

SUCCESS DESPITE BARRIERS:  
Innovative Housing Options for Homeless Young Adults

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## Executive Summary

*INTRODUCTION:* This report highlights some of the most contemporary innovations being used to secure stable housing for homeless young adults 18-24 years old after they complete Transitional Living Programs (TLPs). The information about stable housing services comes from a literature review and a series of interviews with the directors of five agencies and one expert in the field. The six interviewees were chosen by the New England Network for Child, Youth & Family Services, which conducted preliminary background research to determine the agencies' leadership in the field of post-TLP housing development.

*BACKGROUND INFORMATION:* Between 750,000 and 2 million young adults, ages 18-24, experience an episode of homelessness each year in the United States. This population of homeless young adults faces several barriers in the attempt to

secure stable housing. Among these barriers are: a lack of affordable housing, the tendency of younger adults to earn lower wages and have fewer benefits, a lack of family support, a loss of the support services available to youth under age 18, and the occurrence of mental health, substance abuse, and/or developmental problems. In response to these barriers, social service agencies began using federal Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) grants to support Transitional Living Program (TLP) facilities. TLPs provide a safe and secure housing arrangement where a young adult can transition from being a dependent minor to being a stable, interdependent adult. However, many young adults graduating from the TLPs are not entirely prepared for the level of responsibility required for maintenance of stable housing. Consequently, service agencies have begun to develop post-TLP housing programs

though the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), local public and private funds as a final step towards securing a stable housing future for previously homeless young adults.

*INTERVIEWS:* A team of three Tufts University graduate students contacted the directors of the agencies and the expert for a one-hour telephone conversation. The Tufts University researchers then followed up the interviews with a series of clarifying questions. The directors and agencies interviewed were: Matt Schnars, Program Director: Haven House Services, Raleigh, NC; David Myers, CEO: Teen Living Programs, Chicago, IL; Steve Bewsey, Director of Housing and Homeless Services: LifeWorks, Austin, TX; Sarah Porter, Deputy Director of Program Services: Larkin Street Youth Services, San Francisco, CA; and Kim Trieber, Co-Director: Dream Tree Project, Taos, NM.

Rebecca Muller is not currently the director of a service agency, but has had years of experience with stable housing development and serves as an expert in the field.

*SUCCESS DESPITE BARRIERS:* The researchers found that the central component of success for stable housing development is the ability of an agency to form numerous community coalitions. For most of the agencies this meant establishing several informal and formal partnerships between the agency and local churches, universities, neighborhood development corporations, construction companies, and individual landlords. Agencies also connected to numerous funding sources by looking past FYSB and HUD money towards city funds, influential individuals, private corporate sponsorship, and project-based vouchers. While forming community coalitions are the key elements in a post-TLP housing program, other characteristics contribute to an agency's

success. The other characteristics important for successful stable housing arrangements are: being cognizant of the agency's impact on a community, having a variety of living arrangements available to meet individual needs, emphasizing personal relationships, and ensuring smooth transitions from structured living arrangements to

independent housing. Because stable post-TLP housing of this nature is a fairly new concept, the researches make two final recommendations: the establishment of long-term data collection and evaluation to quantitatively determine best practices and the increase in interagency cooperation to encourage the exchange of information.

## Project Description

This report examines innovative approaches to housing young adults, ages 18-24, who are served by federally-funded transitional living programs. The report is specifically focused on how young people secure and maintain housing after they have graduated from transitional living programs. The researchers interviewed program directors from agencies that serve homeless young adults as well as an expert in the field. The report provides in-depth descriptions of promising practices developed by five agencies across the country. The goal is to better understand how and why the agencies decided upon these particular housing options and the results they have achieved in their demographic area. The findings will be useful practitioners in the field as well as state and federal policymakers.

## Methodology

This project was carried out by a team of Tufts University graduate students, under the direction of the New England Network for Child, Youth & Family Services, as part of the Field Projects class in the Department of Urban and Environmental Policy & Planning. Douglas Tanner, Technical Assistance Coordinator of the New England Network distributed agency contact information to the Tufts University Research Team. Members of the research team contacted the agencies through e-mail and by phone. Phone interviews were conducted with five program directors and one expert in the field.

## Young Adult Homelessness in the United States

A substantial number of young adults ages 18-24 - approximately 750,000 to 2 million - experience an episode of homelessness each year in the United States.<sup>1</sup> The country's lack of affordable housing hits young people especially hard because they often have low wage jobs with few benefits. Young people who cannot rely on family members to provide a place to live, financial support, and/or guidance are particularly vulnerable to homelessness.

### *LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING*

According to the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH), the lack of affordable housing and the limited availability of housing assistance are the main causes of homelessness. NCH reports that between 1973 and 1993, 2.2 million affordable housing units were demolished or converted to higher priced dwellings.<sup>2</sup> *The Crisis in*

*America's Housing*, a report issued by five national organizations, also describes the shift in the distribution of rental units to higher priced units in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>3</sup> Today, there is a shortage of nearly five million affordable rental units. In its analysis of the most recent American Housing Survey, the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University found that there were only 7.9 million affordable rental units for 9.9 million renters in the bottom income quintile – a shortage of 2 million.<sup>45</sup> An additional 2.7 million of the lowest cost units were occupied by higher income households, creating a total gap of 4.7 million units.<sup>6</sup> This finding mirrors research by the National Low Income Housing Coalition, which found that in 2000 the United States needed an additional 4.9 million rental units that were both affordable and available to the lowest income households.<sup>7</sup>

## *LOW WAGES, FEW BENEFITS*

The lack of affordable housing is a problem for low-income people of all ages.

However, the high cost of housing hits young adults especially hard because they are more likely than older adults to be in entry-level, lower paying jobs with fewer benefits, and are less likely to have health care and savings.<sup>8</sup> It is particularly difficult for young people to pay the steep upfront costs associated with renting an apartment (i.e., security deposit, first and last months' rent). Furthermore, their month-to-month existence can be jeopardized by an unexpected expense, a health crisis, for example. Young adults are especially likely to incur health expenses because they are more likely to be uninsured than any other age group.<sup>9</sup> In their entry-level, often part-time positions, they are the least likely to have employer-sponsored health care.<sup>10</sup>

Census data show that 45 percent of young

adults ages 19-23 were uninsured for at least part of 2002.<sup>11</sup>

Even young people who work *full-time* at the minimum wage cannot afford a basic one-bedroom apartment at the local Fair Market Rent in *any state in the country* without using more than 30 percent of their income, the accepted standard of affordability.<sup>12,13</sup> In 70 percent of the country's metropolitan areas, the Housing Wage (i.e., the hourly wage a full time worker must earn to afford the Fair Market Rent for a two bedroom rental unit) is at least twice the area's minimum wage. In 56 metropolitan areas, the Housing Wage is over three times the local minimum wage!<sup>14</sup> In order to afford a two-bedroom apartment at the Fair Market Rent, renters in 991 counties (where 79% of all rental households are located) would have to work over 80 hours a week at the local minimum wage.<sup>15</sup> In Boston, the Housing Wage for a

one-bedroom unit is \$20.71. The state's minimum wage is \$6.75, meaning that a minimum-wage worker would have to work 123 hours a week to afford a one-bedroom unit.<sup>16</sup> Wages often fall short even for people earning more than minimum wage. The national Housing Wage is \$15.37, while the median hourly wage is \$14.00 and 25 percent of the population earns less than \$10 an hour.<sup>17</sup>

#### *LACK OF FAMILY SUPPORT*

Young adults who are disconnected from their families are particularly vulnerable to homelessness because they do not have a safety net to fall back on. Young adults often rely on their families to provide a place to live, assistance co-signing contracts, financial support and/or advice as they transition to adulthood; few live independently. According to the U.S. Census Current Population Survey, 55 percent of men ages 18-24 and 46 percent of

women in this age group lived at home with one or both of their parents in 2003.<sup>18</sup> Many young adults continue to live with their families until they can support themselves, while others return home from time to time depending on their financial situation. Most Americans reach age 25 before they are financially self-sufficient.<sup>19</sup>

Young adults who cannot count on their families to provide support are often represented in the ranks of the homeless. Some become estranged from their families because there is a history of child maltreatment or other dysfunction, such as parental drug abuse, within the home. The 1996 National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients, carried out by the Census Bureau, found that 27 percent of homeless respondents reported childhood physical or sexual abuse.<sup>20</sup> Others come from families that lack resources because of their own history of homelessness. Twenty-

one percent of respondents in the national survey reported that their families were homeless during their childhood.<sup>21</sup>

Other young adults have experienced an ongoing separation from their families because they have grown up in foster care or been involved with the juvenile justice system. Various studies have found between 23 and 47 percent of homeless individuals have childhood histories of out-of-home placement.<sup>22</sup> Many foster youth are discharged into homelessness or become homeless shortly after they leave foster care. Research has found that one to four years after leaving care 12 to 25 percent of former foster youth experience homelessness at least once.<sup>23</sup> Many have unstable housing and are forced to move from place to place – one study found that in the 12 to 18 months after leaving care, 22 percent of former foster youth had lived in four or more places.<sup>24</sup>

#### *LACK OF RESOURCES FOR YOUNG ADULTS*

Not having family to rely on during the transition to adulthood places young people at a serious disadvantage. Without the support typically provided by family, a single setback can thrust a young adult into homelessness because there is nowhere else to turn for assistance. Peers are often unable to provide long-term support because their financial and housing situations are similarly precarious. Public housing and financial assistance are typically unavailable to adults without children. Young people beyond the age of 21 are no longer eligible for transitional living programs. To make matters worse, shelter beds exclusively for use by young adults (over age 18) are scarce. Even when beds are available, many young adults are wary of entering a facility that primarily houses older adults, who often have severe mental health problems. Others, with a long history of being institutionalized (i.e., in foster care, group homes, etc.), are

hesitant to enter any facility out of an understandable desire for autonomy. These potential remedies – support from peers, public assistance, transitional living programs, and shelters – are only temporary fixes anyway. This report focuses on emerging long-term solutions.

*ADDITIONAL BARRIERS: MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS, SUBSTANCE ABUSE, DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES*

The difficulties young people face securing permanent housing can be exacerbated by mental health and substance abuse problems. Studies have found that homeless youth have rates of serious mental health problems, as determined by standardized diagnostic criteria, from 19 to 50 percent.<sup>25</sup> Rates of drug abuse may be even higher. A survey of 432 homeless young people, ages 13 to 23, in Hollywood, California found that 71 percent met clinical criteria for an alcohol or drug abuse disorder or both (12

percent abused alcohol only, 16 percent abused drugs only, and 43 percent abused both).<sup>26</sup> Three national surveys of substance use among youth ages 12 to 21 who had run away or been homeless at some point in their lives found that 75 percent of those currently homeless were using marijuana, nearly one-third were using hallucinogens, stimulants, and analgesics, and one-quarter were using crack, other forms of cocaine, inhalants, and sedatives.<sup>27</sup> In the three national studies, drug abuse rates were higher among older youth than among younger youth.<sup>28</sup> The research has also found that rates of substance use vary by history of homelessness: youth on the street have the highest rates of substance use, followed by sheltered youth, runaways, and housed youth.<sup>29</sup>

Another barrier to housing young adults is the presence of developmental disabilities. In testimony before the Federal Ways and

Means Committee, Mark Kroner, director of the Lighthouse Transitional Living Program in Cincinnati, Ohio indicated that up to a third of the teens at Lighthouse have a diagnosable developmental disability, many functioning at a 12 to 14-year-old level at age 18.

#### *INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAMS AND*

#### *TRANSITIONAL LIVING PROGRAMS (TLPs)*

Independent Living and Transitional Living Programs (TLPs) were created in response to the barriers young adults face as they transition to adulthood. Independent Living programs serve youth who are preparing to age out of the foster care system and live on their own. In 1986, Title IV-E of the Social Security Act allocated funds to states to assist youth in out-of-home placement.<sup>30</sup> In 1999, the Foster Care Independence Act (FCIA) doubled federal funding for the Independent Living Program, now called the John H. Chaffee Foster Care Independence

Program, from \$70 to \$140 million. FCIA also directed states to use a portion of their funds to provide services to older youth who have left foster care but have not yet reached age 21.<sup>31</sup>

Transitional Living Programs serve a broader population of young people who are at risk for homelessness; they are not limited to serving youth who were in the foster care system. In 1988, Congress created the Transitional Living Program for Older Homeless Youth as part of the Amendments to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA). Today, the Federal Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) funds transitional living programs through the Runaway, Homeless, and Missing Children Protection Act of 2003.<sup>32</sup> In FY2003, \$36.7 million was devoted to TLPs, a fraction of what the federal government allocates to independent living programs. With this funding, nonprofit and public organizations provide

up to 18 months of housing as well as life skills support to youth ages 16-21. The goal of TLP programs is to create a bridge between young adult homelessness and self-sufficient, independent living. While there are various approaches agencies take to construct this bridge, they generally provide life skills training; assistance meeting educational, job training and employment needs; referrals to mental health and substance abuse treatment programs; rental subsidies and/or other financial assistance.

#### *POST-TLP HOUSING*

Due to the shortage of affordable housing and young adults' lack of financial assets, finding stable housing is often one of the most pressing issues faced by young people leaving TLPs. Additionally, many young adults graduating from the TLPs are not entirely prepared for the level of responsibility required for maintenance of stable housing. Consequently, service

agencies have begun to develop post-TLP housing programs. Some agencies have approached this problem innovatively; five will be highlighted in this report. The report will add to the literature on the subject of post-TLP housing; most of the current literature is on housing for young people in TLPs. TLPs provide housing in various ways, including host family homes, group homes, agency-owned apartment buildings, etc.; less is known about how youth maintain housing once they leave the program. Given the barriers young people face securing housing, it is essential to learn how TLPs have effectively served young adults exiting their programs.

## Agency Profiles

The next section details the housing options developed by five agencies across the country. An expert in the field provides guiding principles for agencies developing stable housing for homeless young adults.

REBECCA MULLER, STABLE HOUSING

DEVELOPMENT EXPERT

*“It is important to engage with a broad cross-section of individuals and groups in a community. Non-traditional housing sources are often the best match for young adults.”*

Rebecca Muller is currently an independent consultant, primarily for non-profit and governmental agencies that provide services to marginalized populations, including at-risk youth. Her expertise in the development of community coalitions for post-TLP housing comes from her work with ServiceNet, a multi-service agency for at-risk populations. While there, she helped to develop an internal agency continuum of services for homeless families, individuals, and at-risk youth in Hampshire and Franklin Counties, Massachusetts. Muller summarized the importance of coalition innovation when she said, “Service

providers need to be creative when developing housing options for youth. It is important to engage with a broad cross-section of individuals and groups in a community. Non-traditional housing sources are often the best match for young adults.”

PREJUDICE

Muller indicated that the motivation to develop stable housing options for homeless young adults stemmed, in part, from an observed prejudice this population faced in the community. Society tends to view this population in a doubly questioning manner. First, they are stigmatized as irresponsible and ignorant due to their age. Second, they are judged to have something ‘wrong’ with them because they are homeless. This double prejudice makes it difficult to secure stable housing. Landlords tend to be reluctant to rent to youth with low-wage

jobs who lack traditional financial ‘back-up’ support from their families.

*INTERDEPENDENCE NOT INDEPENDENCE:*

*FRIENDLY LANDLORDS AND THE INTERFAITH*

*COUNCIL*

Muller designed ServiceNet’s post-TLP housing program to provide support to participants, while still allowing them to evolve towards interdependent self-sufficiency. The idea of “interdependence” not “independence” was the guiding principle for both the individual and the agency. The distinction of “interdependence” is important because individuals are most successful when they have support from family and friends, especially as they transition into young adult self-sufficiency. Similarly, agencies are successful when they develop webs of interdependence among other community individuals, service providers, non-profit organizations, and corporations.

One example of interdependence in the community is the establishment of partnerships with “friendly landlords.”

Agencies frequently find “friendly landlords” who will enter into a lease relationship with them. Landlords like this situation because they are guaranteed rent and have a third party overseeing the occupants and ensuring a safe environment. The agency makes it clear to the participants that if they want to stay, they need to display appropriate behavior. The partnership is valuable because the agency has a continuous contact for available housing and the landlord has guaranteed oversight.

Another way coalitions can be created is through collaborating with faith-based organizations. Muller helped to form the Interfaith Council, which created a network between faith-based organizations and service providers. The collaboration improves the development of stable housing

because faith-based organizations are able to provide knowledge of untapped housing sources and volunteer support, while the agency provides professional staff and oversight.

*FUNDING INNOVATIONS: PROJECT-BASED VOUCHERS*

In her discussion of project-based vouchers, Muller illustrated how innovations can also be found in terms of funding sources. Usually housing vouchers are transient in nature, meaning that they are essentially attached to a person. That person finds his or her own unit and then gets an inspector to view the unit. If the unit is accepted and the landlord agrees, the individual gets a subsidy. Federally-funded project-based vouchers differ because they subsidize the building of housing units so an agency can develop affordable housing at a specific site. The voucher provides construction funding, enabling the units to be affordable to low-

income individuals. The affordable units created by the project-based vouchers can then be stable housing options for homeless young adults. DIAL/SELF Teen Services in Greenfield, MA has been using the affordable units subsidized by the project-based voucher for a variety of individuals, including homeless young adults, for approximately fifteen years.

*THE IMPORTANCE OF VARIETY: DIVERSE PERSONALITIES AND SINGLE-ROOM OCCUPANCIES*

When an agency sets up housing programs, it should make every effort to secure a variety of housing options and environments (i.e. some with roommates, some more isolated, some in housing complexes, etc.) to accommodate different personalities. Some people may succeed in a situation with a roommate and others will need an isolated environment. If a client is having difficulty in a certain housing situation, it is the

responsibility of the staff to look at what is not working about that particular environment and improve the situation.

The concept of variety was highlighted through Muller's work developing the Florence Inn. The Florence Inn consists of 14 single-room occupancies (SRO) – individual rooms with shared bathrooms and kitchens. The use of SROs expands the number of affordable housing units because they tend to be less expensive than an independent apartment. However, Muller warns that SROs are not for everyone. The Florence Inn serves a wide range of ages. Consequently, young adults who live there were sometimes at odds with older adults. Some young adults had friends coming and going throughout the night and tended to play their music too loud for the older adults. The difference in culture would sometimes create tension similar to that in a family situation. If the occupants were not

prepared to discuss and resolve these issues, it could be problematic. To be successful in an SRO, the communal situation must mesh well the occupants' living style and personality.

*“Some people don't do well when placed in a group, but if you put them in more autonomous settings, they do amazing things.”*

Muller provided an example that illustrates the importance of variety when discussing a man who entered the emergency shelter when he was 24 years old. He had strong family connections and a couple of years of college. However, when he entered ServiceNet's program, he displayed signs of ritualized behavior. He would frequently call newspapers and magazines and collect and hoard information and materials, usually newspapers. The behavior was time-consuming and difficult to accommodate within the group living placement. Staff

decided to place the man in a more independent living situation. Once the staff put him in a permanent housing site near the college where he had originally studied, he demonstrated more socially adaptive behavior. Over the next two years the young adult finished his college degree and ran for and won a position as a representative to the local Town Meeting. Illustrating the importance of diversity in housing options, Muller said, “Some people don’t do well when placed in a group, but if you put them in more autonomous settings, they do amazing things.”

*CASE MANAGEMENT: “STEP-DOWN HOUSING”*

While the development of housing options and community partnerships is a fundamental component in post-TLP housing, good case management must not be forgotten. New occupants in a ServiceNet property received intensive services when they first move into the stable housing

situation. Upon occupancy, case managers and the resident develop a plan for self-sufficiency. Subsequently, staff provide daily check-ins and support the youth’s effort to implement his or her plan. As a youth gains skills, staff support is gradually withdrawn. Participants learn to rely upon the many community supports that are available.

LIFEWORKS

AUSTIN TEXAS

CONTACT: STEVE BEWSEY, DIRECTOR  
OF HOUSING AND HOMELESS SERVICES

*MOTIVATION*

*“The LifeWorks’ merger eliminates barriers and inefficiencies by creating ‘no wrong door’ service centers located throughout the community and a customer service approach that substantially reduces duplicative paperwork.”*

Steve Bewsey is the Director of Housing and Homeless Services at LifeWorks, a multi-service agency that has been providing solutions for homelessness in Austin, Texas for the past 25 years. LifeWorks, in its present form, began with a merger of four separate service providers in 1998.

According to Bewsey, “The LifeWorks’ merger eliminates barriers and inefficiencies by creating ‘no wrong door’ service centers

located throughout the community and a customer service approach that substantially reduces duplicative paperwork.” With this model in place, LifeWorks is even more efficient at servicing homeless youth and families.

Lifeworks’ goal is to provide exactly the right type of care for each individual it serves. Bewsey maintains that an agency’s ability to cater to the unique needs of each person increases the likelihood of success for that person. For example, a young man came into Lifeworks’ homeless shelter needing services but refusing to be a part of a ‘group home.’ This young man knew that personal space was essential for him to do well. With this in mind, the staff put their energy into figuring out exactly what setting would be beneficial. LifeWorks has many housing options available to them; a luxury compared to other agencies. Options include community-based Single Room

Occupancies (SROs), shared apartments, and the shelter. This young man was placed in a university co-op where he was able to start community college.

The key to LifeWorks' approach is that it is not satisfied with the range of housing options available; it continually strives to expand the options. Although LifeWorks was fortunate to have sufficient money through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHY) to fund some beds, its continued ability to successfully find additional housing options is a testimony to its 25-year history and commitment to finding just "one more bed."

*THE INTERSECTION OF HISTORY, PERSISTENCE  
AND INNOVATION*

*"I think a lot of it is about time. It's really kind of setting up the mission you want to get to and uncovering any resource you can. Can I get a little bit more? Then leverage that any way you can. Look around for anything that can be of assistance."*

Like other agencies, LifeWorks has a history of solid and dependable service to its community. Bewsey mentions, "I think a lot of it is about time. It's really kind of setting up the mission you want to get to and uncovering any resource you can. Can I get a little bit more? Then leverage that any way you can. Look around for anything that can be of assistance." The agency has had success finding additional beds with this philosophy.

LifeWorks has formed coalitions with churches and other faith-based organizations using its clout as a quality service provider as leverage. A group called the Religious

Coalition to Assist the Homeless (RCAH) approached LifeWorks because of its reputation for serving homeless youth. RCAH was looking for proposals to serve the homeless. Five years ago LifeWorks requested \$24,000 from RCAH in order to provide two two-bedroom apartments for pregnant/parenting youth coming from its emergency shelter. Today, LifeWorks receives \$51,000, which covers the cost of rent, utilities and the deposit for the apartments. LifeWorks then uses additional funds from foundations, including the United Way, as well as private donations to provide young people with case management and basic needs such as food, bus passes, diapers, furniture, and household supplies.

#### *ONE MORE BED*

LifeWorks also has access to between 18 and 29 apartments in a single multi-building apartment complex. HUD originally funded

13 of these apartments. After operating these apartments for five years, the agency received a HHS/RHY Transitional Living Grant. LifeWorks informed the apartment owner that it would be able to rent eight additional apartments with the stipulation that the apartment owner donate a free apartment. The apartment owner agreed. When the leases came up the next year, LifeWorks asked for one more free apartment which it received. The agency put an entrance between the two apartments to use them as office space and a place to hold parenting classes and a computer lab. At year seven, the agency asked again for a free apartment which it received, thus increasing bed space while only having to provide funds for basic needs.

This process may not work for the average agency. It was LifeWorks' reputation in Austin that gave it the clout to sway landlords into accepting these deals. By

keeping a close eye on the economic status of Austin, LifeWorks can go to apartment owners and offer them a deal. The agency mentions how great its residents are as tenants. Landlords do not have to worry about getting timely rental payments because LifeWorks signs the lease and pays the entirety of the rent. This enables the young people to build a successful rental history, making it easier to secure housing in the future when they are no longer receiving help from LifeWorks. In the event that a resident is a problem, LifeWorks does not hesitate to efficiently amend the situation, so landlords are not be hassled. Bewsey says that this is because LifeWorks is able to assess and evict a tenant more quickly than a landlord because the agency is not held to the standards of the state. If LifeWorks sees a potential concern, it can quickly remove a young person without going through all the red tape that is associated with legal action. Young people involved with LifeWorks are

attractive to landlords because the agency signs the lease and has the ability to quickly handle problem situations

#### *OUTSIDE RESOURCES*

Although these resources are not used specifically for housing, they are another piece of LifeWorks that allows the agency to access low cost, quality labor to further strengthen its programs. For example, the agency uses the help of Americorps volunteers who do case management. The work Americorps volunteers does is solid, and they are paid through a government stipend taking that potential cost away from LifeWorks and allowing the agency to invest it in another aspect of the program.

DREAM TREE

TAOS, NEW MEXICO

CONTACT: KIM TRIEBER, CO-DIRECTOR

#### *MOTIVATION*

The Dream Tree Project started five years ago to address the needs of homeless young people in Taos, New Mexico. Co-director Kim Trieber tells us that even though the agency started with only a transitional living program, plans were already in place to provide additional services for the homeless young adult population. From the get-go, the agency recognized that in the tourist town of Taos, where housing is expensive and difficult to find, the search for affordable, appropriate housing for TLP graduates would be especially problematic.

#### *CASITAS*

*“From [the Casitas] they will have more successes in the community because they*

*won’t be making that big jump from group home to independent living.”*

To fill the gap in stable, affordable housing, Dream Tree recently broke ground on an innovative program for its TLP graduates, Casitas. The Casitas, meaning little houses in Spanish, consist of four studio apartments connected to a large community room. With this design, residents maintain their individual space, but also have the option of partaking in community. Casitas will provide Dream Tree additional beds, aiding its struggle to find stable, appropriate housing for TLP graduates. Casitas are located on the same property as the TLP program. Trieber states, “From there they will have more successes in the community because they won’t be making that big jump from group home to independent living.”

### *CONSTRUCTION FUNDING*

The Dream Tree Project was able to fund Casitas through an Economic Development Initiative (EDI) Grant from HUD. The grant was made possible through local senator Pete Diminchi, who recognized Dream Tree's need for additional housing and provided the type of leverage only a well-known person in office can. The agency learned how beneficial it is to have a political leader on its side. This grant gave Dream Tree \$365,000 of the \$500,000 needed to fund the construction of the project. The rest of the money was secured through two anonymous sources, a private donor and family foundation. Both parties were solicited by Dream Tree for the remainder of the construction funding.

Additionally, Onyx Construction, a local company headed by Mark Goldman, is doing the construction work and much of it has been done pro-bono. Dream Tree has

also found some environmentally-minded experts helping to ensure that the building is environmentally friendly. Dream Tree is also using Youth Build and the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps to help with the physical construction of the building. Many of the young people who will have the opportunity to live in Casitas are actually helping to build them by virtue of their involvement in these organizations.

### *ADDITIONAL FUNDING SOURCES*

While construction costs are no longer a concern, the operating costs for the Casitas have not yet been secured. Trieber expresses no grave concerns over this. Given the agency's history of successfully securing funding, she feels that Dream Tree will be able to solicit sufficient funds through an ongoing process. When the EDI grant expires in five years, Dream Tree will re-apply for funds to cover operating costs. In the meantime, the agency is beginning a

Spring fundraising letter to educate its donors as to the needs of this current project. Community connections have been a significant reason why Dream Tree feels relatively confident that it will be able to obtain money to fund operating costs.

*THE IMPORTANCE OF “MAKING A NAME FOR ONESELF”*

*“After four years, the community is really understanding how Dream Tree is helping.”*

It is Dream Tree’s demonstrated ability to provide effective services for the homeless young people of Taos that provides leverage to solicit private funds from community members. It is essential to mention that the agency did not gain its reputation overnight. The agency was fortunate to have a few individuals who believed in it early on. From there, Dream Tree has been proactive in promoting the services it provides as a reputable option for Taos’s young people.

Dream Tree has promoted itself on the radio and in the newspaper in an effort to openly express its commitment to Taos. Treiber states, “After four years, the community is really understanding how Dream Tree is helping.”

*ADDITIONAL HOUSING OPTIONS*

Dream Tree has a Transitional Living Program in place that has an exceptionally strong life skills curriculum. When TLP graduates look for housing, they have few feasible choices. Dream Tree has access to Taos’s public housing units. This option is safe and affordable; however, a great deal of planning must take place to ensure a TLP graduate’s space is ready when it is needed. When an intake comes to Dream Tree, that individual’s name may be placed on a waiting list so that in one to two years when the individual has completed the TLP, he or she will be likely to get a space. Dream Tree also has access to some Single Room

Occupancies (SROs) in the community.

However, there are few apartments in complexes, so the agency most often just looks in the paper.

Working with very little, Dream Tree has found housing options by simply utilizing community resources and exploring all funding options. Casitas are just one example of the agency's ability to continue to push the envelope looking for new and innovative ways to strengthen its programming.

LARKIN STREET YOUTH SERVICES  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA  
CONTACTS: SARAH PORTER,  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF PROGRAM  
SERVICES  
LIZ LONGFELLOW, RESIDENTIAL CASE  
MANAGER

Larkin Street Youth Services operates several transitional living programs. In order to improve access to independent housing for TLP graduates, the agency established a relationship with the Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation (TNDC) and launched the Ellis Street Apartments. For many youth, the Ellis Street Apartments serve as post-TLP housing. Moving on to Ellis Street is sometimes the best option for those who have graduated from a TLP because it is much less structured, but still provides some support. Many young people are not ready

to live without any support after only 18 months in a TLP. Also, in San Francisco's high priced housing market, Ellis Street residents only pay 30 percent of their income for rent. This allows young people to save money while enhancing their life skills, so they can move on to stable, market-rent housing when they leave.

The supported housing program has been operating since December 2001 and is made up of 24 studio units. In 2004, Ellis Street served 27 young people; this tends to be the average number served annually. Young people in the program tend to be older as many have already been through a TLP. There is no limit on the length of stay at Ellis Street, although young people do not generally stay beyond age 26 or 27. While a few residents have been at Ellis Street since the program began, many move on after a year or two. Other residents move in and

out in less than one year. Since Ellis Street began, a total of 43 clients have been served.

*A COLLABORATION THAT IMPROVES YOUNG  
ADULT ACCESS TO HOUSING*

Ellis Street is a partnership between Larkin Street Youth Services and the Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation (TNDC). TNDC approached Larkin Street about forming the partnership because in its experience managing 100 buildings in the city, the agency found that young adults often need additional support to maintain their housing. Ellis Street is TNDC's first venture in supportive housing. TNDC owns and manages the building, while Larkin Street provides the supported housing services. As part of the collaboration, TNDC conducts the appropriate background checks and handles the leases for the apartments. TNDC also hires a building manager who lives in the complex and collects the rent. Larkin Street employs a

case manager who works in the complex 40 hours a week to help the young people maintain their apartments. The building manager and case manager work closely together. For example, the building manager will make sure that the case manager knows who is having difficulty making their rent payments on time.

The young people in the program sign the lease for the apartment and pay 30 percent of their income towards rent. Rent is adjusted based on income throughout a young person's stay at Ellis Street. If a resident gets a new job or a raise, their rent goes up accordingly. Likewise, if they lose a job, their rent goes down, so at all times, they pay 30 percent of their income for rent. According to Liz Longfellow, the Residential Case Manager for Ellis Street, this rental arrangement provides a strong safety net for residents, many of whom have mental health issues, substance use

problems, HIV/AIDS, and/or few life skills to manage independent living. It is not necessarily the case that a resident comes in paying little and moves up the rent scale until they pay the entirety of the rent and then move out. Longfellow described the situation when a client is on a fixed income, living on Social Security Disability Insurance. These clients pay the same rent their entire stay at Ellis Street, but often develop budgeting and financial planning skills that enable them to live in non-supported housing. Generally, though, residents' income increases as their job skills, schooling, or training increase.

If a young person is having difficulty paying rent, the Larkin Street case manager will “work through the process” with them, according to Sarah Porter, Deputy Director of Program Services. The case manager may connect the young adult to other agencies that provide supportive services

and/or financial assistance. Larkin Street itself would not bail the youth out financially. TNDC is willing to work with youth and put them on a payment plan if they have difficulty making payments. If a young person faces eviction, Larkin Street encourages them to surrender the apartment in order to keep the eviction off their record and protect their ability to rent an apartment in the future. In the history of the program, only two people have been evicted. Larkin Street has worked with 17 others who surrendered their apartment.

#### *FUNDING*

Larkin Street receives approximately 65 percent of its funding from public sources, mainly local and state funds, including the San Francisco Department of Human Services. The remainder of the funding comes from foundations, grants, and donations.

*WHERE TO THEY GO FROM HERE?*

*For some young people, never seeing them again is a sign of success. Young adults who have left Ellis Street are often older, financially secure, and able to take care of themselves so they just want to blend in to the community and lead “normal” lives.*

Porter says that young people generally “outgrow” Ellis Street. During their tenancy, the Larkin Street case manager works with young people to enhance their life skills. Ellis Street residents also have access to an array of educational and employment services offered by Larkin Street. As their life skills increase and they become more financially stable, the young people feel that they are ready to move on and can usually afford a nicer apartment. They may also decide to move in with a partner.

Larkin Street has an open-door policy for young people leaving Ellis Street.

According to Porter, young people know that “if something goes wrong, they can call us”. Larkin Street follows up with former clients to collect information and data one and two years after they leave Ellis Street. Many former residents stay in touch of their own volition by calling or stopping by. At times, it can be difficult to track young people leaving Ellis Street because they are generally older and more financially secure than the youth leaving Larkin Street’s TLP programs and may not drop in as often.

Porter feels that for some young people this –never seeing them again– is a sign of success. Ellis Street residents are older and generally have been through TLPs in the past, so many want to move on and have “normal” lives.

TEEN LIVING PROGRAMS, INC.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

CONTACT: DAVID MYERS, CEO

In 1976, Teen Living Programs began as a foster care shelter. In 2001, the agency responded to an observed need in the community and began serving only homeless children and young adults. Teen Living Programs also noticed that after young adults graduated from its TLP, they tended to return to unstable housing; it was questionable whether they were any better off than prior to their involvement with Teen Living Programs. To rectify this, Teen Living Programs created the “Scattered Site” program as a post-TLP housing network for its TLP graduates.

*MOTIVATED TO IMPROVE*

*“Our motivation was sort of pain...It pained us that we cared about the kids, but didn’t*

*know what happened to them; we didn’t know if they were any better off.”*

At first, Teen Living Programs did not call the Scattered Site program aftercare.\* What would later become official aftercare originated from a look at the resources the agency had and the ones it was missing. What the agency had was an emergency shelter and a transitional living program facility, but what it lacked was a network of support for TLP graduates. Myers explained, “Our motivation [for post-TLP housing] was sort of pain...It pained us that we cared about the kids, but didn’t know what happened to them; and we didn’t know if they were any better off.” In order to enhance the program’s effectiveness, Myers and the staff of Teen Living Programs created the post-TLP housing network, known as the Scattered Site program.

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\* David Myers used the term aftercare to denote the Scattered Site program, which serves young people after they complete Teen Living Programs’ TLP.

The goal of the Scattered Site program is to help participants enter stable housing as they exit the TLP facility. Myers illustrated the importance of using the term “stable” by highlighting the difference between “stable” and “permanent” housing. The majority of 18 to 24-year-olds move several times before settling into a permanent housing situation. This period of life tends to be transitory. Consequently, the goal of the Scattered Site program is to provide stable housing, which conveys the feeling of safety and security, without necessitating permanence.

#### *THE FIRST STEP*

To begin to understand why the Scattered Site program has been successful, one needs to understand the connection between the TLP, called the Belfort House, and the Scattered Site program. Teen Living Programs believes that a seamless transition from Belfort House is an important

component for a young person’s success. In order for young adults to participate in the Scattered Site, they first have to go through the Belfort House. Belfort House is a therapeutic community, which helps young people overcome barriers and learn the skills necessary to maintain independent housing. If young people did not start by learning what it takes to live independently, they may find it difficult to succeed in the Scattered Site program. Once participants pass fairly stringent qualifications, they graduate from the Belfort House and are given the choice to enter the Scattered Site program. Young people in the Scattered Site program can continue to access the supportive services offered by Belfort House.

#### *THE CREATION OF A STABLE HOUSING NETWORK—“SCATTERED SITE”*

There was a three-year period between the Scattered Site program’s conception and its inaugural year in 2003. In fiscal year 2004,

the Scattered Site program had six participants. As of March of this year, Scattered Site has had six participants. Scattered Site young adults range from 18 to 24 years old. Throughout its two years of existence, Scattered Site has had two graduates. There have only been two graduates because the program lasts for two years.

The Scattered Site program is funded by HUD, the City of Chicago, and private corporate money. Part of Teen Living Programs' success in securing funding can be attributed to the agency's four development staff, who are exclusively focused on fund-raising. The staff was able to research and apply for HUD money available for post-TLP housing programs. The City of Chicago pledged money as part of its dedication to the Continuum of Care process. Under the Continuum of Care, the city has put more emphasis on subsidizing

and developing permanent housing programs, like Scattered Site, while shifting away from short-term remedies. Besides public money, Teen Living Programs receives private funds. Each year, Teen Living Programs hosts a fund-raising gala, where private donors contribute to all of Teen Living Programs' services. The development staff also personally solicits funds from local, private corporations invested in the community.

The Scattered Site participants can choose from a pool of five to six apartment buildings, where Teen Living Programs has developed good relationships with the landlords. If inclined, young adults can find their own apartment, but usually they will choose from Teen Living Programs' selection. Teen Living Programs' name, as an agency, is on the lease. Landlords tend to be more willing to sign with an agency, as opposed to a young adult, because of the

guaranteed rent payment and extra supervision. Teen Living Programs also assists young people in purchasing furniture for their apartment. If participants successfully finish the Scattered Site program, they are permitted to keep the furniture.

Once young adults move into the apartments, the Scattered Site program is broken into two one-year intervals. The two-year limit is imposed by HUD, the major funder. After the first year, the agency and the young adult evaluate whether he or she is ready to graduate from the program. So far, no one has been ready to leave after the first year. Throughout the two-year duration of the program, Teen Living Programs pays the rent and participants put a certain amount of money in the bank each month. The monthly goal is to save enough money to cover the rent. Usually, participants do not save enough at

first, but gradually work up to that point.

After the two-year period, young adults have the option of acquiring the lease or they can seek their own apartment. The Scattered Site coordinator will help young people understand the terms of the lease they choose. Teen Living Programs will then check in and monitor the young adults for six months to ensure their success.

*FINDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING IS EASIER  
THAN IT SEEMED*

*“That was actually one of the biggest surprises for us. We thought finding affordable housing was going to be a problem, but we actually haven’t had problems finding landlords willing to rent us affordable housing.”*

In the conception of the Scattered Site program, Teen Living Programs worried that the lack of affordable housing in Chicago would be a barrier to success. However,

Myers noted two pleasant surprises: the lack of difficulty finding affordable housing and the willingness of landlords and communities to rent to Scattered Site young adults. He said, “That was actually one of the biggest surprises for us. We thought finding affordable housing was going to be a problem, but we actually haven’t had problems finding landlords willing to rent us affordable housing.” Myers speculated that part of the success in finding landlords and communities open to Scattered Site young adults is the fact that the participants are spread throughout the community and not congregated in one area. This way no community feels like it is getting burdened with a particular population.

*“CRYSTAL”*

Because of the infancy of the program, there have not been many graduates from the Scattered Site program. However, if Crystal is any prediction of the future, the program

is promising. Crystal came to Belfort House with a variety of emotional problems, including depression. She spent 13 months at Belfort House and moved on to the Scattered Site program. While in Scattered Site, she went to school and worked full-time, achieving two promotions. After two years, she graduated from the program with a secure job and \$8,000 in the bank. She continues to do well. Crystal spoke at Teen Living Programs’ gala about the program’s impact on her life and her continued success. Besides the support Crystal received from Teen Living Programs, Myers attributes some of Crystal’s success to the strength of her faith and the faith-based support she has received over the years.

*LOOKING TO THE FUTURE*

*“There’s nothing like a deadline to push you along.”*

When asked whether the two-year time limit imposed by HUD was sufficient, Myers responded that there is not enough data to provide a definitive answer. So far, the two graduates have seemed to excel under the two-year limit, but Myers questioned the readiness of the upcoming graduates. Two years may not be enough for them.

However, he did highlight the positive aspect of the time limit by noting that “there’s nothing like a deadline to push you along.”

Despite the program’s success, there are two aspects of the Scattered Site program that Myers would like to improve. The agency would like to have more apartments available and ready when young people graduate from Belfort House. Myers would

also like to lighten the Scattered Site coordinator’s caseload because he is currently overextended managing ten apartments and ten clients.

HAVEN HOUSE SERVICES  
RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA  
CONTACT: MATT SCHNARS,  
PROGRAM DIRECTOR

*“Rest assured, it is no walk in the park making a Scattered Site model run though. You need to have some extremely committed people who have a lot of patience and a willingness to watch kids make mistakes and yet hang in there with them...I think we do a good job in our community considering the myriad of problems we face.”*

In order to address the issue of housing after graduation from its TLP programs, Haven House Services has developed a program that establishes TLP participants as the leaseholders of their own apartments. Participants in the Preparation for Independent Living Program (PILP) find privately owned, market-rate, Scattered Site apartments. Young people sign the lease

from the outset and can remain in the apartment for as long as they are able to meet the financial obligations. PILP currently has ten active cases and serves 20 young people each year; many more youth receive ongoing outreach services.

#### *MOTIVATION*

Haven House Services was prompted to create PILP through its involvement in the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Continuum of Care. Other community agencies brought to its attention the gap in services for young adults ages 18-21 and the increasing number of former foster youth who had been discharged from care and were presenting at adult shelters. Haven House decided to expand its existing TLP program, which had been operating using licensed foster homes and a group home setting. Six years ago, Haven House began using the Scattered Site model in order to enable youth to experience a

smoother transition into the community and provide hands-on independent living experience.

*INCREASING ACCESS TO*

*INDEPENDENT HOUSING*

*“Kids learn the process of getting approved for an apartment. It is a very empowering experience. They get approved based on their own merit.”*

*“The kids sign the lease – it’s their apartment, so we treat them like adults.”*

According to Program Director Matt Schnars, Haven House staff selectively choose young people who are developmentally ready to live in their own apartments. These young people go through the process of choosing an apartment, getting approved by a private rental agent, and signing a lease, just like anyone else in the community. Program staff coach youth on how to approach the rental agent and

when the time comes, youth advocate for themselves. The majority of times, the landlord has no idea that the young person is involved with Haven House Services.

Caseworkers go with young people to view apartments and they have the option of discreetly telling the landlord whatever they want about the caseworker. They can choose to identify the caseworker as a friend. Program staff do not identify themselves so youth do not get stigmatized as bad or troubled kids for being involved with Haven House Services.

While Haven House recognizes the need for an intermediate program for those who are not ready, or are not qualified to rent an apartment on their own, this program is intended to serve those who are ready for the independent housing market. In order to secure an apartment, young people must undergo background and credit checks. Their name is on the lease from the

beginning. Schnars describes this as a positive learning experience: “Kids learn the process of getting approved for an apartment. It is a very empowering experience. They get approved based on their own merit.”

From the most part, rental agents are unaware of a young person’s involvement with Haven House Services. However, the program has established relationships with rental agents in two apartment complexes. These rental agents have had positive experience with Haven House youth. Because the young people consistently paid their rent and did not damage the apartments, Haven House now gets calls from the complexes when apartments are available. These rental agents even attend Haven House Services’ “Real World Fair” to display information about the apartment complexes.

The program provides youth with a monthly stipend that pays for part of their rent. The young people are “weaned off” financial assistance- they receive a stipend starting at \$300 a month and decreasing by \$50 each month. After six months, youth are responsible for paying the entirety of the rent. Haven House directs youth to housing that they will likely be able to maintain once they graduate from the program.

Consequently, youth often rent rooms, efficiencies, dorm-style housing, and shared apartments. Rent generally runs \$300-450 per month for these basic units, which is considerably cheaper than the average price for a one-bedroom apartment in the Raleigh area - \$700/month. Because of Haven House Services’ proximity to North Carolina State University, youth in the program often get shared apartments with college students. These arrangements provide youth with their own bedroom and bathroom, as well as a shared living room.

The rental agent finds roommates, all of whom sign an individual lease. Youth in the program are often able to blend in with NC State students and no one knows that they are involved with Haven House Services. Living with college students is typically an eye-opening, motivating experience.

In an effort to truly prepare them for independent living, program staff do not rescue youth when they encounter difficulties, such as getting their utilities shut off. Young people in the program have had to sit in the dark or cold after failing to pay their utility bills. Schnars recalled a time when, instead of paying the overdue utility bill, he let a youth borrow a kerosene heater until he would be able to pay the bill himself. “We let them feel that pain, but stay involved with them over the long term to see them through the hard times. It’s a good learning experience.” The program’s philosophy is that youth need to be treated

as adults because no one is going to bail them out when they leave the program. “The kids sign the lease – it’s their apartment, so we treat them like adults.” Of course, the program also has an array of skills classes and support groups so youth can learn how to successfully function independently.

#### *FUNDING*

PILP receives funding from a variety of sources. Twenty-nine percent of the funding for PILP comes from a Transitional Living Program Grant from the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB); 18 percent comes from a FYSB Street Outreach grant; 39 percent of the funding comes from the Department of Labor in the form of a WIA grant, which funds an additional case manager and services to help young people finish high school and obtain employment; 11 percent comes from the local United Way; and three percent of PILP’s funding

comes from HUD. Haven House has also received some small foundation grants over the years for PILP, but these were not renewable. The agency receives private donations from individual donors, but nothing substantial enough to maintain PILP. The community donor base supplies youth with many of the items they need for their apartments.

Originally much larger, the program's HUD grant is now \$15,000 a year. HUD has shifted the majority of its focus to permanent housing projects and this program won't continue to qualify for funding. Because the HUD funding is not stable, Haven House is hoping to secure additional private donations or a foundation grant. The agency is also exploring ways to access Juvenile Justice funds in the community and to use PILP to assist youth transitioning from the juvenile justice system to the community.

#### *ONGOING HOUSING AND SUPPORT*

Since clients sign the lease on their apartment, they are allowed to stay in the apartment after they graduate from the program, provided they can continue to meet the financial obligations. Eighty-six percent of youth in the program are able to maintain housing throughout the six months they are in the program and by the end, they are paying the full rent.

A common occurrence among youth who have been unable to maintain their housing is pregnancy. When a young woman becomes pregnant, Haven House staff take her to the Housing Authority to apply for Section 8 assistance. Because Section 8 typically has a significant waiting list, youth typically stay with a friend or family member in the meantime. Haven House still provides outreach services. Matt Schnars recounted a story of a successful parenting young adult. Haven House continued to

provide supportive services when she moved to Section 8 housing. Today, she is a Certified Nursing Assistant and helps Haven House staff make presentations about the program in the community.

For six months, Haven House formally tracks youth who have completed PILP. After six months, the case file is officially closed; however, this is rarely the end of Haven House Services' involvement in the youth's life. As Schnars describes, "On paper we've closed the case, but we're still involved with many of them... We say that we track them for six months, but the majority stay involved long, long afterwards." More often than not, youth come to Haven House's Outreach Center. They also have access to a food pantry and emergency fund, which can provide \$100 to those in danger of losing their apartment. Former PILP participants also help manage

the furniture donations that are used in the apartments.

#### *INTERMEDIATE OPTIONS ARE STILL NEEDED*

With more funding, Matt Schnars would like to be able to provide PILP participants with a rental stipend for longer than six months.

"A lot of times with these kids it's realistically going to take 2, 3, 5 years for them to be able to function in society... It is unrealistic to expect a short-term program to solve 15-20 years of family problems."

Funding, though, is only available to help young people for short periods of time. In addition to serving youth for longer periods of time, Matt Schnars would like to have the ability to reenter youth in the program after discharge if they fall on hard times. At present, he is hesitant to officially reenter youth because there is a push from funding sources to show that the program is making progress.

In addition to making PILP more flexible, Haven House has plans to establish an intermediate program. The program is designed for those youth who are not ready to go from a supervised foster home to being the leaseholders of their own apartment.

Young people in the program will still live in Scattered Site apartments, but Haven House Services will sign the lease and provide additional support. Youth will contribute increasing amounts towards the rent. The money will be placed in an escrow account, which participants can use for approved independent living expenses.

Haven House has recognized the need for an option commonly found among TLP programs because so many homeless young people are not ready to take on the responsibility, or would not qualify to sign their own lease. However, by establishing an accessible bridge to independent housing through the PILP program, Haven House is a step ahead of many programs. When the

agency implements the intermediate step, it will have a viable continuum from supervised living to independent housing – an admirable accomplishment.

# SUCCESS DESPITE BARRIERS

## *COMMUNITY COALITIONS*

The five agencies and one expert interviewed for this report differed in their range and style of services. However, the key element that the interviews emphasized is the importance of community coalitions. The coalitions were primarily formed by finding and utilizing community resources and by extending the funding base for the agency. The agencies that were able to access multiple community resources and funding sources tended to have the most comprehensive and adaptable services.

***USING COMMUNITY RESOURCES:*** Rebecca Muller highlighted the importance of being creative when building interdependent relationships for individuals and within the community. These relationships enhance success by providing a stronger network and more extensive support system. The interviews with the organizations illustrated the value of both informal and formal community partnerships.

- ***FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS:*** LifeWorks built on the assets of its community by establishing coalitions with churches. Partnerships with the faith-based community created a wider support system as well as extra funds for additional apartments.
- ***UNIVERSITIES:*** Haven House created an important community connection when it looked at the resources offered by its proximity to North Carolina State University. This proximity created a pool of more affordable housing options for participants as well as

provided an environment where the outside community would not stigmatize Haven House participants as “homeless,” but instead view them simply as college-aged youth living among peers.

- *DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS:* Larkin Street was able to create an entire housing complex for post-TLP youth through its partnership with the Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation. Both agencies recognized that post-TLP young adults need experience in maintaining their own apartment as well as additional support in that maintenance. Because of that need, TNDC provides the property management for Ellis Street, while Larkin Street provides a caseworker to oversee and support the residents of the facility.
- *CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES:* Dream Tree developed a partnership with Onyx Construction to build the Casitas. This partnership helped Dream Tree’s mission financially because Onyx contributed a significant portion of the work pro bono. Onyx Construction also gave the Dream Tree participants a sense of ownership of the Casitas when it recruited the future residents to help in the construction.
- *FRIENDLY LANDLORDS:* The agencies and Muller indicated that “friendly landlords” are also important community partners. The establishment of a strong, reliable relationship between individual landlords of various types of properties and agencies benefits both parties. The landlords are guaranteed oversight of the occupants and the agencies have a more secure and diverse pool of housing options from which to choose.

***MULTIPLE FUNDING SOURCES IN THE COMMUNITY:*** The agencies were also able to broaden their funding base by including federal, local public and local private money to support their initiatives.

- ***PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP:*** Teen Living Programs developed staff positions whose purpose was the solicitation of funds. The single-focus positions allowed Teen Living Programs to secure HUD money, city money, as well as private corporate sponsorship and donations. The staff actively solicits funds from those private corporations and organizes fund-raisers so that Teen Living Programs does not have to rely solely on HUD grants.
- ***PUBLIC OFFICIALS:*** Dream Tree enlisted the help of local senator Pete Diminchi to secure an Economic Development Initiative Grant (HUD). This grant is specifically for construction, which may have not been otherwise accessed without the commitment of the Senator.
- ***PROJECT-BASED VOUCHERS:*** Muller helped initiate housing programs that accessed governmental housing vouchers, which are traditionally available only to individuals, for specific properties. The voucher was a valuable funding source for the agency because it was attached to the property and subsidized the rent for whoever occupied that property.

### *A MULTITUDE OF SERVICES:*

While the use of community resources and multiple funding sources are arguably the most important elements for the success of a post-TLP housing program, these aspects would most likely not be successful without incorporating additional elements. The following are other important factors that contribute to success when serving the young adult homeless population:

- *PUBLIC AWARENESS:* Muller indicated how comprehensive knowledge of the community's housing situation will help guide an agency's services. If an agency is aware of the local character, it can adapt to that character. Teen Living Programs stayed cognizant of its impact on the community by spreading the occupants throughout the city and maintaining good relationships with a number of landlords. Because the participants were not concentrated into one area, they did not run the risk of over-imposing on any one neighborhood. Because Dream Tree understood its impact on the local community, it ensured an environmentally conscious construction of the Casitas. It also addressed potential uneasiness in the community by launching an education campaign to inform the local residents of its mission and participants.
- *VARIETY:* The conversation with Muller highlighted the importance of being conscious of individual differences. Some young adults may have the best chances for success in a large apartment building and some people may need a more isolated environment. Muller also indicated that variety is important in considering which partnerships to develop.

- *RELATIONSHIP BUILDING:* Besides the agency's relationship with the community and community partners, the interviews illustrated the importance of personal relationship-building in housing programs. Muller asserted that a young adult cannot expect to have a stable relationship with an apartment if he or she has never observed or experienced a stable relationship in any other facet in his or her life. Kim Treiber of Dream Tree highlighted importance of relationship building in widening a net of support. The more people a young adult knows in his community, the more resources that young adult has for finding jobs, getting advice, and maintaining friendships.
- *SMOOTH CONTINUUMS:* As indicated in the literature review, many homeless young adults have specific mental and/or physical health needs. In most cases, these needs were addressed through involvement in a therapeutic TLP environment. Often, some supportive services were still available to young people in post-TLP housing. Teen Living Programs clearly stated in its methods the importance of a "seamless transition" between Belfort House TLP and the Scattered Site program. Haven House is developing a continuum of services by adding an intermediate step between supervised living and independent housing for those youth who are not yet prepared to take on their own lease. Haven House also adapted its services to the clients as elements in their lives changed; for example, if they became pregnant.

## NEXT STEPS

*EVALUATIONS:* Post-TLP housing is a fairly novel addition to the transitional living program field. As such, most of these agencies lack evaluative components in the programs. In order to encourage success, we recommend consistent collection of data for several years and the initiation of a more formal evaluative process to determine which methods seem to be working and which methods need improvement.

*INTERAGENCY COOPERATION:* Along with improvement in overall service, we hope that this report will help increase the cooperation among homeless young adult service agencies across the country by encouraging conversation and the sharing of information among those agencies.

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# Appendix

## IRB APPROVAL

TO: Kelly Agnese, Kate Golden, Jen Tyson

This letter is your official notification that your research project

*Alternative Housing Options for Homeless Young Adults*

is exempt for IRB review for the following reasons:

2. Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior UNLESS the information is recorded in a manner in which the subject can be identified AND disclosure would place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to financial standing, employability, or reputation. This does not apply where the subjects are children except where it involves passive observation of public behavior.

Please be sure to print a copy of this notification for your files.



Helen A. Page

IRB Administrator

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**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**  
**BETWEEN**  
**TUFTS UNIVERSITY FIELD PROJECTS TEAM NO. 7**  
**AND**  
**NEW ENGLAND NETWORK FOR CHILD, YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES**

**I. Introduction**

Project number: 7

Project code: NN-14

Project title: Alternative Housing Options for Homeless Young Adults

This Memorandum of Understanding (the “MOU”) summarizes the scope of work, work product(s) and deliverables, timeline, work processes and methods, and lines of authority, supervision and communication relating to the Field Project identified above (the “Project”), as agreed to between (i) the candidates for the Master of Arts degree enrolled during the spring 2005 semester in the Field Projects and Planning course (UEP-255) (the “Course”) offered by the Tufts University Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning (UEP) who are identified in Paragraph (1) below (the “Field Projects Team”); (ii) New England Network for Child, Youth & Family Services, further identified in Paragraph (2) below (the “Client”); and (iii) a Tufts faculty member directly involved in teaching the Course during the spring 2005 semester.

**II. Specific Provisions**

(1) The Field Projects Team working on the Project consists of the following individuals:

- |                 |                                       |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Kelly Agnese | email address: Keagnese@hotmail.com   |
| 2. Kate Golden  | email address: Kategolden@hotmail.com |
| 3. Jen Tyson    | email address: Jentyson1@yahoo.com    |

(2) The Client’s contact information is as follows:

Key contact/supervisor: Melanie Wilson, Director of Research and Public Policy  
Email address: [mwilson@nenetwork.org](mailto:mwilson@nenetwork.org)

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Telephone number: 978/346-0597

FAX number: 978/346-8488

Client name: New England Network for Child, Youth & Family Services (NEN)

Address: 24 South Pleasant Street Merrimack, MA 01860

Web site: [www.nenetwork.org](http://www.nenetwork.org)

(3) The goal of the Project is:

To produce a report examining innovative approaches to housing young adults, ages 18-24, who have exited from transitional living programs. The report will provide in-depth descriptions of promising practices or models across the country to inform practitioners in the field as well as state and federal policymakers.

(4) The work processes and methods by which the Field Projects Team intends to achieve this goal/these goals is/are:

1. Conduct a literature review of housing issues affecting young, low income adults and existing transitional living programs (TLPs) and independent living programs (ILPs) that serve this population
2. Develop a semi-structured interview protocol for TLP program staff to systematically learn more about their aftercare services related to housing

(5) The Project work products and deliverables are:

Literature review, interview protocol, written report

(6) The anticipated Project timeline is:

Literature Review & Interview Protocol – draft emailed to Client by 2/16

Written Report – draft submitted to Client by 3/18

(7) The lines of authority, supervision and communication between the Client and the Field Project Team are:

- The Field Project Team will provide the Client with regular progress updates via email. Prior to submitting drafts of the work products on the aforementioned dates, the Team will send outlines, via email, to the Client to solicit comments.
- The Client will select and provide contact information for the agencies to be interviewed. Prior to beginning the interview process, the Client will approve the Interview Protocol. The Team will inform the Client of any difficulties contacting the selected agencies, as soon as they arise, in order to ensure timely completion of the report.
- The Client will have editorial control over the final report.

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- Kate Golden will serve as the contact person for the Team and will send drafts and other documents to the Client for review.
- (8) The understanding with regard to payment/reimbursement by the client to the Field Projects Team of any Project-related expenses is:  
Documented project-related expenses in excess of \$100 will be reimbursed by the Client.

### **III. Additional Representations and Understandings**

- A. The Field Projects Team is undertaking the Course and the Project for academic credit and therefore compensation (other than reimbursement of Project-related expenses) may not be provided to team members.
- B. Because the Course and the Project itself are part of a larger academic context, it is understood that the final work product and deliverables of the Project (the “Work Product”) – either in whole or in part – may and most likely will be shared with others inside and beyond the Tufts community. This may include, without limitation, the distribution of the Work Product to other students, faculty and staff, release to community groups or public agencies, general publication, and posting on the Web. Tufts University and the Field Project Team may seek and secure grant funds or similar payment to defray the cost of any such distribution or publication. It is expected that any issues involving Client confidentiality or proprietary information that arise in connection with a Project will be narrow ones that can be resolved by discussion among the Client, the Field Projects Team and a Tufts instructor directly responsible for the Course (or his or her designee).
- C. It is understood that this Project may require the approval (either through full review or by exemption) of the Tufts University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This process is not expected to interfere with timely completion of the project.

### **IV. Signatures**

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For: New England Network for Child, Youth & Family Services

By: Melanie Wilson

Date: \_\_\_\_\_, 2005

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Representative of the Field Projects Team #7

By: Kate Golden

Date: \_\_\_\_\_, 2005

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Tufts UEP Faculty Representative

By:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_, 2005