



Last year saw the launch of the first statewide census of those unaccompanied homeless youth up to the age of 24 who are not in the physical custody or care of a parent or legal guardian and who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. 2015 will mark the second year all Continuums of Care throughout the State are participating in this count. The Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness has created a survey tool for the communities to administer.

To better understand youth homelessness, the State, through the Department of Housing and Community Development, convened a special commission in 2012. The state recognized that historically, it has been a difficult population to capture an accurate understanding of as many of these youth would like to remain under the radar to avoid going into the system and different counts in the past have used different age ranges and different definitions of homelessness. For instance, the City participates annually in a point in time count required by the Department of Housing and Urban Development ("HUD") that does not consider couch surfing youth to be homeless.

The Housing Division of the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development respectfully requests that you forward this letter, memorandum and scope of services to the Board of Alderman (BOA) requesting that the BOA accept a grant in the amount of \$5,000 from the Department of Housing & Community Development in order to support our efforts to conduct a count and survey of unaccompanied homeless youth beginning Wednesday January 28, 2015 through Wednesday February 4, 2015.

Re: 2015 Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Count

Date: 12/8/2014

From: Kelly Donato

To: Mayor Curtatone

MEMORANDUM

MICHAEL F. GLAVIN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR



The grant was offered to all continuums statewide in the amount of \$5,000 to assist in the count efforts and can be spent on staff time coordinating planning efforts for the count and providing training, outreach, data collection and reporting activities as well as partner agency administrative costs for overseeing youth ambassadors and assistance with training and outreach, materials, and stipends. We will be using youth ambassadors identified by agencies within Somerville to help reach out through their peer networks. Separately, the City will also be participating in the annual HUD point in time count, which will occur during the overnight hours of January 28th to January 29th 2015 from 2am-6am.

Last year in Somerville we collected 56 surveys, of which 24 met the State unaccompanied homeless youth definition and 18 met the HUD unaccompanied homeless youth definition. Of these 56 surveys, 9 respondents were potentially experiencing risk.

While we understand that it will be difficult to reach out to and find every youth in Somerville who falls into this population, we estimate that there are roughly 70 homeless unaccompanied youth currently in Somerville. The goal of this statewide undertaking is to gain a clearer understanding of this vulnerable population so that the state will be better positioned to allocate resources in a more effective and efficient manner in the hope of ending homelessness among youth.

Recommendation:

That the BOA accept a grant in the amount of \$5,000 from the Department of Housing & Community Development in order to support our efforts to conduct a count and survey of unaccompanied homeless youth beginning Wednesday January 28, 2015 through Wednesday February 4, 2015.



October 2, 2014

Kelly Donato
City of Somerville
50 Evergreen Ave.
Somerville, MA 02145
Dear Ms. Donato,

The Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Commission was established in 2012 and has been working since to outline a strategy for better understanding the scope and needs of unaccompanied homeless youth. Fortunately this year the state's budget includes resources to enhance the work of the Commission. As a result, I am pleased to inform you that the Department of Housing and Community Development will make a grant of \$5,000 available to the Somerville Continuum of Care in order to support efforts to conduct a count and survey of unaccompanied homeless youth during this year's Point In Time count. Expenses are permitted between the dates of 10/1/14 and 6/30/15.

Participation by the Somerville CoC will be important for our statewide goal of conducting the second annual statewide count of unaccompanied homeless youth and obtaining an improved statewide data set that will inform policy and program design. With a clearer understanding of this vulnerable population we will all be better positioned to allocate resources in a more effective and efficient manner, with the ultimate goal of ending homelessness among youth.

Enclosed with this letter is a Scope of Services and an outline of required reporting elements associated with the grant. Please review these. I will be in touch with you soon to discuss additional details and answer any questions you may have. The budget you submitted with your application has been approved and should guide expenditures. Invoices may be submitted monthly by the 10th day after the end of each month and should be submitted via email to liz.rogers@state.ma.us or by mail to Liz Rogers, 100 Cambridge St., Suite 400, Boston, MA 02114. Invoices must be accompanied by supporting documentation, such as receipts.

Additionally, you will soon receive an invitation to attend an upcoming conference where all CoCs will have the opportunity to share their approaches to planning and executing this statewide count.

Thank you for your commitment to homeless youth and your partnership in the MA Youth Count effort.

Enclosures

Elizabeth Rogers
Executive Director
Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth Rogers".

Sincerely,



MEMORANDUM

TO: MA Youth Count Grantees

FROM: Liz Rogers, Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness

DATE: October 2, 2014

RE: 2015 Massachusetts Youth Count Reporting Requirements

All grantees will be required to report back to the Department of Housing and Community Development on the results of their efforts to count and survey unaccompanied homeless youth. The reporting requirements fall into three main categories as described below. Items I and II will be due no later than February 25, 2015, and should be submitted to Liz Rogers at liz.rogers@state.ma.us - 100 Cambridge St., Suite 400, Boston, MA 02114.

- I. Point in Time Census of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth
 - a. Total number of HUD-defined homeless youth encountered during the PIT.

- II. Youth Count Survey

- a. The survey will be available via electronic means at www.surveymonkey.com/, which can be accessed via computer or mobile device using the surveymonkey app. A specific link will be provided at a later date. CoCs should prioritize this method to reduce the data entry burden and potential transcription errors.
- b. Paper surveys will be available and can be provided to youth if they prefer to use that method. Versions of the survey in Spanish will also be available in paper format.
- c. Any surveys completed in paper form must be received at the address above no later than February 25, 2015.

- III. Process Evaluation: 45-minute phone interview with state's data analysis team to be scheduled for February 2015. Interview questions will include the following:

Planning and recruitment

- a. In planning for your count, did you initiate a local planning committee? What benefits, if any, did that bring to the implementation of the count?
- b. What partner organizations did you engage in the count and survey administration? And what was each of their roles (i.e., outreach, counting)? What partners were missing from your effort and why?
- c. Did you employ any centralized coordination during the count and survey period?
- d. What strategies did you employ to recruit volunteers and what was most effective? Least effective?
- e. Did you have any special outreach for LGBTQ youth (i.e., partners, volunteers, True Colors stickers)?
- f. Did you have any special outreach for youth under age 18?
- g. How did you train volunteers? Were volunteers monitored or supervised for quality control?
- h. Did you do any marketing of the count (i.e., through social media, flyers, through word of mouth of service providers)? How effective do you think those strategies were?

Implementation

- i. Over how many days, did you administer the count?
- j. How did you determine who to survey?

- k. How well did your approach to survey administration work?
- l. How well did the tool itself work? Was the length appropriate? Were there certain questions that posed challenges to obtaining strong information, or should be redesigned or removed? Were there questions that youth refused to answer? If so, what were they? Did you provide incentives for youth who participated in the count? If so, what were they and how were these funded (i.e., ICCH grant, own funding, philanthropic)?

Locations

- n. Did you conduct a street count? If so, what geographic areas did you cover? And how were areas determined?
- o. Did you conduct a service-based count? If so, what locations were covered (i.e., schools, juvenile detention, soup kitchens, drop-in centers, health clinics)?
- p. Did you host any magnet events (i.e., sleepovers)? If so, how well did those go? How many youth attended? And what types of activities or incentives (i.e., food, gift bags) were provided?
- q. Do you think there were youth that were missed in your count? If so, what is your estimation of the undercount (e.g., youth in certain circumstances or in certain geographies)?

Success and challenges

- r. What were the biggest successes for your count?
- s. What were the biggest challenges for your count?
- t. Are there local factors unique to your community that could have impacted your count?

Moving forward

- u. Has this experience changed the way your CoC will approach the count in the future or how it will work with unaccompanied homeless youth?
- v. What advice would you give the state as it looks to support future efforts to count unaccompanied homeless youth?



Massachusetts Youth Count SCOPE OF SERVICES

The Continuum of Care shall perform the following functions and activities:

A. Point In Time Count Administration

1. Conducting a count of unaccompanied homeless youth in the Continuum of Care service geographic footprint.
The Continuum of Care shall be responsible for conducting a census of all unaccompanied homeless youth on the date of the annual Point In Time Count as required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The count should include at a minimum those youth who meet the criteria described in paragraph 1 of HUD's Homeless Definition Final Rule and who are not in foster care, wards of the state, or otherwise under government custody or supervision as of the night designated for the count. The Continuum of Care may also count other youth defined as homeless by some other entity, such as the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, though this may only be used for planning purposes and cannot be reported to HUD. The Homeless Definition Final Rule can be found at: [https://www.onecpd.info/resources/documents/HEARTH_HomelessDefinition_FinalRule.p](https://www.onecpd.info/resources/documents/HEARTH_HomelessDefinition_FinalRule.pdf)

2. Engaging partners in a local planning committee to assist in the identification of unaccompanied homeless youth during the Point In Time count.
The Continuum of Care shall be responsible for serving as the lead coordinating agency for the count, but shall also engage additional community partners to assist in the effort. This could include housing and service providers, government entities, youth-serving agencies, LGBTQ-serving agencies, and other community-based nonprofits.

B. Survey Administration

1. Administer a survey to unaccompanied homeless youth.
The Continuum of Care shall be responsible for administering a survey to unaccompanied homeless youth over the course of the week following the Point In Time Count. For example, if the count is scheduled for a Wednesday, the survey should be administered over the course of the seven days immediately following the PIT, starting with Thursday. The survey tool used will be provided to the Continuum of Care by the Department of Housing and Community Development, and will be used statewide in order to collect a



complete, uniform data set across sites. The survey will be available electronically and in paper and should be provided directly to the youth to complete themselves. *The survey is not intended to be administered in an interview style because of the sensitive nature of some of the questions.*

2. Recruit volunteers to assist with survey administration. The Continuum of Care shall be responsible for recruiting volunteers to identify and provide youth with the survey tool. Every effort should be made to recruit youth who may have experienced homelessness to serve as these volunteers in order to increase comfort amongst youth being surveyed.

3. Pay stipends for participating youth. Any youth volunteers assisting with the administration of the survey tool should be paid a stipend for their time. Additionally, the Continuum of Care may also attempt to identify resources to pay a small stipend to youth completing the survey. State grant funds may be used to support both of these efforts, but additional resources could be necessary. Stipends could be paid in the form of gift cards to grocery stores, convenience stores, or other local and easily accessible businesses.

C. Data Collection and Reporting

1. Provide the Department of Housing and Community Development with census numbers and survey results. The Continuum of Care shall provide DHCD with information about the number of homeless youth in their geographic footprint, as well as all completed surveys for central analysis. Additional details on data and reporting can be found in the Memorandum dated October 2, 2014 referencing required data and reporting elements.

2. Participate in a process evaluation. Following the conclusion of the count and survey period, the Continuum of Care shall participate in a telephone interview with DHCD's data analysis team to gather information about the initiative. Additional details on data and reporting can be found in the Memorandum dated October 2, 2014 referencing required data and reporting elements.