



HOME FOR GOOD NEW ORLEANS:

Youth & Young Adult Sustainability Plan

2026 - CREATED BY CLUTCH CONSULTING GROUP



Executive Summary

New Orleans can drastically reduce youth and young adult homelessness by reaching young people earlier and resolving housing crises faster, so that unsheltered homelessness becomes rare and brief. This plan outlines how New Orleans will sustain low to no unsheltered homelessness for youth and young adults by building a durable, accountable system that finds and engages young people quickly, prevents unnecessary shelter entry, and helps youth remain stably housed after exit.

New Orleans has strong youth providers and a critical crisis safety net through Covenant House, yet the system is not consistently designed or scaled to prevent homelessness when possible or to resolve it quickly when it occurs. Each year, approximately 525 young people fall into homelessness. At the same time, only a small number—approximately 25 households annually—experience long-term homelessness. These dynamics create a clear opportunity: with standardized practices and coordinated performance management, New Orleans can reduce the number of youth falling into homelessness, shorten episodes of youth homelessness, and sustain low to no unsheltered homelessness for youth and young adults.

System Design Priorities to Sustain Low to No Unsheltered Homelessness for Youth and Young Adults:

- **Identify Youth Upstream and Standardize Access to Assistance.**
 - The system must move upstream—partnering with schools, foster care, juvenile justice, and community providers to identify youth at risk sooner and connect them to support before shelter or unsheltered homelessness occurs. Identification must function as the gateway to stabilization, not simply to services or data collection.
- **Intervene Early Through Prevention and Diversion.**
 - Most youth do not need long-term programs to resolve their housing crisis. Consistent use of youth-centered problem solving, diversion, family reunification when safe, and flexible assistance can prevent unnecessary shelter entry and shorten episodes of homelessness.
- **Optimize Shelter flow.**
 - Shelter must function as a short-term stabilization point, not a holding place. The system must proactively engage unsheltered young people and provide immediate access to low-barrier shelter or diversion. Youth entering shelter should be engaged immediately in intensive problem solving and progressive engagement, with a clear expectation that they return to stable housing within 60 days whenever possible. For the small number of youth with higher needs, the system must accelerate access to housing and supports to eliminate long-term homelessness entirely.

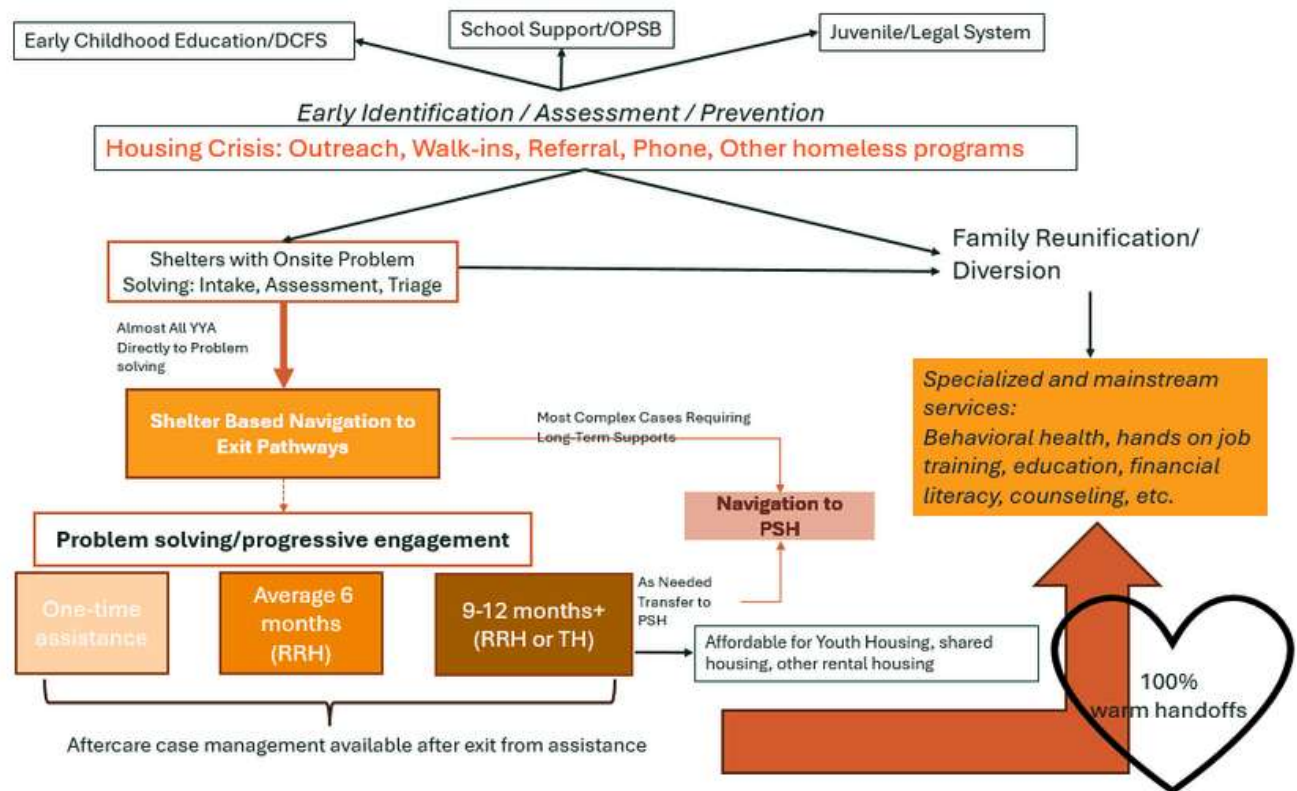
Implementation of this plan will be co-led by the City of New Orleans Office of Homeless Services and Strategy (OHSS) and UNITY of Greater New Orleans, with strong alignment across youth providers, funders, and key system partners. Progress will be monitored through shared performance measures, including inflow, which is defined as the number of people that become homeless annually, length of time in crisis and shelter, housing outcomes, returns to homelessness, and time to stabilization.

Together, these actions position New Orleans to not only respond to youth and young adult homelessness, but to end it sustainably, ensuring that when young people face housing crises, the system responds quickly, consistently, and with lasting results.

Reaching Low to No Unsheltered Homelessness for Youth and Young Adults

New Orleans is committed to an optimized youth homelessness response system that intervenes early, reduces reliance on shelter, and ensures swift pathways to stable housing and opportunity. In this system, young people are identified upstream, supported through youth-centered problem solving, and connected to flexible resources without needing to enter shelter whenever safely possible.

In the optimized system, shelter functions as a brief stabilization point—not a destination. There is an immediate focus on resolving housing crises and reconnecting youth to supportive relationships, education, employment, and health care. Supports are decoupled from shelter entry, so youth can access help across the community: through schools, drop-in centers, proactive street outreach, or community partners.



Values and Principles



Youth-centered decision-making: young people are primary decision-makers in their own pathways to stability.



Prevention and early intervention: act before instability becomes a crisis.



Low-barrier access: meaningful support without requiring shelter entry.



Timely, flexible assistance: respond quickly with resources that fit the situation.



Strengths-based problem-solving: build plans around strengths, relationships, goals, and aspirations.



Warm handoffs and continuity: seamless connections to services, education, employment, health care, and housing supports.



Progressive engagement: start with the least intensive support and scale up only as needed.



Whole-person stability: address housing plus belonging, connection, and opportunity.



Family and relationship inclusivity: honor trusted relationships and chosen family; pursue reunification when safe and desired.



Dignity and trauma-informed practice: minimize retraumatization and promote safety and respect.

Priority 1: Identify Youth Upstream and Standardize Access to Assistance



Ensuring that all youth and young adults (YYA) experiencing homelessness are identified is the foundation of an effective community response. Before young people end up at shelter or sleeping outside, many will couch-surf, stay temporarily with friends--cycling through untenable or unsafe situations. Most young people are involved in or connected to other systems of care, such as schools, health care, foster care or the juvenile court and supervision system. Without deliberate identification strategies and strong partnerships, our community misses critical opportunities for early intervention and stabilization.

Identification is not simply a data exercise. It is the gateway to connect young people to resources and avoid additional trauma. When youth are not identified, they are more likely to experience prolonged homelessness, educational disruption, exploitation, juvenile system involvement, and long-term housing instability. Early identification paired with resources will shorten episodes of homelessness and increase the likelihood of positive outcomes in adulthood.

Priority 1: Identify Youth Upstream and Standardize Access to Assistance

**Upstream Partnerships
and Early Identification**

**Youth-Centered
Access and
Assessment**

**Decoupling Supports
from System Entry**

Upstream Partnerships and Early Identification

A central pillar of this strategy is deepening partnership with upstream systems that regularly interact with young people at heightened risk of homelessness. This includes collaboration with the foster care system, charter schools, and the juvenile court and supervision system. These systems often see warning signs long before a young person enters shelter or sleeps outside.

By formalizing coordination agreements and shared accountability across these sectors, the community can shift from reacting to homelessness to preventing it. To better understand the scale and pathways into homelessness, this strategy calls for aggregate data matching across systems of care. Conducting data matches between upstream systems and youth who later enter the homelessness response system will reveal patterns, identify risk factors, and inform targeted interventions. This shared understanding will allow resources to be directed to the highest-impact prevention points.

Why this works:

- Identifies youth earlier, preventing escalation.
- Creates consistent referrals through shared accountability.
- Targets prevention resources where they matter most.

Priority 1: Identify Youth Upstream and Standardize Access to Assistance

**Upstream Partnerships
and Early Identification**

**Youth-Centered
Access and
Assessment**

**Decoupling Supports
from System Entry**

Youth-Centered Access and Assessment

When young people are identified and seek assistance, the response must be accessible and trauma-informed. A standard assessment process at major access points reduces barriers to entry and avoids retraumatization. Rather than requiring youth to navigate complex intake systems, the goal is to quickly triage needs and connect them to appropriate supports.

The outcome of this assessment process includes rapid connections to:

- Prevention assistance to stabilize current housing
- Family reunification services when safe and appropriate
- Diversion supports to identify any immediate safe alternatives
- Rapid rehousing resources, including connections to vouchers for eligible youth, (such as the family unification program vouchers for young people exiting foster care)
- Wraparound services from mainstream systems such as mental health care, medical care, education and employment

The plan also calls for ensuring that 211 and 311 are connected to this assessment system and have clear, updated youth-specific prevention referrals so that young people and families can access help through familiar entry points.

Why this works:

- Fewer steps reduces drop-off.
- Faster matching to the right intervention.
- Shared approach improves consistency and equity.

Priority 1: Identify Youth Upstream and Standardize Access to Assistance

**Upstream Partnerships
and Early Identification**

**Youth-Centered
Access and
Assessment**

**Decoupling Supports
from System Entry**

Decoupling Supports from System Entry

Youth should not have to enter the homeless system to receive services or resources. Young people often need behavioral health services, educational support, employment assistance, or family mediation before they need shelter – and those services can often prevent entry into shelter. The system will prioritize flexible, community-based responses that stabilize youth where they are when it is safe to do so, preserving relationships, educational continuity, and long-term stability.

Why this works:

- Support in community prevents shelter entry.
- Maintains school/work and key relationships.
- Preserves shelter beds for youth who need them.

Priority 2: Intervene Early through Prevention and Diversion



Homelessness among young people should be prevented whenever possible, and when not possible, homeless episodes should be as short as possible. Many young people experiencing homelessness are already connected to schools, behavioral health providers, family support systems, or informal networks long before they seek shelter. New Orleans has an opportunity to build a stronger upstream response that identifies youth earlier, responds faster, and offers meaningful alternatives before young people are sleeping outside or entering shelter. This includes standardizing youth-focused assessment and triage processes across systems, strengthening cross-system coordination, and expanding prevention and diversion resources that are accessible outside the shelter system.

This priority recognizes that many youth homelessness crises can be resolved quickly with timely problem-solving, mediation, flexible financial assistance, and support reconnecting to family, chosen family, or other trusted adults. Preventing shelter entry whenever safely possible reduces trauma and disruption while preserving young people's connections to school, employment, community, and supportive relationships. Schools will play a particularly important role as an early intervention touchpoint, alongside broader investments in wraparound supports that address the underlying drivers of instability. Together, these strategies create a more coordinated and youth-centered safety net focused on prevention, rapid resolution, and long-term stability.

Priority 2: Intervene Early through Prevention and Diversion

**Standardized
Assessment and Cross-
System Coordination**

**Scaling Prevention,
Diversion, and Rapid
Resolution Resources**

Flexible Assistance

Standardized Assessment and Cross-System Coordination

A standard, trauma-informed, phased youth assessment will be designed and implemented across key providers, including Covenant House, Start Corporation, street outreach and adult shelters. Upstream systems of care will adopt the early intervention phase of the standard assessment. Consistent assessment tools will ensure youth are appropriately triaged and connected to prevention, family reunification, and diversion. Cross training and coordination between mainstream systems and the homeless response system is necessary to strengthen the safety net and catch young people before they are literally sleeping outside or at the front door of shelter.

Why this works:

- Standard tools create consistent triage and referrals.
- Cross-training speeds prevention and diversion decisions.
- Earlier coordination prevents shelter and unsheltered entry.

Priority 2: Intervene Early through Prevention and Diversion

**Standardized
Assessment and Cross-
System Coordination**

**Scaling Prevention,
Diversion, and Rapid
Resolution Resources**

Flexible Assistance

Scaling Prevention, Diversion, and Rapid Resolution Resources

In addition to building standardized assessment processes within upstream systems of care, the community will need to expand staff capacity and financial resources dedicated to homelessness prevention, shelter diversion, and family reunification. These resources must be available outside the shelter system so young people can access them without first entering shelter. Young people who are couch surfing are at particularly high risk of becoming homeless, and the system should be designed to intervene before they experience the trauma of sleeping outside or the disruption of staying in shelter. While shelter can be a critical safety net, staying in shelter can disrupt connections to work, community, and supportive relationships and should be avoided whenever possible.

A clear, centralized pathway for accessing homelessness prevention and diversion resources is essential – potentially through a coordinated clearinghouse – paired with a strong communication strategy so young people and their families know exactly where to go for help. Currently, access points are unclear, and resources are first-come, first-served and can be quickly exhausted. A community-wide flexible fund could provide standardized access to flexible financial assistance, with shared definitions and targeting. Together, these investments would create a safety net that young people could access before presenting at shelter.

Schools are a primary prevention touchpoint. Because schools in New Orleans operate within a charter management organization structure, standard requirements should be built into the charter reauthorization process to ensure there is a point of contact to identify and support students experiencing homelessness. If each charter management organization had a dedicated navigator for this population and access to a flexible fund for prevention or shelter diversion assistance, New Orleans would be poised to intervene earlier for many young people.

Why this works:

- Resolves crises quickly, reducing shelter inflow.
- Youth choice increases follow-through.
- Focus on safe options shortens episodes.
- Often the fastest safe exit from homelessness.
- Mediation plus follow-up reduces returns.
- Expands options through chosen family supports.

Priority 2: Intervene Early through Prevention and Diversion

**Standardized
Assessment and Cross-
System Coordination**

**Scaling Prevention,
Diversion, and Rapid
Resolution Resources**

Flexible Assistance

Flexible Assistance

Housing assistance alone is insufficient to meet the needs of some young people. This plan calls for increased connections and support for specialized services that youth need to regain stability and find their path to thriving. In addition to behavioral and physical health services, young people need a variety of pathways to opportunity in order to meet their goals, including literacy support and GED, on ramps to and scholarships for higher education, skill building and hands on job training, mentorship, budgeting skills among others. By investing in wraparound services outside of the homeless response system and prioritizing young people experiencing homelessness, the community can address root causes and reduce recurrence.

Why this works:

- Removes small barriers that trigger homelessness.
- Lower cost than prolonged shelter stays.
- Flexible help fits youth circumstances.

Priority 3: Optimize Shelter Flow

Integrated Street Outreach and Rapid Connection to Shelter

Intensive Problem Solving and Rapid Exit from Shelter

Progressive Engagement

Integrated Street Outreach and Rapid Connection to Shelter

Eliminating unsheltered youth homelessness in New Orleans requires street outreach capacity that is fully integrated with the broader youth homelessness response. While the community has strengthened coordination in the single adult street outreach system, outreach must be more intentionally aligned with youth providers, youth serving shelters, and housing pathways for youth.

New Orleans has a strong foundation of low-barrier shelter options for young people – through youth-specific providers like Covenant House and partnerships with adult programs offering youth-appropriate services, such as the Low Barrier Shelter partnership with Start Corporation. However, gaps remain in youth-specific expertise within outreach, coordination between outreach and youth shelter, and alignment across providers serving youth.

Building on this foundation, street outreach efforts will be more intentionally integrated with the youth system through cross-training, shared protocols, and coordinated workflows across outreach teams, youth-serving shelters, and housing programs. This includes stronger alignment between outreach, diversion and problem-solving resources, and youth-specific pathways such as family reunification and shared housing.

Outreach will focus on housing and stabilization from the first interaction, with coordinated, real-time connections to youth-specific diversion, low-barrier shelter options, respite, family reunification, or housing pathways.

Why this works:

- Reduces time spent unsheltered
- Builds trust and engagement
- Creates a direct connection from street to diversion, shelter and housing

Priority 3: Optimize Shelter Flow

**Integrated Street
Outreach and Rapid
Connection to Shelter**

**Intensive Problem
Solving and Rapid Exit
from Shelter**

**Progressive
Engagement**

Intensive Problem Solving and Rapid Exit from Shelter

The first days of a young person's stay in shelter are critical. The data show that most young people (81%) exit shelter without any housing resources and stay an average of 3 months; 20% of that group returns.[1] We expect that with more resources to engage and support youth, young people could exit faster and return at much lower rates. The system will need to be reoriented to treat shelter entry as a brief stabilization point and an opportunity for immediate resolution.

To accomplish this system change, shelters will need to be staffed with trained problem-solvers who engage intensively with young people when they first present at shelter. These staff will conduct structured, youth-driven conversations to explore all possible safe exit pathways, including reconnecting with family, friends or trusted adults (when appropriate), mediation to resolve conflict, shared housing arrangements with peers, or returning to a prior housing situation with targeted support.

This approach leverages flexible, one-time assistance as a tool to unlock options. Small amounts of financial support – such as funds for transportation, rental arrears, utility payments, security deposits, groceries, interview clothes, etc. - can often bridge the gap between crisis and stability. The strategy will require a dedicated flexible funding pool specifically for rapid exit, allowing staff to act quickly.

Problem-solving will also intentionally utilize each youth's social capital and natural supports. Staff will collaborate with young people to identify safe relationships and networks that may not have initially been considered, and provide mediation, logistical or material support to make those arrangements viable. When youth have income or employment, or could quickly become employed, plans will leverage their own resources to secure housing quickly, paired with light-touch follow-up support to ensure stability.

To reinforce urgency, shelters will establish performance benchmarks tied to rapid exit – such as the percentage of youth exited within the first week, reductions in average length of stay, and reductions in returns. Staff will be supported with daily case conferencing to prioritize creative problem-solving and potential roommate matching. Landlord recruitment efforts will offer connections with landlords that rent rooms and affordable units, as well as management companies, to facilitate rapid placements in housing.

Why this works:

- Clear expectations drive faster exits.
- Earlier housing plans reduce returns.
- Rapid turnover keeps beds available.

[1] Returns to homelessness includes many young people who exit shelter to temporary housing situations. This measure is different from the HUD System Performance Measures (SPM) for returns to homelessness that is calculated for people who exit to permanent housing and does not include returns from temporary situations.

Priority 3: Optimize Shelter Flow

**Integrated Street
Outreach and Rapid
Connection to Shelter**

**Intensive Problem
Solving and Rapid Exit
from Shelter**

**Progressive
Engagement**

Progressive Engagement

Progressive engagement is a housing strategy that starts with the least intensive – and least costly – intervention needed to help a young person exit homelessness, and then increases support only if it becomes clear that more assistance is necessary. Rather than trying to predict at the outset who will need long-term programs, the system will respond in real time to how a young person is actually stabilizing.

In practice, this means that when a young person in New Orleans exits shelter or is identified through outreach, they are first offered problem solving and, if necessary, one-time assistance. Many youth stabilize successfully with their own resources or time-limited financial help and light-touch case management.

If a young person is unable to exit with that level of support, the level of intervention increases. Support can include rental assistance, ongoing case management, and integration behavioral health services. The most vulnerable young people may need to transition to permanent supportive housing. The key principle is responsiveness: services expand based on demonstrated need, not assumptions.

Flexible intervention is what makes progressive engagement possible. It requires adaptable funding and service models that are not rigidly tied to a single intervention design. For example:

- Duration of rental assistance extends if stability is not yet achieved
- Case management intensity can increase during transitions or a crisis and taper as stability improves
- Youth can move between housing pathways – such as from rapid rehousing to permanent supportive housing – without returning to homelessness

For youth and young adults, progressive engagement is particularly important because developmental needs and growth, person goals, income potential and social supports vary widely and change quickly. Some youth need only a small financial bridge and connection to employment; others require long-term clinical and housing support. Youth should be supported to revisit their goals and exit plan frequently – as often as every week - adapting as opportunities arise.

Why this works:

- Starts light; scales only if needed.
- Right-sized support improves outcomes.
- Reserves intensive slots for high-need youth.

Priority 3: Optimize Shelter Flow (continued)

System Integration

Housing Access

Wraparound Supportive Services to Sustain Stability

System Integration

Deepening collaboration – including co-location, shared protocols, joint case conferencing, and integrated service pathways will create a trauma-informed system where youth move from street outreach to shelter to permanent housing with the behavioral health care, supportive services, and opportunities they need to thrive.

Drop-in centers and youth-serving shelters will function as critical entry points for behavioral health assessment and stabilization. All youth entering low-barrier settings will be screened with a standard assessment and referred for timely behavioral health evaluation as indicated. While shelter and outreach case managers will not directly provide behavioral health assessments or services, they will coordinate access to community-based providers including Federally Qualified Health Centers and Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams, to ensure youth can access psychiatric care and medication support when needed.

Some highly vulnerable youth require short-term stabilization before engaging in shelter services or entering housing. There is a gap in the community for behavioral health respite beds or a Safe Haven-type model specifically designed for youth and young adults that must be met. Access must prioritize youth experiencing homelessness or identified as at high risk of homelessness who need therapeutic stabilization in a low-barrier, developmentally appropriate environment.

Why this works:

- Integrated supports improve housing stability.
- Removes bottlenecks to prevent long stays.
- Prioritizes residential treatment or respite beds for highly vulnerable youth.

Priority 3: Optimize Shelter Flow (continued)

System Integration

Housing Access

Wraparound
Supportive Services to
Sustain Stability

Housing Access

Youth housing pathways are a continuum and must reflect how young adults actually stabilize – rather than assuming a single outcome like an independent apartment is the only successful path. In addition to living with family and friends, young people need access to a range of housing options that align with their developmental stage, income, and support needs. This includes shared housing that mirrors natural roommate arrangements, rapid rehousing that provides a time-limited bridge to stability while youth build income and complete education, transitional housing that offers structured support and time to stabilize, affordable-for-youth housing that ensures long-term affordability, and permanent supportive housing for those with higher needs.

No single intervention meets the needs of all young people; a range of housing options provides flexibility and leads to more lasting stability for young people. To operationalize this array of housing pathways, the unit acquisition approach must expand beyond traditional models to intentionally secure rooms and leases that support these varied pathways.

The OHSS unit acquisition team will serve as a centralized hub for landlord engagement, with a specific focus on expanding housing options that are realistic and attainable for young people with lower incomes. This includes proactively identifying and structuring units for shared housing, room rentals, and other flexible living arrangements that align with the needs of young people. The team will work with existing UNITY landlord engagement efforts to coordinate and standardize strategies, while also tailoring outreach to landlords open to renting by the room, allowing co-tenancy, or offering lower-cost units.

By maintaining a dynamic inventory that includes shared units and individual rooms – and by helping shape lease structures that support affordability – the team will expand access to housing options that are often unavailable in traditional unit acquisition approaches, making shared and youth-appropriate housing a consistent and scalable part of the system.

Why this works:

- Creates a full mix of housing options
- Reflects how young adults actually live and stabilize
- Builds real housing affordability into the system
- Ensures a pipeline of tailored rooms and units for youth

Priority 3: Optimize Shelter Flow (continued)

System Integration

Housing Access

Wraparound
Supportive Services to
Sustain Stability

Wraparound Supportive Services to Sustain Stability

Housing placements will be paired with ongoing wraparound support designed not only to maintain tenancy, but to stabilize and advance young people's overall well-being. While case management provided by the homeless system is critical for helping young people secure and retain housing, it is not designed to meet the full range of needs that often underlie instability for young people.

Today, support is often fragmented and insufficient. As a result, young people are expected to navigate multiple disconnected systems to access behavioral health care, education, and employment services, often leading to gaps in care and increased risk of returning to homelessness. This strategy calls for the development of a cross-sector model that aligns housing with resources explicitly prioritized and set aside to ensure timely access to meet the needs of young people at risk of returning to homelessness. These services should be embedded into the stabilization plan from the outset – not treated as referrals – and delivered through coordinated partnerships with clear roles, shared accountability, and consistent communication.

The model should be designed to provide continuity through key transitions, with flexible, youth-centered supports that adapt over time. This includes sustained relationship-based engagement, proactive follow-up, and the ability to respond quickly as needs evolve. Building this approach will require stronger integration across systems and a shift from parallel service delivery to a unified, integrated model focused on long-term stability.

By intentionally designing and prioritizing resources for young people with the highest needs, the system can move beyond crisis response to pathways to self-sufficiency.

Why this works:

- Addresses root causes, not just the immediate crisis.
- Reduces returns to homelessness.
- Builds the foundation for stable futures.

A Data-Driven Approach



Clutch Consulting Group conducted a comprehensive analysis of the youth and young adult homelessness response system using the same system-level modeling and optimization approach previously applied to the single adult and family systems. In partnership with UNITY of Greater New Orleans, the team combined HMIS system modeling with stakeholder engagement to understand annual inflow into homelessness, pathways through shelter and housing programs, length of stay, and exit outcomes, clarifying the interventions needed to end youth and young adult homelessness for good.

This analysis clarifies both the **type and scale of pathways needed** to address annual inflow and sustain low to no unsheltered youth homelessness. Current utilization patterns highlight several key dynamics:

- **Most youth experience short-term homelessness but cycle through shelter.** Over 80% of youth use shelter only, stay about 90 days, and 1 in 5 return. This points to the need to shorten stays and strengthen exits. Expanding diversion and rapid exit strategies will allow more young people to resolve housing crises quickly and reduce returns.
- **Housing pathways need to be expanded.** In addition to scaling diversion and rapid exit, increasing access to transitional housing, rapid rehousing, affordable-for-youth housing and permanent supportive housing, will ensure that young people who need housing assistance can move more quickly into stable, appropriate options.
- **A small group experiences long-term homelessness but faces delays.** Fewer than 5% of youth (approximately 25 people) experience long-term homelessness, yet delays in accessing permanent supportive housing prolong instability. Faster lease-up and increasing dedicated permanent supportive housing for youth will ensure faster access for those with the highest needs.

Together, these findings show that youth homelessness in New Orleans is solvable with targeted, right-sized investments that prioritize early intervention, faster exits, and sustained stability, rather than crisis system expansion. A well-designed set of housing pathways ensures that young people receive the right level of support at the right time to prevent homelessness whenever possible and resolve it quickly when it occurs. Right-sized housing pathways align the type and intensity of support to each young person's needs. The data show that most youth can resolve homelessness quickly with light-touch interventions, while reserving longer-term housing resources for those with higher needs.

Right-Sized Housing Pathways

ANNUAL INFLOW: 525 YOUTH

10%	Diversion/Family Reunification	Resolve housing crises and avoid shelter entry through safe reunification or other immediate alternatives.
60%	Rapid Exit/Family Reunification	Exit shelter quickly through problem-solving and connection to safe housing options.
10%	Transitional Housing	Time-limited setting with services to stabilize and prepare youth for independent housing.
15%	Rapid Rehousing (Progressive Engagement)	Short or medium-term rental assistance to move youth into housing quickly, with flexible duration based on need.
5%	Permanent Supportive Housing / Affordable-for-Youth Housing	Long-term, affordable housing for youth with higher needs or limited income.

Right-Sized Housing Pathways



LONG TERM HOMELESS: 25 YOUTH

50%	Rapid Rehousing	Medium-term rental assistance as bridge to independence or other permanent housing.
50%	Permanent Supportive Housing	Ongoing housing and services for youth with the highest needs.

Financial, Operational & System Sustainability

Financial stability

Cost Framework and Resource Needs

Intervention	Estimated Cost per Person	Annual # Needed at Scale	Existing Investment in Exits	Estimated New Annual Investment (Gap)	Why This Matters
Diversion/Rapid Resolution	\$1,900	360 individuals	N/A	\$700,000	Prevents shelter entry or resolves homelessness in days, not months
Transitional Housing	\$22,000	50 individuals total; 25 new individuals	\$550,000	\$550,000	Converts assistance into lease-ups; reduces time in shelter
Rapid Rehousing (Progressive Engagement)	\$12,000	75 individuals total; 50 new individuals	\$350,000	\$600,000	Clears shelter bottlenecks for youth unable to exit through Rapid Resolution alone
Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) / Affordable-for-Youth Housing	\$24,000	Add 75 new units over 5 years, beginning with 23 slots in 2026	\$350,000	\$550,000 in 2026; grows to \$2.2M as units are added*	Long-term housing and support for youth with more intensive needs and barriers to stability
Total Annual Investment	—	—	\$1.25M	\$2.4M (2026); \$4.2M (2030)	Rebalances system to resolve homelessness quickly, unblock shelter flow, and ensure exits lead to stability.

Annual investment changes over time based on cost increases. Figures represent 2026 cost estimates unless otherwise noted.

*\$550,000 represents an increase of 23 new PSH units in 2026; \$2.2M represents a total increase of 75 new PSH units in 2030 at projected future costs. Costs reflect operating/service/rental assistance and do not include development costs for site-based PSH or Affordable-for-Youth Housing.

Financial, Operational & System Sustainability



Operational Leadership and Governance

Implementation will be jointly led by **OHSS and UNITY**, with active engagement from youth providers and system partners. Ongoing oversight will focus on performance, alignment, and continuous improvement.

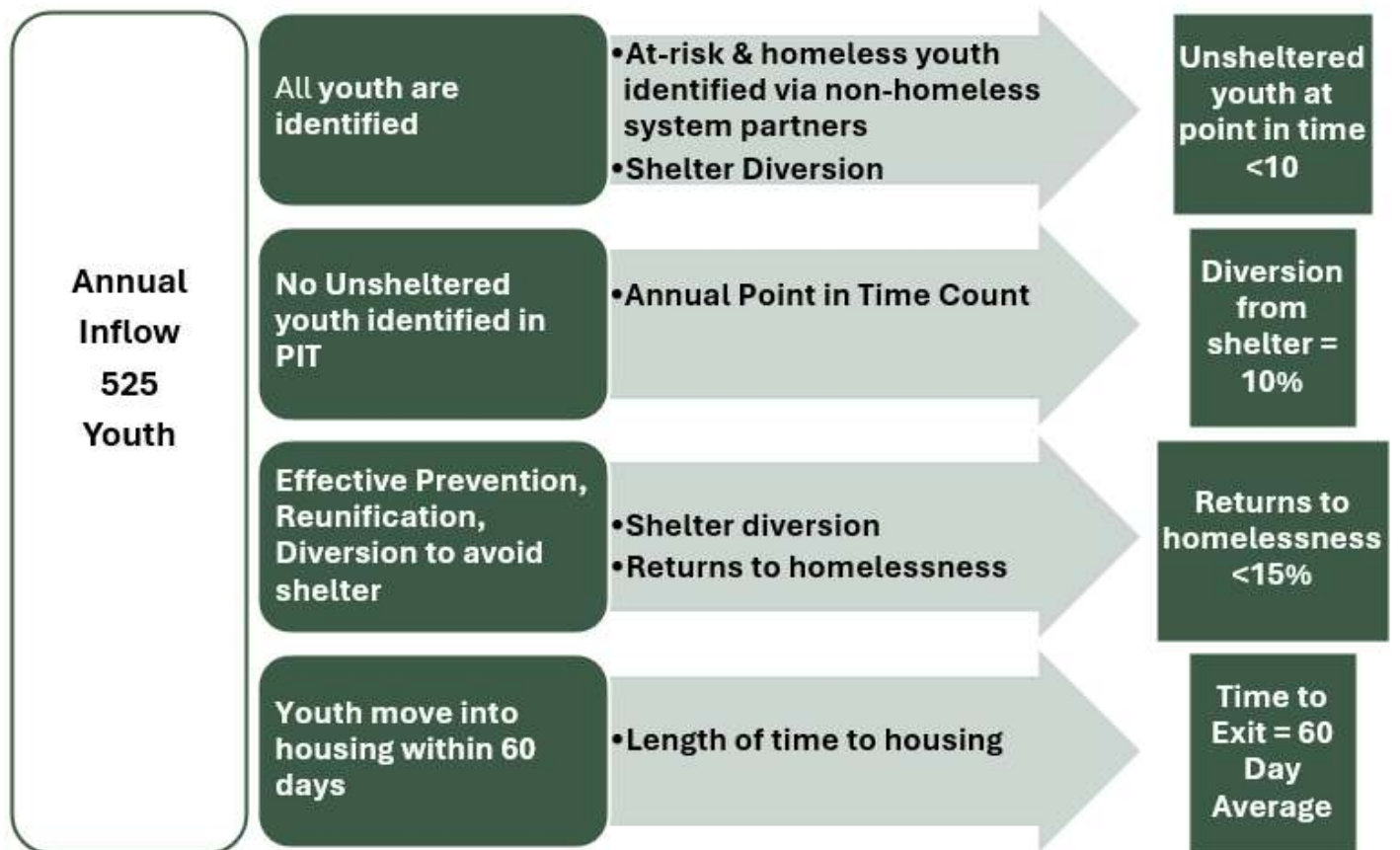
To support implementation and accountability, a Youth Plan Implementation Committee should be established, including representation from youth providers, system partners, young people with lived experience – integrating the voices of youth through the Continuum of Care’s People’s Council – and the City’s New Orleans Children and Youth Planning Board (CYPB).

The Committee will develop ongoing and ad hoc working groups to drive system priorities, inviting external partners as needed (e.g. Charter Management Organizations for upstream identification activities).

Financial, Operational & System Sustainability

Data, Performance, and Accountability

New Orleans has established a milestone framework to track progress toward ending and sustaining unsheltered homelessness among youth and young adults.



Appendices



Appendix A: Definitions

Shared housing: A housing approach in which young people live with roommates, reflecting natural and common living arrangements among young adults. It is developmentally appropriate, promotes peer connection and reduced isolation, lowers cost of living, and can serve as a more realistic bridge to long-term independence.

Rapid Rehousing (RRH): A short - to medium-term intervention that provides immediate access to housing while young people work toward specific goals such as completing education, enrolling in job training, or increasing income. It is intentionally time-limited and designed as a bridge to longer-term stability.

Transitional Housing (TH): A structured, time-limited housing program (often up to 24 months) that offers a congregate or semi-independent setting with on-site or linked services. While transitional housing is not permanent, it is a program environment with clear participation expectations. It provides stability and support to address immediate barriers, build life skills, and strengthen income before taking on the full responsibilities of a lease.

Affordable-for-Youth Housing: An emerging permanent housing model designed specifically for young people, with rents set as approximately 30% of a young person's income – even at minimum wage. Piloted by Covenant House in other parts of the country, this model expands affordable housing options and aims to prevent returns to homelessness or unstable living conditions.

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH): A long-term housing intervention for a small subset of young people with high-acuity and ongoing service needs, such as disabling conditions or significant behavioral health conditions. It combines deeply affordable housing with voluntary, flexible support services to promote sustained housing stability.

Appendix B: Stakeholder Engagement & System Modeling

This plan was informed by a structured process that combined system data modeling with input and reflection from youth providers and system stakeholders. Data used to inform the analysis were drawn from UNITY of Greater New Orleans Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) 

The analysis was conducted by Clutch Consulting Group, using a system model to understand current conditions and model ideal housing pathways for youth and young adults experiencing homelessness in a balanced system.

Clutch conducted this analysis in consultation with Unity of Greater New Orleans, which serves as the lead entity for HMIS data collection and management, as well as the lead for the Continuum of Care. Unity provided data access and validation of key assumptions used in the modeling process.

In addition to the quantitative analysis, the plan was informed by engagement with youth service providers and system stakeholders.

Two in-person working sessions were held with youth providers:

- October 2025 – Initial workshop explored current system challenges and established a local vision for an ideal system
- January 2026 – A second workshop reviewed preliminary system modeling results and refined strategies based on provider experience and feedback

Following the completion of the modeling and draft strategy development, a final virtual session with stakeholders was held March 31, 2026. This session provided an opportunity for system partners to reflect on the proposed strategies, discuss implementation considerations, and identify next steps for advancing the plan.

Stakeholders involved in developing this plan included the City of New Orleans Office of Homeless Services and Strategy (OHSS), UNITY of Greater New Orleans, Covenant House, United Way of Southeast Louisiana, Start Corporation, and Catholic Charities.

Appendix B: Stakeholder Engagement & System Modeling

System data show us that about 525 young people fall into homelessness in a single year in New Orleans. Most young people who use emergency shelter exit without a housing resource.

The average length of stay for this group is three months, with 20% return within six months. This indicates an opportunity to intervene earlier with light-touch support – reducing both time spent in shelter and the likelihood of return.

A relatively small number of young people remain in the system for a year or longer, around 25 households. Among those enrolled in permanent supportive housing, it currently takes more than six months to lease up in permanent housing after enrollment.

By expanding access to a network of pre-engaged landlords and available units, the system can dramatically shorten this step – reducing the time from securing a housing subsidy to move-in from months to days or weeks. As a result of improved strategy and targeted resources New Orleans could eliminate long-term homelessness among young people.



THE DEMAND: How Many People Do We Need to Exit?

ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT ANNUAL NEED (YOUTH)



Annual inflow is defined as youth entering or returning to the homelessness response system each year.

- 81% of unaccompanied youth only use emergency shelter and stay an average of 3 months, 20% return within 6 months



Long-stayers are defined as homeless more than a year.

- Long-term homelessness is not a significant concern for youth, but access to PSH for those who need it takes a long time and youth take 6+ months to lease after enrollment

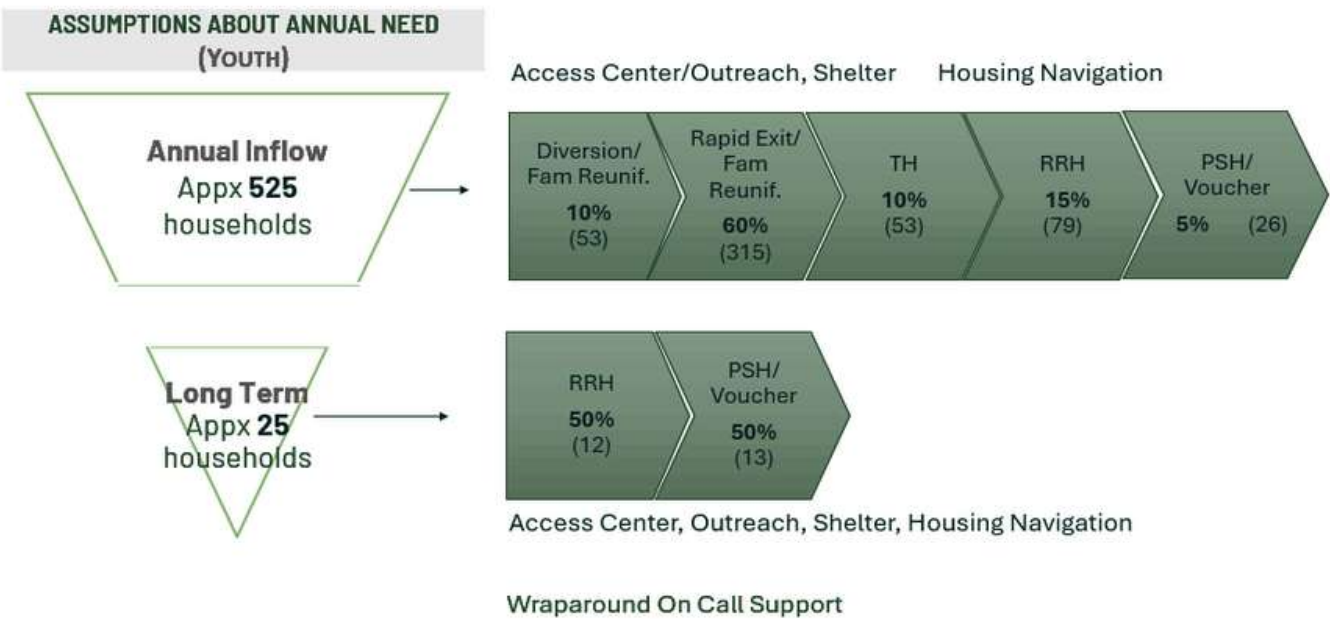
Appendix B: Stakeholder Engagement & System Modeling

Using a shared vision of what an ideal youth homelessness response system would look like, along with analysis of how young people currently move through the system, community stakeholders worked together to right size the ideal exit pathways.

These pathways illustrate a balanced system that prevents homelessness whenever possible and resolves housing crises quickly by ensuring young people receive the right level of support at the right time.



THE PATHWAYS: How Many People on Each Pathway?



Appendix B: Stakeholder Engagement & System Modeling

The system modeling chart illustrates the resources required to rehouse all long-term homeless youth and young adult to respond to an annual inflow of approximately 525 youth households, comparing existing inventory to identified gaps across interventions.

The largest gap appears in Diversion/Rapid Resolution, with additional gaps in Rapid Rehousing (RRH), Transitional Housing (TH), and Permanent Supportive Housing/Affordable-for-Youth Housing (AFYH). Diversion/Rapid Resolution shows by far the most significant gap, reflecting the scale of resources needed to quickly resolve housing crises and prevent prolonged shelter stays. Approximately 340 additional Diversion/Rapid Resolution slots are needed annually to meet modeled inflow demand and ensure homelessness remains rare and brief for young people. Importantly, Diversion/Rapid Resolution is also one of the least costly interventions on a per-household basis, making it a highly cost-effective strategy to reduce shelter demand and prevent longer and more expensive episodes of homelessness.

Rapid Rehousing shows a meaningful gap between current capacity and modeled need. Expanded RRH is essential to quickly move youth from shelter to permanent housing, shorten lengths of stay, and reduce returns to homelessness through progressive engagement and stabilization support. Transitional Housing requires targeted expansion for youth who need more structured services and longer-term stabilization as they build income, education, employment, and life skills.

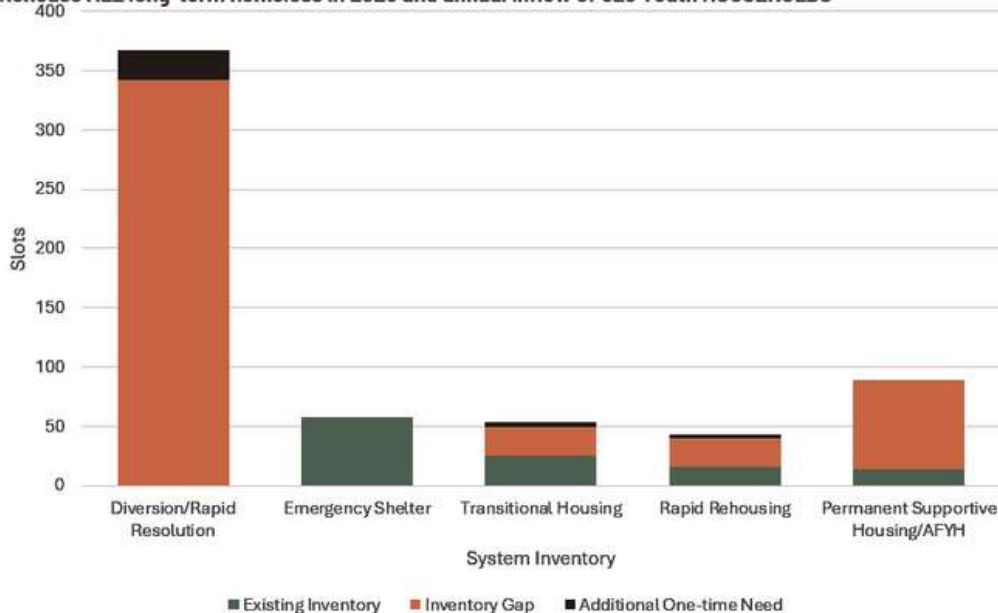
Permanent Supportive Housing/Affordable-for-Youth Housing also shows a substantial gap. While only a small percentage of youth experience long-term homelessness, those youth often require more intensive housing and support interventions to exit homelessness and sustain stability.

Emergency Shelter capacity appears relatively strong, with existing inventory generally aligned with modeled need. However, the chart highlights a broader system imbalance: shelter capacity is more robust than the housing-focused interventions needed to accelerate exits and reduce returns to homelessness. Without sufficient rapid exits and housing pathways, shelter risks functioning as a holding space rather than a brief stabilization intervention.



System Resource NEEDS

Rehouse ALL long-term homeless in 2026 and annual inflow of 525 Youth HOUSEHOLDS



Appendix C: Implementation

Priority 1 Tasks

PRIORITY	OBJECTIVE	TASK	SUBTASK
Early Identification	Identify YYA earlier through upstream partners	Formalize coordination with schools, foster care, and juvenile justice	• MOUs + data sharing; assign liaisons • Shared referral triggers & warm handoffs • Aggregate data matching to target prevention points • Quarterly review of referral volume, time to contact, outcomes
Youth Access	Standard youth access and assessment	Implement shared assessment and routing	• Develop standard assessment questions and processes • Decision rules for prevention/ diversion/ reunification/ RRH & mainstream supports • Training + QA/fidelity across access points • Follow-up standard (same day)
Prevention	Provide help without shelter entry	Build community referral paths + flexible assistance	• Resource map & “no wrong door” referrals • Referral pathways from schools, drop-in, outreach, providers • Standard flexible assistance workflow (eligibility → payment) • Track shelter avoided, time to stabilization, returns

Appendix C: Implementation

Priority 2 Tasks

PRIORITY	OBJECTIVE	TASK	SUBTASK
Diversion	Resolve crises without shelter entry	Standard diversion/problem solving	• Shared script & documentation • Training + coaching/QA • Track shelter avoided & outcomes
Prevention	Scale flexible assistance	Youth prevention/diversion fund	• Shared eligibility & targeting • Fast approvals & payment process • Simple tracking & spend/outcomes
Reunificaton	Make reunification routine (when safe)	Mediation & family engagement capacity	• Safety screening & decision rules • Provider cross-training • Follow-up plan (30/60/90 days)

Appendix C: Implementation

Priority 3 Tasks

Priority	Objective	Tasks	Subtasks
Street Outreach	Reduce unsheltered youth homelessness	Integrate outreach with shelter and rapid connection to diversion and rehousing	• Cross training and shared protocols across outreach, youth-serving shelters and diversion staff • Housing-focused outreach with real-time connections to youth diversion, low-barrier shelter, and housing pathways for young people • Coordinated workflows and warm handoffs to ensure rapid movement from street
Rapid Exit	Shorten shelter stays	Problem-solving at shelter entry	• Entry workflow (0–72 hours) • Benchmarks & daily huddles • Dedicated rapid-exit flexible fund
Engagement	Right-size supports	Implement progressive engagement	• Start light; scale as needed • Flexible extensions (rent/case management) • Seamless transfers across pathways
Integration	Prioritize access to behavioral health	Integrate behavioral health access	• Screening & referral pathway • Coordinate FQHC/ACT access
Housing	Expand housing	Define and expand access to shared housing, RRH, TH, PSH roles	• Expansion and performance targets by pathway • Eligibility & referral rules
		Strengthen landlord partnerships	• Targeted unit pipeline & landlord list • Expedite inspections/lease-up • Tailor shared housing lease structures to meet needs
Wraparound Support	Reduce returns to homelessness	Build cross-sector support model	• Light-touch follow-up after exit • Rapid re-engagement for early signs of instability • Roles + warm handoffs • Priority access to key services • Flexible assistance to resolve short-term crises
		Measure outcomes + improve	• Returns + stability metrics • Monthly learning reviews