A member of this focus group told us, “I am trying to make my life better than the one I had growing up.” Talking to our young adults experiencing housing instability and assessing their needs is an important ongoing process in order to understand and better provide essential services.

SUMMARY

Three break out groups of a total of thirty-three participants offered input and feedback on questions regarding housing instability experienced by young adults ages 18 through 25. Common themes presented throughout each discussion included an emphasis on youth focused services delivery with ongoing connections that help the young adults navigate and create their own plan for achieving housing stability. Most of the participants had used emergency shelter with mixed experiences. Recommendations included providing ongoing case management or mentoring support even beyond housing, designing services that allow the young adult to pursue education and work outside of program requirements and delivering services that value and support the young adults achievements and goals. Although many of the participants had indicated they had spent at least one night on the streets or in a car, most were experiencing episodes of housing instability including staying with friends and families, sofa surfing, shelter or transitional living, congregate living or pooling funds together to stay at motels. The following is the list of responses offered during the focus group discussion. We are grateful to the young adults for providing frank and earnest input and to the YARC staff for hosting the forum.

QUESTION 1: Where do you sleep at night?

- Streets (x2)
- People’s couches
- Restaurant Patios
- Friend’s Houses (x2)
- Parks, Benches

- Beacon, Covenant House (x3), Charity Guild (x2), Astro Inn
- Bus Stops (x2)
- Abandoned Buildings (“Vacos”, “Abandos”)

QUESTION 2: How are you trying to change the housing situation?

- Apply/Try to get job
- Make money
- Find money for legal fees
- Get an apartment (process to get an apartment takes a lot)

- Get one place to stay (not go from place to place)
- Attend programs at non profits
- Apply for funding and grants
- Pregnant and go to Social Services

QUESTION 3: What are the challenges you face in trying to find a more stable situation?

- Legal fees
- Lack of experience
- Moving away from hindrances
- Employment (x2)

- Finding next meal *(x2)
- Clothing
- Maintain Hygiene x(2)
- ID’s (x2)
- Money (x3) - Children
- Discrimination by employees - Social Security Card because of homelessness

QUESTION 4: What support could be offered to get or stay in Permanent Housing?

- Job search assistance for those - More programs like YARC with record - Place to stay during day
- Job Assistance to work as part as - Keep Productive program - Disconnect with people who will
- School help - 

QUESTION 5: What services are needed to stay housed?

- Case Management - Stay connected even after getting
- Transportation - housing
- Bus Card - Job and Employment Assistance
- Medical Services - Mentor
- Budgeting - Payee for SSI
- Access to Mental Health - HAY Center
- Rx Help - Education Assistance

QUESTION 6: What are some services you use and find useful?

- Food Stamps - Churches
- Transportation - Covenant House
- Case Management - Beacon – Mixed Reviews more for adults
- YARC - Foster Care and Juvenile Justice
- Grace Place - Aftercare Service transition from
- HAY Center - Hawthorne
- Palmer - 

QUESTION 7: What kind of Service have you received?

- EBT - choices to find work or school or do for yourself
- Emergency Shelter – Mostly old people, not professional. Older people act like they know everything, showers not clean - Shelters and programs have too much mandatory programing for spiritual classes and life skill classes and forbid you for seeking work
- Counseling
- Foster Care
- Most services are not designed for Youth and don’t support your
QUESTION 8: What’s the most helpful Help received?

- Case Manager
- YARC
- Mentor
- ODM
- TSA
- Cell Phone
- Work
- Things that prevent you from being lonely

QUESTION 9: Experience at Shelter that would not want you to back? What happened?

- Emergency Shelters – Required Praying and spiritual classes
- Youth shelter – Staff, Rules
- Shelter – demanding on their rules and religious founding
- Hard to get away from negative people, felt like in jail
- Shelters are hard...really hard with baby
- “older people judging younger people”
- Want all to work
- They don’t acknowledge your progress
- No food after 5
- Extremely early curfews at 5 or 6pm – (x2)
- Not clean
- “if you say we are adults, then treat us like adults’
- Some shelters won’t let you have phones, so can’t look for job
- Do not pay attention to specifics
- Requires Christian classes
- Religion required

QUESTION 10: If you have not sought help from public or Non-profit, why not?

- Didn’t want to be in another group home. Was in Foster care group homes and want to have more independence.

QUESTION 11: What kind of help or services do you wish were there for you that are not available now?

- Mentoring
- Cohousing-sharing housing with roommates
- Employment related support
- Continued Case Management Assistance when going their own way
- Access to lockers and places to stay during the day

QUESTION 12: What is good or positive in your life now?

- Change
- Strength/Hope
- School
- Family Support (x2)
- My intelligence
- Make music
QUESTION 13: How do you get money?
- Pawning
- Write a paper
- Greensheet Jobs
- Work fulltime *(x2)
- Bartering and trading
- Family help (x2)
- Landscaping
- Panhandle
- Steal
- Habits learnt on the street

QUESTION 14: Who do you rely on when you need help?
- God
- Mom
- Myself (2)
- Positive Friends
- Internet network
- Family, but they are not always available
- Don’t want to ask family since it’s against morals
- Young adults stick together and rely on each other
- Mentor
- Case manager
- Step Dad

QUESTION 15: Who relies on you for support?
- Daughter, Kids
- Whole family (x2)
- Brother
- Everybody
- Family relies on emotional and financial support

QUESTION 16: What Survival Strategies do Youth use before and after leaving home? Tell us your thoughts
- Work
- Basketball
- School
- Home family
- Poetry
- Positivity
- Seeking own solution to problem
- Drugs
- Have a weapon and be aware of your surroundings
- Stealing (x2)
- Vigilance
- Not relaxed or calm
- Stay away from others
- Pick up habits to keep ahead of things
- Keep to myself and stay hidden
- Sugar momma or daddy
- Credit Cards fraud
- Sell Drugs
- Steal and then return items for cash

QUESTION 17: Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- Surviving
- Own business in Miami, working on engines
- College, Criminal Justice
- House, Car, College with baby
- Working and taking care of daughter
- Legal issues complete and going back home
- Move to Haiti, fix up some place
- Done with School, VFD, Lawn care business
- Going to school
- In Austin w own Apartment and car
- NAM housing subsidy
- Have apartment and taking care of son with a job
- 3 story house w 2 jobs
- Working Offshore
- Working with others

The below table provides brief demographics on our focus group participants

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<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Average Age</th>
<th>Age Distribution</th>
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<td>(Includes 2 mixed)</td>
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<tr>
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