challenges have you faced during the planning process for the YHDP/community plan?

o What strategies did you use to try to overcome these challenges? What has resulted? Have you received any TA to help with these challenges? Did it help? If no, why not? If yes, how?

C9. What challenges have you faced as you are carrying out your plans for the YHDP?

o What strategies did you use to try to overcome these challenges? What has resulted? Have you received any TA to help with these challenges? Did it help? If no, why not? If yes, how? Any additional assistance needed?

D. Governance

Now I'd like to ask you about the governance structure.

D1. Can you describe the governance structure for the youth homeless system? *[Probe for lead agency, other organizations involvement, types of decisions made, etc.]*

o What major role(s) does this governance structure play?

o What kinds of decisions does this governance structure make?

o Is this structure specific to the youth system or shared with the systems for adults and for families?

D2. What changes in governance have occurred or are planned for with the YHDP?

E. Coordination of Youth Homeless Services with Other Systems

We'd like to learn about how the youth homeless system coordinates with other systems.

E1. Is there any coordination between youth homeless service providers and adult and family homeless service providers? How has that or will that change with the YHDP? *[Probe for coordination on coordinated entry as well as housing; on serving particular populations, especially young adults 18-24 and parenting/pregnant young adults 18-24.]*

E2. Is there any coordination between the youth homeless system and

o the child welfare system?

o the juvenile justice system?

o the education system?

o other mainstream service systems (such as health, behavioral health, employment)?

[For each, probe for role of YHDP if applicable, level of coordination prior to YHDP or community plan, and current/planned. Probe on type of coordination, including involvement in governance, referrals, data sharing, etc.]

E3. What challenges have you faced in coordinating with these systems?

o What strategies did you use to try to overcome these challenges? What has resulted?

E4. What efforts does the YHDP/community plan have for increasing coordination across these systems?

F. Funding

My next questions are about funding for youth homeless services. From *[documents reviewed prior to interview]* we learned *[summarize findings]*. We'd like to confirm/find out about the following:

F1. Key sources of funding for the youth homeless services system. *[Review sources and amounts.]*
- o How those funds are being used
- o Any restrictions on how specific funds can be used

F2. Besides the amount of funding, what funding challenges do you face? *[Probe for restrictiveness, process for accessing and using, etc.]*

G. Current Status of the Youth Homeless Service System

Now I would like to walk you through different components of the youth homeless system and learn about the status of each, beginning with outreach. Many of these components are covered in your plan, but we would like to know more about their status and implementation. *[Verify information covered in the plans and ask questions about missing information. Address all components, so as not to miss any components that were not included in the plan.]*

Outreach

G1. It looks like your outreach efforts consist of *[list from plan].*
Now I'd like to walk through each of the efforts. For each:
- **o** What is the nature of the effort? Please describe.
- **o** When did it start?
- **o** What organizations are involved? In what ways?
- **o** How are youth identified? Where are they identified?
- **o** What resources, if any, are provided to youth?
- **o** Is this effort targeted to all youth and young adults or to specific subpopulations?

G2. Are there any other efforts currently in place to reach out to youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness? This could include street or school outreach efforts or mobile vans or drop in centers.

G3. Are additional changes to the outreach efforts planned as part of the YHDP/community plan? If so, please describe. *[Probe: Changes in the way youth are identified? Resources to be provided? Organizations involved? Role of other systems? How and when the program will operate? Where it operates? Its capacity? The nature and number of staff involved?]*

G4. What challenges have you faced implementing outreach efforts?
- **o** What strategies did you use to try to overcome these challenges? What has resulted? Have you received any TA to help with these challenges? How has it helped or how could it be improved if it did not help?

G5. What have you learned about outreach services thus far?

Coordinated Entry

Now I would like to move to learning more about how youth enter the system.

G6. How do youth currently enter the system? Is coordinated entry fully implemented? If so, what does "full implementation" mean? *[Probe: all providers use it? CE data integrated with HMIS data? All youth receive CE?]*

G7. How were prioritization policies for youth established? How did you decide which vulnerability or service need factors would be assessed? Who/which agencies participated in making that decision?

G8. If coordinated entry is fully implemented:
- **o** How does the process work? *[Probe: Who is eligible; one entry point or multiple points; how youth arrive at these points; whether/how the system is*

> *coordinated/linked with the adult and/or family coordinated entry homeless systems.]*
> - o What is the "official date" when coordinated entry started?
> - o What organizations are involved?
> - o What is the role, if any, of other systems such as child welfare system, juvenile justice, school system?
> - o How is coordinated entry coordinated with other services (such as diversion, housing, other services?) Please describe.

G9. If coordinated entry is not fully implemented:
- o How do youth get into the system now?
- o What is the status of coordinated entry? When is it expected to be implemented? What will change in the process?

G10. How are the needs of homeless youth assessed as part of the entry process?
- o Confirm the assessment tool(s) that are used.
- o Who/what providers do the assessment? How are they trained in its use? Have there been challenges in the implementation of the tool?
- o How are the individual assessments used? Is there a prioritization process? How are they used in making referrals to housing and/or other services?
- o Do you anticipate any changes to the assessment process? If yes, please describe *[Probe: on tool, training, the process, etc.]*

G11. What data are collected on the coordinated entry process (such as length of time to placement, etc.)?
- o Are the CE data linked to HMIS data? Some other data system?
- o Are the data used to analyze the effectiveness of the CE process? If so, how? What metrics are used? If not, why not?

G12. Are additional changes to the entry process planned as part of the YHDP/community plan? If so, please describe. *[Probe: Changes in the way youth are identified? Resources available? How and when the program operates? Where it operates? Its capacity?]*

G13. What challenges have you faced implementing coordinated entry for youth?
- o What strategies did you use to try to overcome these challenges? What has resulted? Have you received any TA to help with these challenges? How has it helped? Or how could it be improved?

G14. What have you learned about coordinated entry thus far?

Prevention

My next two sets of questions focus on prevention and diversion services. I'd like to confirm what we learned from your plan. Starting with prevention services…

G15. Currently your efforts in place to prevent youth from becoming homeless include *[list from plan. This could include programs, resources, or interventions such as family intervention, assistance to young parents at risk of homelessness, assistance to youth aging out of foster care, or other supports.] [For each youth homelessness prevention program, ask:]*
- o What is the nature of the effort? Please describe.
- o When did it start?
- o What organizations are involved?
- o How are youth identified? Where are they identified?
- o What resources, if any, are provided to youth?
- o Is this effort targeted to all youth and young adults or to specific subpopulations?

o What is the role, if any, of other systems in the efforts (e.g., child welfare system, school system)?

G16. Are additional changes to these prevention efforts planned as part of the YHDP/community plan? If so, please describe. *[Probe: Changes in the way youth are identified? Resources to be provided? Organizations involved? Role of other systems? How and when the program will operate? Where it operates? Its capacity? The nature and number of staff involved?]*

G17. What challenges have you faced implementing prevention? *[Probe: Go beyond lack of funding.]*

o What strategies did you use to try to overcome these challenges? What has resulted? Have you received any TA to help with these challenges? How has it helped? How could it be improved?

G18. What have you learned about prevention thus far?

Diversion

Now I'd like to ask you about diversion assistance.

G19. Currently your efforts in place to divert youth before they enter shelter or another homeless situation include *[list from plan. This could include programs, resources, or interventions, such as family intervention, rental assistance to young parents, or other supports.] [For each youth homelessness diversion program ask:]*

o What is the nature of the effort? Please describe.

o When did it start?

o What organizations are involved?

o How are youth identified?

o What resources, if any, are provided to youth?

o Is this effort targeted to all youth and young adults or to specific subpopulations?

o What is the role, if any, of other systems in the efforts (e.g., child welfare system, school system)?

G20. Are additional changes to these diversion efforts planned as part of the YHDP/community plan? If so, please describe. *[Probe: Changes in the way youth are identified? Resources to be provided? Organizations involved? Role of other systems? How and when the program will operate? Where it operates? Its capacity? The nature and number of staff involved?]*

G21. What challenges have you faced implementing diversion?

o What strategies did you use to try to overcome these challenges? What has resulted? Have you received any TA to help with these challenges? How has it helped? How could it be improved?

G22. What have you learned about diversion thus far?

Family and Natural Support Engagement Services

Now I have a few questions about any efforts in the system to reunify homeless youth with their families or other natural supports [in addition to any that have already been described]. By "natural supports," I mean personal relationships in the community that enhance the quality and security of life for youth, including family relationships and close friendships. Again, I'd like to confirm what we learned from your plan.

G23. Currently your efforts in place to help homeless youth reunify with their families or other natural supports include *[list from plan].* Let's walk through each effort.

For each:

o What is the nature of the effort? Please describe.

o When did it start?

o What organizations are involved?

o How are youth identified?

o What resources, if any, are provided to families?

o Is this effort targeted to all youth and young adults or to specific subpopulations?

o What is the role, if any, of other systems in the efforts (e.g., child welfare system, school system)? How do homeless service providers work with other systems?

G24. Are additional changes to these efforts planned as part of the YHDP/community plan? If so, please describe. *[Probe: Changes in who is involved? The engagement process? Resources to be provided? Organizations involved? Role of other systems? How and when the program will operate? Where it operates? Its capacity? The nature and number of staff involved?]*

G25. What challenges have you faced implementing family intervention/engagement services?

o What strategies did you use to try to overcome these challenges? What has resulted? Have you received any TA to help with these challenges? How has it helped? How could it be improved?

G26. What have you learned about family intervention services thus far?

Shelter for Youth *[if not obtained prior to interview]*

G27. Are there youth-specific homeless shelters in your community? How many organizations? Are there any documents that would help us understand how many and what types of youth-specific homeless shelters are available in your community? *[Probe: How many beds? Probe for: # and type of units (single or shared occupancy, apartment or room); type of shelter (e.g. congregate, scattered site, etc.); length of stay.]*

Housing for Youth

Now I would like to ask a few questions about housing for youth, both in the youth homeless system as well as any that may be specifically designated for young adults in either the adult or family systems. I am interested in housing for both unaccompanied youth and youth who are parenting or pregnant. Again, I'd like to confirm and expand on what we learned from your plan.

G28. Currently your efforts in place for youth experiencing homelessness include *[list from plan]*. For youth that are parenting or pregnant *[list from plan]*. Others *[list from plan]*.
[Walk through each type of program (RRH, PSH, TH, host homes, other) and ask:]

o When did this type of housing program begin?

o Describe the housing: *[Probe for: # and type of units (single or shared occupancy, apartment or room); type of housing (e.g., congregate, scattered site, etc.); nature and length of assistance (e.g., whether full or partial subsidy, how long subsidy/assistance provided)?]*

o What organizations are involved in the delivery of the housing?

o What services are available to help connect youth to housing (e.g., Housing Navigation)?

o How is housing coordinated with other services (such as coordinated entry, diversion, other services?) Please describe.

G29. Are additional changes to these efforts planned as part of the YHDP/community plan? If so, please describe. *[Probe: Changes in who is involved? The engagement process? Resources to be provided? Organizations involved? Role of other systems? How and when the*

program will operate? Where it operates? Its capacity? The nature and number of staff involved?]

G30. What challenges have you faced implementing housing for youth?
  o What strategies did you use to try to overcome these challenges? What has resulted? Have you received any TA to help with these challenges? How has it helped? How could it be improved?

G31. What have you learned about housing for youth thus far?

Employment Services

Let's turn now to confirming employment and education assistance offered in your community.

G32. Currently your efforts in place to connect youth with employment services or help them find jobs include ***[list from plan. This could include both services targeting youth experiencing homelessness and overall youth employment services.]***
  For each effort:
  o What is the nature of the assistance? Please describe.
  o When did it start?
  o What organizations are involved?
  o How are youth identified?
  o What resources, if any, are provided to youth?
  o Is this effort targeted to all youth and young adults or to specific subpopulations?
  o Do you collaborate with the local American Job Centers, Workforce Investment Board, or other Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) providers? If so, how?

G33. Are additional changes to these efforts planned as part of the YHDP/community plan? If so, please describe. ***[Probe: Changes in who is involved? The engagement process? Resources to be provided? Organizations involved? Role of other systems? How and when the program will operate? Where it operates? Its capacity? The nature and number of staff involved?]***

G34. What challenges have you faced connecting youth with employment services?
  o What strategies did you use to try to overcome these challenges? What has resulted? Have you received any TA to help with these challenges? How has it helped? How could it be improved?

G35. What have you learned about employment services for youth thus far?

Education Services

G36. Currently your efforts in place to connect youth with education services or school supports include ***[list from plan. In addition to secondary education/GED/higher education, this could include job training and apprenticeships.] [For each effort, ask:]***
  o What is the nature of the assistance? Please describe.
  o When did it start?
  o What organizations are involved?
  o How are youth identified?
  o What resources, if any, are provided to youth?
  o Is this effort targeted to all youth and young adults or to specific subpopulations?

G37. Are additional changes to these efforts planned as part of the YHDP/community plan? If so, please describe. ***[Probe: Changes in who is involved? The engagement process? Resources to be provided? Organizations involved? Role of other systems? How and when the***

program will operate? Where it operates? Its capacity? The nature and number of staff involved.]

G38. What challenges have you faced connecting youth with education services?
  o What strategies did you use to try to overcome these challenges? What has resulted? Have you received any TA to help with these challenges? How has it helped? How could it be improved?

G39. What have you learned about education services thus far?

Other Services

G40. Other efforts in place in this system or in others to support youth who are experiencing homelessness Include *[list from plan.] [Prompt separately for case management, behavioral health, other services.]*

  For each:
  o What is the nature of the effort? Please describe.
  o When did it start?
  o What organizations are involved?
  o How are youth identified?
  o What resources, if any, are provided to youth?
  o Is this effort targeted to all youth and young adults or to specific subpopulations?
  o What is the role, if any, of other systems in the efforts (e.g., child welfare system, school system)?

G41. Are additional changes to these efforts planned as part of the YHDP/community plan? If so, please describe. *[Probe: Changes in who is involved? The engagement process? Resources to be provided? Organizations involved? Role of other systems? How and when the program will operate? Where it operates? Its capacity? The nature and number of staff involved.]*

G42. What challenges have you faced connecting youth with other services?
  o What strategies did you use to try to overcome these challenges? What has resulted? Have you received any TA to help with these challenges? How has it helped? How could it be improved?

G43. What have you learned about other services for youth thus far?

H. System Issues

I would like to ask you a few final questions about the overall system for youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

H1. Currently, what are the key gaps in meeting the needs of youth experiencing homelessness? Where are youth most likely to fall through the cracks in the system? Are there certain characteristics of youth who are more likely to fall through the cracks or not get the services they need? *[For YHDP sites]* How will YHDP address the gaps? What gaps will still be there?]

H2. What would you say are the main unresolved issues in the youth homeless system that you are confronting?

H3. What are the tensions in the system?

H4. Are there disagreements in what the system should look like? What are the various views?

I. Data

Now moving on to a few data questions.

I1. How do you use data for system monitoring/evaluation? What metrics are monitored and are they used to set and measure progress toward goals?

    o What data do you use?

    o Is it easily accessible? In what format?

    o How often?

I2. Are there data that the system or decision makers need but that are not currently being collected? Why are they not being collected?

I3. Are you conducting any other studies right now outside of system monitoring? With whom? In what population/topics?

    o Do you have any new efforts around monitoring and evaluation as part of the YHDP/community plan? If so, describe.

I4. What challenges have you faced in using data?

    o What strategies did you use to try to overcome these challenges? What has resulted? Have you received any TA to help with these challenges? How has it helped? How could it be improved?

J. Context

J1. Is there any other way that your agency/department is involved with serving youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness?

J2. Are there any other factors that are important for us to understand in characterizing the context of the community? Economic factors? State or local political factors? Anything else (such as geography, transportation, culture, growth of the population)?

K. Developments

K1. *[For YHDP sites]* What role did the YHDP grant play in the development of new and better programs for homeless youth? What did the grant do for your community that would not have occurred without the grant?

K2. My final question is: What do you see as the most exciting developments under way or being considered that are relevant to youth homelessness?