



Hamilton County Safe and Supported Community Plan

to Prevent Homelessness for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth

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Acknowledgements

The Hamilton County Safe and Supported Community Plan to prevent homelessness for LGBTQ youth focuses on the planning process and details implementation of the plan over the course of the next two years. It is the product of six-months of hard work and dedication by community leaders, youth, and youth-serving agencies.

This Plan is dedicated to all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth in Hamilton County. We hope to achieve our guiding vision and make Hamilton County a place where all LGBTQ youth are safe and supported.

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the development of this Plan. The community planning process involved youth, community leaders and support from many sectors. Special thanks to the LGBTQ and homeless youth who bravely shared their experiences and ideas with us, and to the Steering Committee member organizations that participated diligently in meetings and guided the plan's development with their unique expertise and perspectives. Steering Committee members included: Caracole, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, Office of Mayor John Cranley, Cincinnati Police Department, Cincinnati Public Schools, Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, Hamilton County Job and Family Services, Heartland Trans* Wellness Group, Human Rights Campaign, Lighthouse Youth Services, Planned Parenthood Southwest Ohio Region, Strategies to End Homelessness, The Partnership Center, Truth and Destiny Covenant Ministries, University of Cincinnati LGBTQ Center and YWCA of Greater Cincinnati.

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Contents

Acknowledgements.....	2
Contents.....	3
Executive Summary.....	4
Section I: Introduction	6
Section II: Local Context.....	8
Section III: Overview of Hamilton County Safe and Supported Initiative	13
Section IV: Implementation Plan	17
Section V: Conclusion.....	27
References	28
Appendix A: Local Partners and Supporters	29
Appendix B: Theory of Change for Hamilton County Safe and Supported Initiative	32
Appendix C: Logic Model for Hamilton County Safe and Supported Initiative.....	33
Appendix D: Initiative Outcomes	35
Appendix E: Terminology from True Colors Fund.....	38
Appendix F: Strategic Sharing for Youth Spokespeople.....	40

Executive Summary

Hamilton County, Ohio is one of two communities in the country selected to participate in the *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) Youth Homelessness Prevention Initiative*, led by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). LGBTQ youth are dramatically overrepresented in the population of youth experiencing homelessness, yet there are far too few systems and services designed to meet their needs. This initiative consists of developing and implementing a plan for LGBTQ youth homelessness prevention and intervention. The goals are to learn more about (1) preventing homelessness for LGBTQ youth and (2) intervening early to prevent chronic homelessness among LGBTQ youth.

The initiative's objectives are to:

1. **Facilitate greater local collaboration between stakeholders working with youth.** Hamilton County, Ohio will develop and implement a community strategy to prevent and end homelessness among LGBTQ youth who are at-risk or who are experiencing episodic (i.e., non-chronic) homelessness.
2. **Inform national strategies for preventing and ending homelessness among LGBTQ youth.** Hamilton County, Ohio will identify promising practices and strategies for addressing implementation challenges to inform future federal program guidance and policy.

From the beginning, a strong coalition of cross-sector advocates and youth has driven the development of the community plan. Safe and Supported brings together stakeholders and organizations from various systems including child welfare, juvenile justice, education and the runaway and homeless youth system, at both the local and national level to break down silos and increase collaboration.

Aligned with the USICH Framework to End Homelessness, the plan focuses on improving outcomes for LGBTQ youth in four core areas:

1. Social and Emotional Well-Being
2. Permanent Connections
3. Education and Employment
4. Permanent Connections

Using information from our community needs assessment, our plan will prevent and end LGBTQ youth homelessness by:

- Recognizing the unique circumstances LGBTQ youth face (including identity-based family rejection);
- Utilizing interventions that address specific risk factors;
- Ensuring that programs are safe, inclusive and affirming of LGBTQ identities;
- Improving relationships and increasing the level of collaboration between state and local youth serving organizations; and,
- Improving outcomes in the four core areas.

The Hamilton County Safe and Supported Community Plan has eight key goals:

- (1) **Facilitate greater community awareness** of issues contributing to LGBTQ youth homelessness and the Initiative's efforts to address these issues.
- (2) **Facilitate greater local collaboration** among stakeholders including youth, community members, youth serving agencies and staff of youth-chosen spaces.
- (3) **Improve data quality** on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- (4) **Use risk and protective factors for screening and assessment** of youth at risk of or experiencing episodic homelessness.
- (5) **Improve the quality of interventions** to reduce risks and build protective factors that can prevent LGBTQ youth homelessness.
- (6) **Support positive outcomes for LGBTQ youth** in the areas of well-being, permanent connections, stable housing and education/employment.
- (7) **Obtain new funding and in-kind resources** to support plan implementation.
- (8) **Evaluate the initiative** including its progress and outcomes.

Section I: Introduction

Initiative Background

The U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development invited Hamilton County, Ohio to participate in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) Youth Homelessness Prevention Initiative, led by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The community response to involvement was enthusiastically “yes!” From the beginning, a strong coalition of cross-sector advocates and youth has driven the development of Safe and Supported. For definitions of the terms used throughout this document, please see Appendix E.

Lighthouse Youth Services is Hamilton County’s lead for this initiative, in partnership with Strategies to End Homelessness. The project is led by a Steering Committee whose members include: Caracole, Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center, Office of Mayor John Cranley, Cincinnati Police Department, Cincinnati Public Schools, Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN), Hamilton County Job and Family Services, Heartland Trans* Wellness Group, Human Rights Campaign, Lighthouse Youth Services, Planned Parenthood Southwest Ohio Region, Strategies to End Homelessness, The Partnership Center, Truth and Destiny Covenant Ministries, University of Cincinnati LGBTQ Center and YWCA of Greater Cincinnati. The voices of many other community organizations and members were heard through the planning process community forums and youth focus groups.

Technical assistance (TA) is available from federal agencies and non-profits including HUD; the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, Justice, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) and the True Colors Fund, a national organization dedicated to ending LGBTQ youth homelessness.

LGBTQ Youth Homelessness Is a Challenge in Hamilton County

Defining homelessness for the purpose of this initiative was a challenge as agencies operate with different definitions. For this Initiative, we used a broader definition of “**homeless**” or “**homelessness**” which is defined as a person who experiences one or more of the following:

1. Sleeping in a shelter, on the street or in a place not generally meant for sleeping (cars, abandoned buildings, etc.)
2. Fleeing domestic violence
3. Doubled up or couch-surfing—relying on others for a place to stay
4. Unstably housed—as evidenced by many moves in a short period of time

In the following statistics, each agency used their own definition of homelessness which creates some discrepancy in the numbers. However, any way you measure it, the information clearly demonstrates that youth homelessness deserves attention in Hamilton County.

In 2013, the local homeless management information system, VESTA, reported 8,271 unduplicated homeless individuals in Cincinnati and Hamilton County using the HUD definition of homelessness (Partnership Center, 2014). This represents the unduplicated count of homeless persons engaged through street outreach, emergency shelters, and transitional housing programs. Included in that group are 1,721 homeless youth up to age 24, including parenting youth, representing 21% of the homeless population identified in the homeless count. Of these youth, 74% were unaccompanied and 26% were parenting. More of the homeless youth are male (52%) than female (48%), with less than 1% identifying themselves as transgender.

Cincinnati Public Schools reported that in the 2011-12 school year, it classified 2,590 students as homeless, of whom 803 were unaccompanied. Most of these students were couch surfing with friends or relatives, or living in shelters. The Department of Education includes a broader definition of “homeless,” which include couch surfing/doubled-up youth, hence the discrepancy between the HMIS and the Public Schools numbers.

Also during 2013, Lighthouse Youth Services provided outreach and emergency shelter for 1,229 homeless youth between the ages of 12 and 24 through the Sheakley Center for Youth, Youth Crisis Center and Street Outreach Program (VESTA). Lighthouse Youth Services is the only agency in Hamilton County specifically serving this population of homeless unaccompanied youth. Many of these youth self-identify as LGBT or are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Research demonstrates that LGBTQ youth make up only 5-7% of the general youth population nationally, yet up to 40% of the youth experiencing homelessness (Durso & Gates, 2012; Ray, 2006). The most frequently cited reason for their housing status is identity-based family rejection. Additional factors include challenges such as involvement in the child welfare system, poverty, abuse and neglect (Durso & Gates, 2012).

In Hamilton County, an estimated 15% of clients at the Lighthouse Sheakley Center for Youth, an emergency shelter specifically for young adults ages 18 to 24, self-identify as LGBTQ. This percentage is based on HMIS data collected during intake. Self-reporting numbers are likely lower than reality, because some young people who ask for help will not disclose such personal information and, based on experience, other homeless LGBTQ youth are reluctant to seek services at all.

Many youth who experience or are at risk of homelessness engage with Hamilton County’s public systems. These systems include the Hamilton County Department of Job & Family Services (that includes the Children’s Services Division), and the Hamilton County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board. If they become subject to the criminal justice system, youth aged 18 and under are the responsibility of the Hamilton County Juvenile Court, while those 18 and older are subject to the adult system.

On any given night in Cincinnati, as many as 15% to 25% of all homeless youth ages 18 to 24 have aged out of the system of public care, according to Lighthouse HMIS data. In Hamilton

County, youth age out at age 18. The association between leaving juvenile corrections or the foster care systems and experiencing homelessness is validated by a wide variety of research. *The Midwest Evaluation* found that between the ages of 18 and 24, 40% of the youth who exited foster care had experienced homelessness or without a stable living situation at least once. Many had experienced homelessness multiple times (Courtney et al., 2010).

Initial clinical assessments at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, CHECK Foster Care Clinic suggest that LGBTQ youth are overrepresented in the foster care population in Greater Cincinnati, as compared to available general population information. This is similar to the findings of a recent study in Los Angeles that found almost 20% of foster youth identified as LGBT (Wilson et al., 2014).

The USICH Framework

The *USICH Framework for Ending Youth Homelessness* supports improved outcomes for all youth experiencing homelessness, including LGBTQ youth, in the areas of (1) stable housing, (2) permanent connections, (3) education/employment, and (4) social-emotional well-being. Both the USICH framework and research on system integration (Burt, 2007) emphasize the importance of youth-serving agencies and systems working together. The willingness of representatives from both public and private agencies to work collaboratively has been very powerful in the local planning process.

Planned system change is supported by a local focus on two USICH strategies of 1) improving data quality and collection on youth experiencing homelessness, and, 2) building capacity for service delivery.

Section II: Local Context

To increase planning process effectiveness and success it was important to leverage the unique strengths of the community and pay attention to various contextual factors that influence LGBTQ youth homelessness in Hamilton County. The needs assessment and youth Think Tank sessions allowed LGBTQ youth and youth experiencing homelessness a direct voice in the Plan.

The needs assessment consisted of a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis, key stakeholder interviews, and an online survey for Steering Committee members. These findings were analyzed into key themes and shared with teams at community meetings for reflection and conversation.

The needs assessment identified contextual factors at the individual, program, community, and Federal levels that all contribute to the complexity of providing services for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness.

Many variables impact the youth at the individual level including socioeconomic demographics, their coming out status, experience with trauma, individual protective factors, and awareness of, and willingness to, access supports. Programmatic policies and practices, along with the cultural competency of staff, make an impact at the program level.

At the community level, availability of and access to culturally competent services, programs, shelters, and housing has significant influence. Collaboration in the community across youth-serving systems (e.g., education, juvenile justice, law enforcement, mental health, faith-based) also affect youth. Additional community level factors include social attitudes toward LGBTQ identity/expression and the availability of data on this population to support program planning.

Finally, at the Federal level, federal programs serve LGBTQ youth in our community. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act provides services for homeless LGBTQ youth. They may also be served through the Department of Education's Education of Homeless Children and Youth program, a HUD-administered Continuum of Care program, and HHS' Runaway and Homeless Youth Program. Federal agencies such as the U.S. Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Education, Health and Human Services and Justice and Labor are increasing support for the initiative. For example, the Department of Labor is an essential partner in increasing employment opportunities for LGBTQ youth (Job Corps, YouthBuild, Apprenticeship programs, and the Reintegration of Ex-Offenders (RExO) programs).

A full list of contextual factors is included in the logic model (Appendix C).

Planning Structure

The six-month strategic planning process was supported by more than 20 planning members, identified in Appendix A. Planners also hosted four community meetings and events that all community members and youth were invited to attend.

The process was organized to leverage the strengths and time of each individual. The Leadership team met bi-weekly and the Steering Committee met monthly. Additionally, issue specific planning teams were created and met bi-monthly. The teams included:

1. Awareness Building and Cultural Competence;
2. Housing and Transportation Options;
3. Social and Emotional Support;
4. Organizational Policy and Data Practices;
5. Practical Living / Life Skills; and
6. Child Welfare (Overlapped with the *Youth At Risk of Homelessness*¹ Grant).

Needs and Challenges

The needs assessment revealed the persistence of bias against LGBTQ individuals. This bias was especially a concern in neighborhoods outside of the urban core (e.g., more rural areas) and among some faith communities. Furthermore, the community lacks an understanding about transgender identity, and lacks awareness about youth homelessness generally, but especially about LGBTQ youth homelessness.

¹ The Youth At Risk of Homelessness Planning Grant is funded through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration of Children, Youth and Families. It provides an opportunity for Hamilton County to create a community plan to prevent homelessness for youth entering foster care at age 14 and older, youth aging out of foster care and currently homeless youth with a history of child welfare.

Local HMIS data demonstrates a clear need for services for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. Even with a new youth homeless shelter, there are not enough shelter beds for youth. No agency provides beds dedicated specifically to LGBTQ youth. There is also a need for consistent data collection on sexual orientation and gender identity across youth-serving agencies reporting to HMIS. This may contribute to missing or inaccurate information.

LGBTQ youth face many challenges that influence the system's ability to prevent homelessness and to intervene early. The factors that put LGBTQ youth at risk for homelessness and impact prevention efforts include:

- Bullying and unsafe school situations;
- "Couch surfing" that leads to unstable housing;
- Family rejection and harmful behavior;
- Lack of positive community influences;
- Lack of support from peers;
- Trauma;
- History of abuse/neglect;
- Mental health challenges; and,
- Substance use.

Additional obstacles to serving LGBTQ youth and gaps in services exist. For example, existing services may have limited cultural competency and health and behavioral health services may not be affirming of LGBTQ identities. Additionally, a transgender youth may face additional barriers seeking and maintaining stable employment because of transphobia and systemic barriers related to gender identity (e.g. changing gender on a driver's license).

Strengths and Assets

Hamilton County systems and agencies have multiple strengths which supported an effective needs assessment and planning process. It is a highly collaborative community, especially among youth-serving providers. This spirit of collaboration rather than competition is evidenced by the high level of participation and cooperation in this initiative. Existing funding mechanisms in the Hamilton County/City of Cincinnati Continuum of Care are collaborative and involve youth providers, a rarity in other communities. Partner organizations have strong infrastructure and supports that are responsive to LGBTQ youth. Moreover, Cincinnati and Hamilton County are consistently improving policies and attitudes toward LGBT individuals overall. One example of this is that in August 2014 the City of Cincinnati approved health benefits for transgender employees seeking gender-reassignment surgery.

In addition to HMIS, other community efforts are underway to share data across systems to better track and support young people and improve services. Examples of this include the Kids in School Rule! Program² and the Youth at Risk of Homelessness planning process.

² The Kids in School Rule! program promotes improved education outcomes for students in Cincinnati Public Schools in the custody of the Hamilton County Job and Family Services.

Significantly, the community has many strong leaders and allies. Lighthouse Youth Services is committed to ending youth homelessness for all young people in Hamilton County, including LGBTQ youth. The local Human Rights Campaign (HRC) chapter is integrated into the business community and leverages business resources. There are many allies for LGBTQ youth through strong informal supports such as places of worship, businesses and youth-chosen spaces such as libraries.

Planning partners have participated in the initiative at five different levels. A full list of partners is in Appendix A.

1. The Leadership Team represented staff members who are ultimately responsible for submission of the plan. They work directly with the TA team and convene the Steering Committee.
2. The Steering Committee included staff members from key youth, homeless or LGBTQ-serving agencies who commit to a leadership role in the initiative.
3. Team Members included community members/youth and colleagues who participate on a smaller issue focused planning team.
4. Community Partners included community members, youth and colleagues who are supportive of the initiative. They may attend initiative events and/or be a member of the email list.
5. Youth Focus Groups of LGBTQ, allied and currently homeless youth who participated in think tank sessions to directly contribute their experiences and ideas to the planning process.

Opportunities

Many opportunities in the community for preventing and ending LGBTQ youth homelessness and intervening early when it occurs have been integrated into the Plan. In alignment with *Opening Doors: the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*,³ and the Hamilton County *Homeless to Homes Plan*,⁴ Lighthouse Youth Services has launched a campaign to end youth homelessness in Cincinnati by the year 2020. LGBTQ youth will be a substantial area of focus on the campaign. Cincinnati Public Schools and other education groups are supporting youth experiencing homelessness through McKinney-Vento Services. One strategy involves working through the schools to identify youth at risk of homelessness sooner and connect families and young people to resources.

The initiative provides an opportunity to be awarded new funding to implement the Plan's programs. Initiative leaders will engage support from city and county leaders and establish this as a priority community issue. Working within existing systems and frameworks, the Plan includes strategies to develop the cultural competency of youth-serving providers. Examples include adding LGBTQ cultural competency training to the Strategies to End Homelessness's

³ http://usich.gov/opening_doors/

⁴ <http://www.strategiestoendhomelessness.org/wp-content/themes/stehTheme/docs/Homeless%20to%20Homes%202010.pdf>

annual training series, and leveraging the attention and resources from USICH and HUD to strengthen community housing options and programs.

Threats to Success

Possible threats to the initiative's success include sustainability of partner organization energy and time throughout the implementation process. The risk is to lose key partners due to competing demands for staff time, leading to initiative fatigue. Another potential barrier is identifying sufficient funding sources to fully staff and implement the Plan.

It is important to be accountable to the LGBTQ youth and families served and not tokenize their participation. Another challenge is to provide the necessary support for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness to authentically share their experiences with the community through public speaking and media activities in a way that does not re-traumatize them or share sensitive information publically. The Steering Committee encourages involving LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness as leaders in this work. Its members identified resources on Strategic Sharing to support safer youth participation as community spokespeople. These Strategic Sharing resources will be used with all initiative youth spokespeople before they speak to the media. An example of a Strategic Sharing resource is included in Appendix F.

Section III: Overview of Hamilton County Safe and Supported Initiative

This section provides an overview of the Safe and Supported initiative and walks through the components of the logic model (Appendix C) in more detail.

Vision

The initiative steering committee drafted the vision statement. It was amended at a community meeting to reflect the input of more planning partners. This vision statement, widely shared at planning community events, is the driving force for the Plan.

Hamilton County will be a safe and secure community for youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) or are questioning (Q) their gender identity or sexual orientation. These young people will have access to stable housing, health care, education, employment and emotional connections that ensure they thrive. Youth in Hamilton County are proud of their LGBTQ identity and community members support them. Every youth has a home.

Purpose

The purpose of the initiative is to:

- (1) Prevent and end homelessness for LGBTQ youth.
- (2) Intervene early to prevent chronic homelessness among LGBTQ youth.

Definitions

Youth are defined as individuals in Hamilton County age 24 and under.

For this Plan, **“homeless”** or **“homelessness”** is defined as a person who experiences one or more of the following:

5. Sleeping in a shelter, on the street or in a place not generally meant for sleeping (cars, abandoned buildings, etc.)
6. Fleeing domestic violence
7. Doubled up or couch-surfing—relying on others for a place to stay
8. Unstably housed—as evidenced by many moves in a short period of time

“Chronic Homelessness” is defined as: (1) an unaccompanied homeless individual with any disabling condition (or a family with at least one adult member who has a disabling condition) who has been continuously homeless for a year or more, OR (2) who has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. A disabling condition could include a diagnosable substance abuse disorder, a serious mental illness, a developmental disability and/or a chronic physical illness or disability.

Goals

- (1) Facilitate greater community awareness** of issues contributing to LGBTQ youth homelessness and the Initiative's efforts to address these issues.
- (2) Facilitate greater local collaboration** among stakeholders including youth, community members, youth serving agencies and staff of youth-chosen spaces.
- (3) Improve data quality** on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- (4) Use risk and protective factors for screening and assessment** of youth at risk of or experiencing episodic homelessness.
- (5) Improve the quality of interventions** to reduce risks and build protective factors that can prevent LGBTQ youth homelessness.
- (6) Support positive outcomes for LGBTQ youth** in the areas of, stable housing, education/employment, permanent connections and well-being.
- (7) Obtain new funding and in-kind resources** to support plan implementation.
- (8) Evaluate the initiative** including its progress and outcomes.

Inputs

Community organizations and staff contributed valuable time and resources to the planning process. The Steering Committee included about 20 members who consistently participated in planning activities. All of their time was either volunteer, or covered by their agency. Additional team members volunteered their time to the planning process by participating in team meetings addressing specific objectives of the Plan. Initiative partners donated the use of their space to host community events. Host organizations included the University of Cincinnati, Office of Mayor John Cranley, Cincinnati Public Schools and Lighthouse Youth Services. Caracole, Lighthouse Youth Services and Strategies to End Homelessness donated meeting space for Steering Committee and team meetings.

The initiative was organized by two staff from Lighthouse Youth Services and one staff from Strategies to End Homelessness. These three staff were the Hamilton County Leadership team and interfaced directly with the Federal Technical Assistance team (TA team). The TA team consisted of three members, one each from American Institutes for Research, True Colors Fund, and Center for Social Innovation, who completed four in-person site visits, numerous phone calls and email support. Technical assistance was also provided in the form of webinars, resources, and feedback from multiple federal partner agencies. Although HUD is not providing funding for the direct implementation of the Initiative, HUD has funded technical assistance to support planning and implementation. Additionally, HUD provides millions of dollars in resources to end homelessness that can be utilized to support many of the goals in the initiative's plan.

The Groupsite served as the online hub for planning activities. This invitation-only website allowed Initiative members to access resources, communicate with their team members, and store and access planning documents.

New funding was secured to support youth participation in the Initiative. A group of generous donors allowed LGBTQ and homeless youth to be compensated for their time when participating in planning activities. Every youth under age 24 received an hourly stipend, a meal, and travel assistance at all Initiative events and meetings.

A fundraising team was convened via phone to coordinate existing funding and explore new funding options.

Key Planning Activities

Needs Assessment: In an effort to fully understand the needs of LGBTQ youth in Cincinnati and Hamilton County, a needs assessment was the first activity undertaken by the Steering Committee. Interviews were held with key community stakeholders along with a survey shared with community partners. Findings from this needs assessment helped to frame the needs of LGBTQ youth and begin the development of the Initiative's Plan.

Local Collaboration: Steering Committee members met monthly. Four community events were held to gain input from a diverse group of stakeholders.

Local Plan Development: Community members and Steering Committee members participated on the planning teams to develop initial recommendations for the Plan. The Initiative Logic Model, Theory of Change and initial plan strategies were presented at community events for additional input and feedback from youth and community members. The Leadership Team, Steering Committee and TA team worked together to format, clarify and align the final plan strategies.

Outputs

The outputs of the initiative consist of:

- Needs assessment findings presentation;
- Report on analysis of local data;
- Theory of change;
- Logic model;
- Strategic plan;
- Financial plan;
- Media training materials and presentation;
- Messaging Talking Points.

Outcomes and Impact

The Initiative has identified a number of short-term, intermediate, and long-term measurable outcomes organized around USICH's four core outcomes. Short-term is defined as 6 months, intermediate as one year and long-term as two years. The anticipated outcomes are detailed in Appendix D.

In the tables, "System Change" indicates an outcome that will affect the entire system and community. This will ultimately improve individual youth outcomes in the other four areas, but may not link directly to them. The outcomes listed in Tables 1, 2, and 3 are based on issues identified in the strategic planning process and provide the basis for developing the activities in the Plan.

Stable housing, permanent connections, education/employment, and well-being are included as the primary outcomes in this intervention model and are described below. By designing interventions that target risk and protective factors, USICH anticipates positive impacts on broader life outcomes that signal healthy and productive transitions to adulthood. Local intervention strategies should strengthen the youth's protective factors and reduce their risk factors. Improvements on risk and protective factors can serve as pathways to achieve better outcomes.

Stable housing includes a safe and reliable place to call home. Stable housing fulfills a critical and basic need for homeless youth. It is essential to enabling functioning across a range of life activities. Lack of stable housing, on the other hand, exposes young people to a multitude of risks on the streets.

Permanent connections include ongoing attachments to families, communities, schools, and other positive social networks. Connections support young people's ability to access new ideas and opportunities that support thriving and they provide a social safety net when young people are at-risk of re-entering homelessness.

Education/employment includes high performance in and completion of educational and training activities, especially for younger youth, and starting and maintaining adequate and stable employment, particularly for older youth. Achievements in education and employment increase a youth's capacity to be self-supporting and avoid future homelessness.

Well-being refers to the social and emotional functioning of homeless youth. It includes the development of key competencies, attitudes, and behaviors that equip a young person experiencing homelessness to avoid unhealthy risks and to succeed across multiple domains of daily life, including school, work, relationships, and community.

Milestones

Key milestones to measure successful implementation include forming the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and sustaining participation among members. A key milestone for the future is an increase in the number of LGBTQ youth accessing culturally competent services.

Measures are designed to ascertain success through activities that are successfully completed on time and by measuring outcome impact.

Continuous Quality Improvement and Evaluation

The HUD Technical Assistance Team will assess overall initiative implementation and outcomes, and support local continuous quality improvement strategies. Each partner organization will evaluate their programs and activities. CAC members will use this information to re-assess initiative strategies and make necessary changes.

The CAC will communicate with members about any adjustments or changes to the implementation plan. The CAC will guide external communications to community members and media. Future communications will take place via the Initiative email list, the Safe and Supported Facebook page, Twitter account, and media stories and press releases.

Section IV: Implementation Plan

This section is organized around eight initiative goals. Each goal includes a purpose statement, objectives, and activities for achieving the goals. The year and quarter of expected implementation is included in parentheses. In the coming months, initiative leadership will add additional detail to this plan including organizations responsible for the various activities and factors that may help or hinder implementation and how they could be addressed.

Goal 1: Facilitate greater community awareness of issues contributing to LGBTQ youth homelessness and about the Initiative's efforts to address these issues.

Purpose: The Initiative will facilitate greater community awareness through targeted messaging and information sharing. This will be accomplished through community events and meeting youth in their neighborhood settings (e.g., schools, libraries). This will facilitate reaching and involving youth, faith leaders, educators, foster parents, service providers and other interested community members, as well as people who are not currently aware or supportive.

- **OBJECTIVE 1A: Develop and implement multimedia public awareness/marketing campaign.**
 1. **Activity:** Develop and implement social marketing plan. (2015 Q2)
 - a. Identify marketing firm/expertise. (2014 Q4)
 - b. Develop initiative brand and messaging. (2015 Q1)
 - c. Develop social marketing plan. (2015 Q2)
 - d. Implement marketing plan activities. (2015 Q2 and ongoing)
 2. **Activity:** Implement in-person and social media strategies. (2014 Q4, Continuous)
 - a. Initiative organizations include information in organizational newsletters/blogs/publications (15 per year). (2014 Q4)

- b. Launch and maintain social media campaign (Twitter, Facebook Page, Blog all interconnected). (2014 Q4)
 - c. Dedicate a LGBTQ youth component of Lighthouse’s Campaign to End Youth Homelessness. (2015 Q1)
 - d. Include LGBTQ youth homelessness information in Greater Cincinnati Homeless Coalition’s Community Education program. (2015 Q1)
 - e. Launch Cincinnati Police Department Billboard campaign demonstrating support for homeless youth. (2014 Q4)
3. **Activity:** Host quarterly community forums/events in Cincinnati and in suburban communities to (1) address issues intersecting with LGBTQ youth homelessness and the initiative, including initiative progress reports and to (2) engage key community members (parents, faith leaders, law enforcement, education staff, etc.) (2015, Q1)
 4. **Activity:** Engage the faith community in dialogues about reactions to LGBTQ identities including youth homelessness
 - a. Identify allied faith leaders to host programs/discussions in their faith community. (2015 Q2)

Outcomes:

- ✓ Increased participant and community awareness of LGBTQ youth homelessness (short term).
- ✓ Increased community engagement (short term).
- ✓ Increased community acceptance and adult support of LGBTQ youth (long term).

Goal 2: Facilitate greater local collaboration among stakeholders, including youth, community members, youth serving agencies and staff of youth-chosen spaces

Purpose: Increase local collaboration through a Community Advisory Committee and increase communication among youth serving agencies. Collaboration means that stakeholders will work together on shared goals and activities. Stakeholders include youth, community members, front line staff from LGBTQ, homeless and youth-serving agencies, and staff of youth chosen spaces such as libraries, neighborhood centers and parks. These activities will move stakeholders through the four levels of systems integration including (1) isolation, (2) communication, (3) coordination, and (4) collaboration (Burt, 2007).

- **OBJECTIVE 2A:** Establish Community Advisory Committee to provide ongoing input on plan development and implementation, and review of initiative progress
 1. **Activity:** Hire staff person. (2015 Q1)
 2. **Activity:** Identify agency, community and youth representatives to serve on Advisory Committee (including current Steering Committee members). (2014 Q4)
 3. **Activity:** Create initiative charter. (2014 Q4)
 4. **Activity:** Maintain Advisory Committee with membership representing key youth-serving systems/organizations and youth. (2015 Q1 and ongoing)

5. **Activity:** Engage LGBTQ youth and family members as active members of the Advisory Committee. (2014 Q4 and ongoing)
 6. **Activity:** Convene Community Advisory Committee 4 times annually. (ongoing)
 7. **Activity:** Establish subcommittees and convene monthly. (2015 Q1)
- **OBJECTIVE 2B:** Develop community communication structure to share information and foster collaboration among stakeholders serving LGBTQ youth
 1. **Activity:** Identify interested community partners. (2014 Q4)
 2. **Activity:** Explore communication options (email list, website, etc.) (2015 Q1)
 3. **Activity:** Advisory Committee representatives attend other community networking events/groups/lists to promote collaboration. (2015 Q1 and ongoing)
 4. **Activity:** Share resources, ideas, and opportunities with community partners monthly via email (e.g., webinar invitations, resources or invitations to community events). (2015 Q1 and ongoing)
 5. **Activity:** Work with federal technical assistance supports to compile and, as needed, develop and disseminate new resources tailored to Hamilton County (e.g., guides, webinars, tip sheets, training curricula). (2014 Q4 and 2015)
 6. **Activity:** Establish an initiative webpage to share these resources locally. (2015 Q4)

Outcomes:

- ✓ Participation of LGBTQ homeless youth in planning (short term).
- ✓ Increased participant and community awareness of LGBTQ youth homelessness (short term).
- ✓ Increased community engagement (short term).
- ✓ Increased cross-system community collaboration (long term).
- ✓ Strengthened relationships among youth and key partners (intermediate term).
- ✓ Increased community acceptance and adult support of LGBTQ youth (long term).
- ✓ Expanded dialogue to share and explore perceptions of LGBTQ youth and related issues (long term).

Goal 3: Improve data quality on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Purpose: Having quality data is critical for understanding community needs and making data-driven programmatic changes. We will improve the quality of data on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), and in other youth-serving systems such as child welfare, education, and community programs. We will follow federal privacy laws, as applicable.

- **OBJECTIVE 3A:** Improve quality of data collection at street outreach programs and shelters regarding sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI).
 1. **Activity:** Customize and standardize data fields in local HMIS to include SOGI to measure the prevalence of LGBTQ-youth residing in emergency shelters. (2015 Q2)
 2. **Activity:** Provide standardized trainings for emergency shelter staff (using organization's existing training process) in asking questions of youth regarding SOGI at various points (e.g., at intake, after a duration of time spent with the organization/worker, etc.), so that staff feel more comfortable asking these questions. (2015 Q2)
 3. **Activity:** Analyze data and share findings. (2016 Q2)

- **Objective 3B:** Improve quality of data collection in youth service systems (e.g., education, child welfare) regarding SOGI (e.g., during intake process).
 1. **Activity:** Identify additional systems and potential changes to improve practices for collecting data on SOGI. (2015 Q2-Q3)
 2. **Activity:** Understand prevalence of self-identified LGBTQ youth in foster care through the use of a screening tool as part of a new clinic standard at CHECK Foster Care Clinic at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. (2014 Q4)

Outcomes:

- ✓ Identification of community need(s) using data (short term).
- ✓ Improved data depth and quality (completeness, accuracy, timeliness) (long term).
- ✓ Improved understanding of the prevalence of LGBTQ foster youth in Hamilton County (long term).

Goal 4: Use risk and protective factors for screening and assessment of youth at-risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Purpose: To improve youth outcomes, we will shift the community response to address risk factors and leverage protective factors in the lives of youth. This will require a reorientation within the community and crisis response system towards risk and protective factors, intervention models and screening and assessment tools. Risk and protective factors may include, for example, level of self-esteem, academic achievement, family attachment, and peer relationships.

- **OBJECTIVE 4A:** Build awareness of risk and protective factors and intervention models among service providers, in particular crisis responders.
 1. **Activity:** Facilitate training with key youth-serving providers. (2015 Q1)
 2. **Activity:** Review and identify ways to incorporate LGBTQ awareness into County Plan of Cooperation between Child Welfare and First Responders. (2015 Q1)
- **OBJECTIVE 4B:** Screen and assess risk and protective factors of LGBTQ youth.
 1. **Activity:** Select screening tool from ACYF screening toolbox. (2015 Q1)
 2. **Activity:** Develop ACYF screening toolbox rollout plan. (2015 Q2)
 3. **Activity:** Educate organizations about the selected screening tool and ACYF toolbox. (2015 Q3)
 4. **Activity:** Train organizations and staff members on the ACYF screening tool. (2015 Q4)
 5. **Activity:** Begin using the selected ACYF screening tool within appropriate organizations and connect LGBTQ youth with interventions to decrease risk factors and increase protective factors (see Goal 4). (2015 Q4)

Outcomes:

- ✓ Expanded screening and assessment opportunities (intermediate term).
- ✓ Improved response to risk and protective factors of LGBTQ youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness (long term).
- ✓ Implementation of interventions and county-wide programs to address the specific needs of youth (long term)

Goal 5: Improve the quality of interventions to reduce risks and build protective factors that can prevent LGBTQ youth homelessness.

Purpose: This initiative will connect young people, their families and providers to quality resources in the community. We will identify, coordinate, expand implementation of, and enhance the quality of interventions offered in our community. We will develop a resource guide and distribute it widely. We will also ensure that services are culturally competent and trauma-informed.

- **OBJECTIVE 5A:** Increase awareness of existing local resources and support for homeless LGBTQ youth among youth, families and youth-serving providers.
 1. **Activity:** Promote the True Colors Fund mobile application that provides Hamilton County resources (e.g., emergency shelters, LGBTQ-friendly churches) for youth experiencing homelessness. (2015 Q2)
 2. **Activity:** Create and maintain a community resource guide, connecting currently existing guides, for LGBTQ youth providers and families including online information, support groups, talk lines, and information for caregivers to be distributed to area organizations. (2015 Q1/2, ongoing)
 3. **Activity:** Work with post-secondary school leadership and LGBTQ campus centers (University of Cincinnati, Xavier, Cincinnati State) to build their knowledge and capacity to connect LGBTQ students and their families to resources (mobile app, hotline, LGBTQ Campus Center, etc.) (2015 Q3/4)
 4. **Activity:** Work with K-12 school leadership to build their knowledge and capacity to connect LGBTQ students and their families to existing and new resources (mobile app, etc.) (2015 Q3/4, 2016 Q1/2)
 5. **Activity:** Promote Central Access Point line (CAP) with initiative branding to funnel LGBTQ youth into services and housing. (2015 Q2)
 6. **Activity:** Upon entry into shelter, completion of Continuum of Care Coordination Assessment tool (VI-SPDAT) to determine appropriate housing program placement. (2015 Q3)
- **OBJECTIVE 5B:** Expand organizational capacity to provide more culturally competent, trauma-informed care to LGBTQ youth.
 1. **Activity:** Provide an organizational self-assessment that can identify areas for improvement from a menu of options including: developing organization non-discrimination policy or programmatic policy (e.g., how to correctly assign a trans* youth to a shelter bed), staff training, visual welcome signs, improved client services for LGBTQ youth, etc. (2014 Q4—TA team as resource)

2. **Activity:** Develop structure/system to provide technical assistance to organizations based on their self-assessment needs, including providing training, mentoring, consulting, etc. (2015 Q1)
3. **Activity:** Create a new clinic standard at CHECK Foster Care Clinic asking patients their preferred name at the start of each visit to respect the requests of all youth, including those who are gender nonconforming. (2014 Q4)
4. **Activity:** Achieve All Children All Families (ACAF) Seal of Recognition at Lighthouse Youth Services Foster Care and Adoption Program. (2014 Q4)
5. **Activity:** Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services and Hamilton County Juvenile Court staff will conduct an organizational assessment including a policy review and staff training. (2015, Q1)
6. **Activity:** Host community briefings and provider trainings focused on standards of practice and trauma-informed care. (2015 Q3 and 2016 Q3)

Outcomes:

- ✓ Identification of evidence-based or promising practices (short term).
- ✓ Identification and promotion of existing resources (short term).
- ✓ Increased cultural competency at initiative partner agencies (intermediate term).
- ✓ Increased participation in LGBTQ competency training for foster parents and children's services workers (intermediate term).
- ✓ Increased number of foster and adoptive families that support LGBTQ foster youth and increased matches between youth and these families (intermediate term).
- ✓ Improved LGBTQ client services and satisfaction at Sheakley Center (intermediate term).
- ✓ Decreased number of LGBTQ youth who become homeless (long term).
- ✓ Improved access to community supports and resources for LGBTQ youth (long term).
- ✓ More positive school environment for LGBTQ youth (long term).

Goal 6: Support positive outcomes for LGBTQ youth in the areas of Social and Emotional Well-Being, Permanent Connections, Stable Housing and Education/Employment.

Purpose: Improve positive outcomes for youth in the four key areas of social and emotional well-being, permanent connections, stable housing and education/employment. These four areas were identified by United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) and tie to larger federal and national work on youth homelessness prevention.

Area One: Social and Emotional Well-Being

- **OBJECTIVE 6A:** Improve social and emotional well-being of LGBTQ youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
 1. **Activity:** Conduct a series of trainings for youth-serving staff on issues related to mental health needs of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness, the impact of family rejection, and provision of trauma-informed care. (Plan 2014 Q4, launch 2015 Q1 with TA team support)

- **OBJECTIVE 6B:** Increase safe dating experiences among LGBTQ youth.
 1. **Activity:** Expand current safe dating programs/classes to be LGBTQ inclusive utilizing evidence-based curriculum from the Family Violence Prevention Project.
 2. **Activity:** Promote safe dating at LGBTQ youth events such as the GLSEN prom.

Outcomes:

- ✓ Reduced number of LGBTQ youth who become homeless (intermediate term);
- ✓ Improved social and emotional well-being among LGBTQ youth at risk of homelessness (intermediate term);
- ✓ Increased number of LGBTQ youth in stable housing (long term);
- ✓ Increased number of LGBTQ youth with more positive school experiences (long term);
- ✓ Increased number of LGBTQ youth with employment opportunities (long term); and
- ✓ Increased number of LGBTQ youth with permanent connections to families (long term).

Area Two: Permanent Connections

- **OBJECTIVE 6B:** Expand opportunities for youth to connect with and develop positive relationships with peers.
 1. **Activity:** Expand pro-social opportunities for LGBTQ youth through the promotion of GLSEN youth group, Heartland Trans* Wellness Group teen night, Diverse City USA programs and other LGBTQ youth friendly groups among youth-serving systems and providers. (2015 Q1)
 2. **Activity:** Promote participation in the GLSEN Youth Summit. (2014 Q4, 2015 Q4)
- **OBJECTIVE 6C:** Create a system for identifying and supporting families in understanding and supporting their child's LGBTQ identity, and connect them to resources to reduce harmful family behaviors that put youth at risk for homelessness.
 1. **Activity:** Connect with the Ruth Ellis Center to better understand their model for improving collaboration between RHY and child welfare systems to help families coming to terms with their child's LGBTQ identity. (2015 Q1)
 2. **Activity:** Explore Family Acceptance Project resources for enhancing family understanding and decreasing harmful behavior that puts LGBTQ youth at risk for imminent homelessness. (2015 Q1/2)
 3. **Activity:** Identify and implement appropriate family-level interventions. (2015 Q4)

Area Three: Stable Housing

- **OBJECTIVE 6D:** Increase the number of LGBTQ-affirming housing options to prevent youth from being "put out" into homelessness.
 1. **Activity:** Expand current Hamilton County Homelessness Prevention/Shelter Diversion efforts by adding an additional Shelter Diversion partner agency specifically providing shelter diversion and case management services to LGBTQ youth. (partner agency identified 2014 Q4, Q4 2014/2015)
 2. **Activity:** Conduct cultural competency and trauma-informed care training for RHY

facilities engaging youth (and others as interested). (curriculum development 2014 Q4, launch 2015 Q1)

3. **Activity:** Conduct feasibility assessment of Interfaith Hospitality Network model for LGBTQ Youth (churches providing housing for youth); if feasible, implement (2015, Q1)
 4. **Activity:** Apply for Continuum of Care funding to develop 10 more HUD funded youth housing units. (2015 Q2)
 5. **Activity:** Apply for Continuum of Care funding to develop new Rapid Re-housing programs specifically for 18+ LGBTQ homeless youth. (2015 Q2)
 6. **Activity:** Identify and implement family-finding system to connect youth to extended family members who may be able to provide safe and stable housing. (2016)
- **OBJECTIVE 6E:** Increase the number of LGBTQ youth in foster care who are placed in identity-affirming placements.
 1. **Activity:** Develop recruitment strategies to increase foster parents and homes that identify as LGBT and/or are allies for LGBTQ youth. (2015 Q1)
 2. **Activity:** Implement a host home model in Hamilton County, beginning with a study of how the model has been implemented in other communities with LGBTQ host home programs (e.g., Chicago, Minneapolis). (2015 Q1)
 3. **Activity:** Reassess Hamilton County Job and Family Services policies related to discharge and permanency planning. (2015 Q2)
 4. **Activity:** Integrate a youth's gender identity and sexuality as factors in foster care placement with Hamilton County Job and Family Services. (2015 Q4)

Area Four: Education/Employment

- **OBJECTIVE 6F:** Foster safer, supportive school environments for LGBTQ youth (K-12 & postsecondary).
 1. **Activity:** Facilitate all-staff LGBTQ cultural and linguistic competence trainings (2014 Q4/2015 Q4)
 - Norwood School Systems training by HRC; (2014 Q4)
 - Trainings for school psychologists, social workers, etc. by GLSEN; (2014 Q4)
 - Cincinnati Public Schools. (2015 Q4)
 2. **Activity:** Create more inclusive school policies utilizing current LGBTQ Task Force resources for this topic. (2015 Q4)
 3. **Activity:** Promote gay-straight alliances (GSAs) and similar supports for LGBTQ students and allies in schools. (2015 Q4 – 2016 Q1/2)
 - Conduct outreach to GSAs by GLSEN intern. (2014 Q4, 2015 Q5)
- **OBJECTIVE 6G:** Increase access to employment opportunities and employment skills development for LGBTQ youth.
 1. **Activity:** Connect with the LA LGBT Center to gather information on its approach to developing the employment skills of LGBTQ youth and identify opportunities to replicate strategies and connect youth with employers. (2015, Q1)
 2. **Activity:** Build awareness of employment opportunities and support connections among programs serving LGBTQ youth at risk for homelessness. (2015 Q1—see goal 2)
 3. **Activity:** Develop cultural competency of local job training programs (e.g., Ohio Means Jobs programming and Job Corps) and apprenticeship opportunities to create safe,

supportive settings for LGBTQ youth accessing their services. (2015 Q3)

4. **Activity:** Leverage relationships with local organizational employee resources groups (ERGs), the Greater Cincinnati Gay Chamber of Commerce and employers to connect LGBTQ youth with jobs and job training opportunities. (2015 Q4)

Goal 7: Obtain new funding and in-kind resources to support plan implementation.

Purpose: Secure the necessary resources to implement plan activities. This will include direct funding from donors and foundations along with in-kind support from partner organizations. We will also leverage the federal technical assistance resources.

- **OBJECTIVE 7A:** Obtain \$400,000 of seed funding for initiative priorities, staffing, and activities over two years.
 1. **Activity:** Develop a detailed financial plan. (2014, Q4)
 2. **Activity:** Identify, track, and pursue new funding opportunities to support initiative activities (e.g., foundations, HRC). (2014 Q4 and ongoing)
 3. **Activity:** Identify and engage potential funders in the initiative. (2014 Q4)
 4. **Activity:** Secure funding for and hire staff member to lead the Advisory Council and initiative activities. (2014 Q4)
 5. **Activity:** Plan and convene fundraisers. (2015 Q2)
- **OBJECTIVE 7B:** Secure in-kind supports to facilitate plan implementation (2014 Q1)
 1. **Activity:** Identify commitment from organizations for staff time contributions for implementation (staff time, current programs etc.) (2015 Q1)
 2. **Activity:** Engage available volunteer supports from community organizations (e.g., Kroger) to support fundraising efforts as well as initiative activities. (2015 Q1)
- **OBJECTIVE 7C:** Engage federal TA supports for implementation. (2014 Q4 and ongoing)

Outcomes:

- ✓ Funding sources identified (short term);
- ✓ Opportunities for community to be connected with and impact program (short, intermediate and long term);
- ✓ New funding to support implementation of recommendations (intermediate term); and
- ✓ Technical assistance utilized to support implementation of plan activities (short, intermediate, and long term).

Goal 8: Evaluate the initiative including its progress and outcomes towards ending LGBTQ youth homelessness.

Purpose: Learn from this initiative through evaluation and share these findings with community members locally and nationally. Use a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process to make changes to the plan.

- **OBJECTIVE 8A:** Working with the HUD technical assistance team, assess progress in implementing the plan including successes, challenges, lessons learned, and outcomes and review continuous quality improvement (CQI) information.
 1. **Activity:** Conduct baseline survey across services for evaluation. (6-Month, 1-Year, etc.)
 2. **Activity:** Within the Advisory Committee, review CQI information and make changes as appropriate. (2015 Q2 and ongoing)

- **OBJECTIVE 8B:** Promote planning process, lessons learned, and outcomes with local, regional, and national partners
 1. **Activity:** Share findings with Hamilton County stakeholders. (2015 Q2)
 2. **Activity:** Present findings at local, regional, and national conferences. (2014 Q4 and ongoing)
 3. **Activity:** Advisory Council members share findings within their organizations and membership. (2014 Q4 and ongoing)
 4. **Activity:** Develop resources to assist other communities. (2016 Q1)

Outcomes:

- ✓ Provide data and comparative analyses for use with business marketing strategies and community development initiatives (long term).
- ✓ Using data and systems outcomes to identify practice changes and inform decisions (intermediate term).
- ✓ Evaluation findings (long term).

Section V: Conclusion

We know that many LGBTQ youth experience homelessness in Hamilton County, Ohio, often because of identity-based family rejection. As a community, we are positioned to lead the nation in preventing homelessness and intervening early to prevent chronic homelessness for LGBTQ youth. We can do this by improving how our organizations and systems work together to better meet the needs of LGBTQ youth.

Community ownership of the planning process and commitment to implementation has been evident since day one. The planning process engaged partners from different fields, such as homelessness prevention and LGBTQ youth services, into one conversation. The connections across services and identities are clear. We have leveraged the strengths of local partners and youth throughout the planning process, along with the best frameworks and resources from federal partner agencies. Having youth describe their experiences as LGBTQ and/or experiencing homelessness in Hamilton County boosts our confidence that we have a plan that will work.

The goals in this strategic plan provide a roadmap to begin the implementation process. As the list of community accomplishments and partnerships grow, we should expect to see improved outcomes overall for LGBTQ youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness, especially in the four key areas of social and emotional well-being, permanent connections, stable housing and education/employment.

We also recognize that community needs and resources may change as we implement this plan. We will use available information so that the Community Advisory Committee can adjust the plan and keep it relevant. We will always work to meet the Initiative goals of preventing homelessness for LGBTQ youth and intervening early to prevent chronic homelessness for LGBTQ youth.

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Appendix A: Local Partners and Supporters

1. Leadership Team

Staff members who are ultimately responsible for submission of the plan. They work directly with the TA team and convene the Steering Committee.

Organization	Name	Title
Lighthouse Youth Services	Meredith Hicks	Planning and Policy Director
Strategies to End Homelessness	Meradith Alspaugh	Continuum of Care Director
Lighthouse Youth Services	Zachary Grady	Planning and Policy Assistant

2. Steering Committee

Staff members from key youth serving agencies who commit to a leadership role in the initiative.

Organization	Name	Title
Caracole	Linda Seiter	Executive Director
Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center	Kirsten Simonton	Clinical Fellow, Child Abuse Pediatrics
Office of Mayor John Cranley	Daniel Rajaiah	Director of External Affairs
Cincinnati Police Department	Angela Vance	LGBTQ Community Liaison Officer
Cincinnati Public Schools	Jacqueline Thomas	Project Connect Director
Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN)	Kathy Laufman	Co-Chair / Counselor
Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN)	Sam Naser	Community Outreach
Hamilton County Job and Family Services	Scott Boone	Administrator
Hamilton County Job and Family Services	Lora Wolfe	Contract Services Director
Heartland Trans* Wellness Group	Jonah Yokoyama	Transition Care Services Director
HRC (Human Rights Campaign)	Kristin Shrimplin	Board of Governor
Lighthouse Youth Services	Bob Mecum	President and CEO
Lighthouse Youth Services	Geoffrey Hollenbach	Vice President of Children, Youth and Families
Lighthouse Youth Services	John Keuffer	Lighthouse Sheakley Center for Youth Program Director
Planned Parenthood Southwest Ohio Region	Adam Reilly	HIV Project Manager
Strategies to End Homelessness	Kevin Finn	President and CEO
The Partnership Center	Christa Curfiss	Metadata Manager
Truth and Destiny Covenant Ministries	Rev. Lesley Jones	Senior Pastor/Founder
University of Cincinnati LGBTQ Center	T. N. Vaught	Program Coordinator
YWCA of Greater Cincinnati	Kristin Shrimplin	Director of Family Violence Prevention Project

Hamilton County Safe and Supported Initiative Community Plan

3. Team Members

Community members, youth and colleagues who participated on one of six issue specific planning teams.

Organization	Name	Title
Caracole	Ceilia White	Clinical Specialist
Caracole	Lydia Mahaney	Housing Specialist
Caracole	Megan Sargeant	Case Manager
Caracole	Midge Hines	Client Services Director
Caracole	Suzanne Moore	Housing Services Manager
Cincinnati Public Schools	Leslie Hattemer	Project Connect Adolescent Homeless Liaison
City Gospel Mission	Kevin Rosebrook	Vice President of Homeless Services
Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless	Michelle Dillingham	Director of Education
Hamilton County Public Health	Ashley Moore	Linkage to Care Coordinator
Lighthouse Youth Services	Tynisha Worthy	JOURNEY
Planned Parenthood Southwest Ohio Region	Erin Smiley	Health Educator
Planned Parenthood Southwest Ohio Region	Matt Parker	MSM Outreach Educator
Public Allies	Shawn Jeffers	Site Director
University of Cincinnati	Albert Watson	Professor
Walnut Hills High School	Betsy Shank	Retired Educator
Private Practice	Cori Yeager	Clinical Psychologist

4. Community Partners

Community members, youth and colleagues who are supportive of the initiative. They may have attended a one-time community event and/or receive email updates about the Initiative.

Organization	Number of Representatives
Alliance of Kroger	2
Caracole	2
Children's Law Center	1
Community Members	15
Diverse City Youth Chorus	15
Equality Ohio	3
Human Rights Campaign (HRC)	1
Faith Voices for Equality Leaders	10
Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN)	1
GLSEN Youth Group	3
King's High School	1
Lighthouse community School	3
New Spirit Metropolitan Community Church	2
Northern Kentucky University	2
Ohio Attorney General's Office	2

4. Community Partners

Community members, youth and colleagues who are supportive of the initiative. They may have attended a one-time community event and/or receive email updates about the Initiative.

Organization	Number of Representatives
Parents, Friends and Families of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)	1
Public Allies Cincinnati	1
Seven Hills Neighborhood	3
Solutions Community Counseling and Recovery Centers	1
St. John United Church of Christ	2
St. Joseph's Orphanage	1
Stonewall Community Center Columbus	1
The Health Path Foundation of Ohio	1
Trans Saints Ministry	1
University of Cincinnati	2
Xavier LGBTQ Alliance	1

5. Youth Focus Groups

LGBTQ, allied and currently homeless youth who participate in think tank sessions to directly contribute their experiences and ideas to the planning process.

Organization	Number of Representatives
GLSEN Youth Group	6
Lighthouse Sheakley Center for Youth	8
University of Cincinnati LGBTQ Center	12

Appendix B: Theory of Change for Hamilton County Safe and Supported Initiative

Safe and Supported Theory of Change: How and why an approach will produce change

To prevent LGBTQ youth homelessness,

Start with a needs assessment, understanding of local community context, AND a collaborative planning process with stakeholders and youth representing the community

To identify and implement strategies that leverage local strengths and address gaps for preventing LGBTQ youth homelessness and address challenges contributing to LGBTQ youth homelessness

Through increased resources for youth, families, schools, communities and peer groups

Through cultural competency training and awareness building for families, schools, communities and peer groups

Through policies, procedural and systems changes

So that we:

Build protective factors and reduce risk factors associated with LGBTQ youth homelessness such as:

- (1) Improve social climate, including inclusivity of policies, effectiveness of resources, and support/acceptance of LGBTQ identity
- (2) Nurture youth that are motivated by self-acceptance and belonging to a community to seek social and emotional well-being, permanent connections, stable housing and education/employment
- (3) Nurture a community that provides a safety net of social and emotional well-being, permanent connections, stable housing and education/employment opportunities so youth do not experience homelessness
- (4) Increase the ability of families to accept and support difference to create a safe space for youth and prevent episodes of homelessness.

Appendix C: Logic Model for Hamilton County Safe and Supported Initiative

Vision		Purpose	
Hamilton County will be a community that is safe and secure for youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) or are questioning (Q) their gender identity or sexual orientation. These young people will have access to stable housing, health care, education, employment and emotional connections that ensure they thrive. Youth in Hamilton County are proud of their LGBTQ identity and community members support them. Every youth has a home.		(1) Prevent homelessness for LGBTQ youth. (2) Intervene early to prevent chronic homelessness ⁵ among LGBTQ youth.	
Goals			
(1) Facilitate greater community awareness of issues contributing to LGBTQ youth homelessness and the initiative’s efforts to address these issues. (2) Facilitate greater local collaboration among stakeholders, including youth, community members, youth serving agencies and staff of youth-chosen spaces. (3) Improve data quality on sexual orientation and gender identity. (4) Use risk and protective factors for screening and assessment of youth at risk of or experiencing episodic homelessness. (5) Improve the quality of interventions to reduce risks and build protective factors that can prevent LGBTQ youth homelessness. (6) Support positive outcomes for LGBTQ youth in the areas of permanent connections, stable housing, education/employment, and well-being. (7) Obtain new funding and in-kind resources to support plan implementation. (8) Evaluate the initiative including its progress and outcomes.			
Focus Population		Inputs	Priority Activities
LGBTQ youth in Hamilton County ages 24 and under.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiative Planning Team (~30 members) including youth participants Lighthouse Staff (2) Strategies to End Homelessness staff (1) Technical assistance (TA) team (3) and other federal TA Groupsite Coordination of existing funding Exploring new funding 	Needs Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SWOT analysis Local Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steering Committee meetings (monthly) Community meetings (4) More clearly defining CQI process (formal change management process) Local Plan Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6-month strategic planning process involving the systems and providers serving LGBTQ and homeless youth Leadership Team meetings (bi-weekly) Team meetings (bi-monthly) 7. Awareness Building and Cultural Competence 8. Housing and Transportation Options 9. Social and Emotional Support 10. Organizational Policy and Data Practices 11. Practical Living / Life Skills 12. Child Welfare (Overlap with <i>Youth At Risk of Homelessness</i> Grant) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collection: Administrative and Qualitative TA site visits (4)
Contextual Factors	Contextual Factors Cont.		
Community context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability of and access to culturally competent services, programs, shelters, and housing Availability of data Economic development and financial resources Geography Leadership Collaboration in the community across youth-serving systems (e.g., education, juvenile justice, law enforcement, mental health, faith-based) and “turf” concerns Culture Advocacy efforts and politics Community awareness of prevalence and causes of LGBTQ youth homelessness Social attitudes toward LGBTQ 	Client context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socioeconomic demographics (Age, Race, etc.) Awareness of and willingness to access supports Previous access to supports Protective factors (e.g., employment, positive friends, school connection, supportive adults, survival skills) Risk factors (e.g., emotional distress, family rejection, lack of stable housing, substance use, mental health challenges, physical factors) Coming out status Federal context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HUD, DOE, HHS, DOJ support for the Initiative DOE requiring diversity training for all school staff 	Needs Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs assessment findings Local Plan Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of local data—report Theory of change Logic model Strategic plan Financial plan Local Plan Implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outputs based on final local plan 	

⁵ Chronic Homelessness is defined as: either (1) an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has been continuously homeless for a year or more, OR (2) an unaccompanied individual with a disabling condition who has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years

Hamilton County Safe and Supported Initiative Community Plan

<p>identity/expression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faith (Broad-perspective) <p>Program context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies and expected practices Cultural competency of staff Leadership Use of data Hamilton County and Cincinnati Shelter standards (2009) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act USICH identified LGBTQ youth as being at high risk of homelessness Legal protections for Gay Straight Alliances (Federal Equal Access Act) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify funding sources Local toolkit for corporate response Development and advocacy of funding strategies <p>Local Plan Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 years of implementation Plan strategies and activities Community Advisory Group Local plan evaluation 	
Outcomes and Impact				
Short-term Outcomes (Months 1-6)		Intermediate Outcomes (Months 7-18)		Long-Term Outcomes (Months 19+)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of community need(s) using data Participation of LGBTQ homeless youth in planning Increased community engagement Increased participant and community awareness of LGBTQ homelessness Identification of evidence-based or promising practices Identification and promotion of existing resources Identification of new funding sources 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced number of LGBTQ youth who become homeless Strengthened relationships among youth and key partners; and within each group Expand screening and assessment opportunities Increase cultural competency at initiative partner agencies Increase participation in LGBTQ competency training for foster parents and JFS workers Increase number of foster and adoptive families that support LGBTQ foster youth and increased matches between youth and these families Improved LGBTQ client services and satisfaction at Sheakley Center Improved social and emotional well-being among LGBTQ youth at risk of homelessness Secure funding for Initiative recommendations 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of LGBTQ youth in stable housing, permanent connections, social and emotional well-being and education/employment Increased community acceptance and adult support of LGBTQ youth Improved response to risk and protective factors of LGBTQ youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness Implement interventions and county-wide programs to address specific needs of youth Decreased number of LGBTQ youth who become homeless Improved access to community supports and resources for LGBTQ youth More positive school environment for LGBTQ youth Expanded dialogue to share and explore perceptions of LGBTQ youth and related issues Improved understanding of the prevalence of LGBTQ foster youth in Hamilton County Improved data depth and quality (completeness, accuracy, timeliness) Increased cross-system community collaboration Opportunities for community to be connected with and impact program Technical assistance utilized to support implementation of plan activities Conduct an evaluation of the initiative

Appendix D: Initiative Outcomes

Table 1: Short-Term Outcomes

Initiative Short-Term Outcomes (6 Months)	Social- emotional Well being	Permanent Connections	Stable Housing	Education and Employment	System Change
Identification of community need(s) using data					X
Participation of LGBTQ homeless youth in planning and plan implementation	X				X
Increased community engagement	X				X
Increased participant and community awareness of LGBTQ homelessness					X
Identification of evidence-based or promising practices	X	X	X	X	X
Identification and promotion of existing resources	X	X	X	X	
Identification of new funding sources					X

Table 2: Intermediate Outcomes

Initiative Intermediate Outcomes (1 Year)	Social- emotional Well being	Permanent Connections	Stable Housing	Education and Employment	Systems Change
Reduced number of LGBTQ youth who experience homelessness	X	X	X	X	
Strengthened relationships among youth and key partners; and within each group	X	X			X
Expand screening and assessment opportunities	X		X		X

Initiative Intermediate Outcomes (1 Year)	Social-emotional Well being	Permanent Connections	Stable Housing	Education and Employment	Systems Change
Increase cultural competency at initiative partner agencies	X				X
Increase participation in LGBTQ competency training for foster parents and JFS workers			X		X
Increase number of foster and adoptive families that support LGBTQ foster youth and increased matches between youth and these families	X	X	X		X
Improved LGBTQ client services and satisfaction at Sheakley Center	X		X		
Improved social and emotional well-being among LGBTQ youth at risk of homelessness	X				
Secure funding for Initiative recommendations					X

Table 3: Long-Term Outcomes

Initiative Long-Term Outcomes (2 Years)	Social-emotional Well being	Permanent Connections	Stable Housing	Education and Employment	System Change
Increased number of LGBTQ youth in social and emotional well-being, permanent connections, education, stable housing and education/employment.	X	X	X	X	
Increased community acceptance and adult support of LGBTQ youth	X	X			
Improved response to risk and protective factors of LGBTQ youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness					X
Increased cross-system community collaboration					X
Decreased number of LGBTQ youth who	X		X		

Initiative Long-Term Outcomes (2 Years)	Social- emotional Well being	Permanent Connections	Stable Housing	Education and Employment	System Change
experience homelessness					
Improved access to community supports and resources for LGBTQ youth	X	X	X	X	X
More positive school environment for LGBT youth	X				
Expanded dialogue to share and explore perceptions of LGBTQ youth and related issues	X				X
Improved understanding of the prevalence of LGBTQ youth in foster care in Hamilton County					X
Improved data depth and quality (completeness, accuracy, timeliness)					X
Implement interventions and county-wide programs to address specific needs of youth	X	X	X	X	X
Opportunities for community to be connected with and impact program					X
Technical assistance utilized to support implementation of plan activities					X
Conduct an evaluation of the initiative					X

Appendix E: Terminology from True Colors Fund

TERMINOLOGY

**This is not a comprehensive list, and differing opinions exist about some of the terms included here. It is always best to ask a person what terms they use to describe themselves and to use those terms respectfully.*

Sex

The classification of people as male or female. At birth infants are assigned a sex, usually based on the appearance of their external anatomy. (This is what is written on the birth certificate.) However, a person's sex is actually a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics.

Gender Identity

One's internal, deeply held sense of one's gender. For transgender people, their own internal gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Most people have a gender identity of man or woman (or boy or girl). For some people, their gender identity does not fit neatly into one of those two choices. Unlike gender expression (see below) gender identity is not visible to others.

Gender Expression

External manifestations of gender, expressed through one's name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behavior, voice, or body characteristics. Society identifies these cues as masculine and feminine, although what is considered masculine and feminine changes over time and varies by culture. Typically, transgender people seek to make their gender expression align with their gender identity, rather than the sex they were assigned at birth.

Sexual Orientation

Describes an individual's enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to another person. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay, or bisexual. For example, a person who transitions from male to female and is attracted solely to men would identify as a straight woman.

Gay

The adjective used to describe people whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attractions are to people of the same sex (e.g., *gay man*, *gay people*). Sometimes *lesbian* (n. or adj.) is the preferred term for women. Avoid identifying gay people as "homosexuals" an outdated term considered derogatory and offensive to many lesbian and gay people.

Lesbian

A woman whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction is to other women. Some lesbians may prefer to identify as gay (adj.) or as gay women. Avoid identifying lesbians as "homosexuals," a derogatory term.

Bisexual, Bi

A person who has the capacity to form enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attractions to those of the same gender or to those of another gender. People may experience this attraction in differing ways and degrees over their lifetime. Bisexual people need not have had specific sexual experiences to be bisexual; in fact, they need not have had any sexual experience at all to identify as bisexual.

LGBT / GLBT

Acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender." LGBT and/or GLBT are often used because they are more inclusive of the diversity of the community. Care should be taken to ensure that audiences are not confused by their use. Ensure that the acronym is spelled out on first usage.

Queer

Traditionally a pejorative term, *queer* has been appropriated by some LGBT people to describe themselves. However, it is not universally accepted even within the LGBT community and should be avoided unless describing someone who self-identifies that way or in a direct quote. When Q is seen at the end of "LGBT," it typically means queer and/or questioning.

Appendix F: Strategic Sharing for Youth Spokespeople

what are sharing circles ?	responding tips
 <p>Strategic sharing begins with a look at the relationships you have in your life. The Sharing Circle shows that not all your relationships are equal, so not all your sharing is equal, either. Those strangers and acquaintances don't have a right to the same information about you as friends, right? The closer the circle is to you, the more life facts you can feel good about sharing.</p>	<p>Generalize: Redirect to a more general topic. "Many youth in foster care feel..." "Not all youth in care..."</p> <p>Bridging: Link the question asked to your key message. "The real issue is"</p> <p>Flagging: Highlight a portion of your message. "The most important thing to remember is..."</p> <p>Steering: Dangling a hook. "But that isn't the only important part..."</p> <p>Deflecting: Answer problematic questions with short responses while going back to your key message. "Here's what I know..." "The bottom line is..."</p>
RED light, YELLOW light, GREEN light strategy	
<p>Some statements can be made to anyone at any time and are green light "go" statements, like "I have a sister."</p> <p>Yellow light statements require us to slow down and think about the consequences, like "I have a sister that I haven't seen in a year." Yellow light statements give glimpses into private information or would cause a person to ask personal questions.</p> <p>Red light statements should be kept within family and a few good friends.</p>	 <p>Green light: "I live in a home."</p> <p>Yellow light: "I live in a foster home."</p> <p>Red light: "Due to physical abuse I went through, I was taken from my biological parents and now live in a foster home."</p>