

Local Government Agency Staff Interview

[Prior to the interview, find out government agency staff (i.e., child welfare, juvenile justice, behavioral health departments, law enforcement, school personnel) are involved in the YHDP or youth homelessness system and what role they play. Create a customized list of services provided by the organization to use in Section D of the protocol. Services could include outreach, prevention, diversion, social/community engagement, housing, mental health/substance abuse, education, employment, and other. For each service, note ahead of the interview, what information (e.g., number of units, eligibility) we already have from community documents.]

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview today. We really appreciate your help. We are researchers from Westat, a research company based outside of Washington DC. We have been contracted by the Department of Housing and Urban Development to learn about how the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project (YHDP) is being implemented in 10 communities across the country.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 45 minutes per response for this Government 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.

[YHDP sites] As you know, _____ is one of the communities involved in the demonstration. We are interviewing a number of people in your community to understand how youth are served and how the YHDP is unfolding here.

[Comparison sites] As part of this evaluation, we are also visiting other communities across the country to learn about their efforts to serve youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

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 agency/department and your role in the agency.

1. What is the mission or focus of this agency/department?
2. What is your position in the agency/department? How long have you been in this position?
3. What is the nature of the population served through your agency/department? **[Probe for age, eligibility criteria, service needs.]**
4. What has been the history of this agency/department's role in serving youth experiencing or at risk for homelessness?

B. Role in the System

5. What role do you and/or your agency/department have in the **[select appropriate wording]** YHDP/youth homelessness system?
6. Did you or your agency/department participate in planning? In what ways?
7. Are you involved in the governance of the system? In what ways? **[Probe on member of the CoC, board, workgroups or committees.]**
 - o If yes, what changes in governance have occurred or are planned for the **[select appropriate wording]** YHDP/youth homelessness system?
 - o What are your perspectives of the governance structure now? The planned structure?
8. **[If applicable:]** How familiar are you with the Youth Board? What is your perspective on the role it has played? What has it offered? Are there ways to improve its contribution?

C. Coordination of Youth Homeless Services with Other Systems

9. How is the work of your agency/department coordinated with the youth homeless service system, if at all? **[Probe on who else can/should coordinate.]**
10. **[only for YHDP]** How has that or will that change with the YHDP?
11. What challenges has your agency faced in coordinating with the youth homeless system?
 - o What strategies did you use to try to overcome these challenges? What has resulted?
12. What does your agency need in order to coordinate better? **[Probe on funding, leadership/guidance, TA.]**
13. What efforts are planned for increasing coordination across these systems?

D. Current Status of the Youth Homeless Service System

Now I would like to ask you about the current status of the youth homeless service system. We would like to walk through each of the areas in which your agency/department provides services first and then discuss areas that your agency supports or coordinates with.

14. Do you play a role in providing any of the services in the system, such as outreach, prevention, diversion, family intervention, education or employment services, or other services? Does your agency/department support or coordinate with any of these services?

I would like to ask you some additional questions about the services you noted.

[For each type of service that the agency/department provides, ask:]

15. Can you describe the nature of the services you provide?

[Probe on:]

- o Are specific subpopulations targeted for the services? Which ones? Can you describe how they are identified?
- o Are there specific eligibility criteria for the services? How are youth screened for eligibility?
- o **[only for YHDP]** Have the services changed at all with the demonstration? Are they expected to change? In what ways and why?
- o Describe any challenges you see with the services.
 - i. What strategies have been used to overcome challenges?
- o **[only for YHDP]** Have you received any technical assistance as part of the demonstration? **[Probe for what has been received and from whom.]**
 - i. Has it been helpful? In what ways? How has it influenced the efforts? What could be improved?
 - ii. What types of TA would you like in the future?

[For each type of service that the agency/department supports or coordinates with, ask:]

16. Can you describe the nature of the services you support or are coordinated with? **[Probe on:]**

- o What support do you provide or in what ways are you coordinated with the service?
- o What organizations do you coordinate with?
- o **[only for YHDP]** Have the services changed at all with the demonstration? Are they expected to change? In what ways and why?
- o Describe any challenges you see with the services or with coordination.
 - i. What strategies have been used to overcome challenges?

17. Do you provide or operate any of the housing that is provided for youth in the system? This includes housing in place and planned 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.

18. Can you describe the housing you provide or operate? **[Walk through each type of program (Rapid Rehousing, Permanent Supportive Housing, Temporary Housing (RRH, PSH, TH, host homes, other)) and ask:]**

- o What support/funding do you provide for housing?
- o What other organizations do you coordinate with?
- o Are specific subpopulations targeted for the housing? Can you describe how they are identified?
- o Are there specific eligibility criteria for the housing? How are youth screened for eligibility?
- o When did your organization begin offering this type of housing? [Probe for if this is a new effort with YHDP]
- o **[only for YHDP]** Has the housing changed at all with the demonstration? Is it expected to change? In what ways and why?
- o Describe any challenges you have had with offering this type of housing.
 - o What strategies did you use to try to overcome challenges?
- o Have you received any technical assistance for this housing as part of the demonstration? [Probe for what has been received and from whom]
 - o Has it been helpful? In what ways? How has it influenced the efforts? What could be improved?
 - o What types of TA would you like in the future?

E. Coordinated Entry

19. Is your agency/department connected at all with coordinated entry? In what ways?
- o Probe for whether they refer youth to the system or receive referrals from the system.
 - o **[if refer]** – can you describe the process of referring youth to coordinated entry? Have you had any challenges in having youth access the system through coordinated entry?
 - o **[if referrals]** – can you describe how you receive referrals from coordinated entry? Have you had any challenges with the referrals?
20. How are the needs of homeless youth assessed as part of the entry process?
- o Do staff from your agency/department participate in the assessments in any way? Describe. **[Confirm the assessment tool(s) that are used.]** Have they been trained in its use? Have there been challenges in the implementation of the tool?
 - o How are the individual assessments used (e.g., making housing referrals, other service referrals, etc.)? What are the eligibility criteria for the referrals?
 - o Do your staff conduct any other assessments of youth?
21. **[for comparison sites]** Is there a process in place to assess the needs of homeless youth in the community?
- o Do staff from your agency/department participate in the assessments in any way? Describe. **[Confirm the assessment tool(s) that are used.]** Have they been trained in its use? Have there been challenges in the implementation of the tool?
 - o How are the individual assessments used (e.g., making housing referrals, other service referrals, etc.)? What are the eligibility criteria for the referrals?
 - o Do your staff conduct any other assessments of youth?
22. **[only for YHDP]** Are you aware of any new or revised coordinated entry efforts planned/implemented as part of the YHDP? If so, please describe.

- o How will you participate in those activities?
- o How will that change the way you participate now?
- o Describe any additional challenges with coordinated entry.
- o Describe any TA received related to coordinated entry for youth.
 - i. Which TA has been helpful? How has it influenced the efforts? Which has not been as useful?
 - ii. What types of TA would you like in the future?

F. Data/HMIS (Homelessness Management Information System)

23. What data do your agency collect on youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness? Can you describe the efforts a bit? **[Probe for data collected for evaluation or reporting purposes; whether the data collection is within or outside of the HMIS system; if outside, are the data ever linked with HMIS?]**
24. **[only for YHDP]** Are you aware of any new efforts around data collection as part of the YHDP?
- o How will you participate in those activities?
 - o How will that change the way you participate now?

G. Systems 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.

25. 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?
26. What would you say are the main unresolved issues in the youth homeless system that you are confronting?
27. What are the tensions in the system?
28. Are there disagreements in what the system should look like? What are the various views?
29. What do you see as the most exciting developments under way or being considered?

H. Context

30. Is there any other way that your agency/department is involved with serving youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness?
31. 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)?

I. Developments

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