YES DROP-IN CENTER

The YES Drop-In Center is a safe place that supports youth on their journey out of homelessness. The only drop-in center in the state of Maryland, specifically for youth experiencing homelessness, is designed to be a “one-stop-shop” for youth where immediate needs are met (shower, food, clothes, and access to phones and computers), as well as long-term planning for stability. First, YES works with youth to secure emergency shelter or temporary housing and meet basic needs. YES facilitates access to resources and opportunities that most (housed) individuals take for granted: a place to clean up, a safe place to receive mail, storage, access to shower and laundry facilities, computer and phone usage, and, simply, a safe place to rest and decompress. YES provides in house case management, workforce development, and rapid rehousing. YES also facilitates access to on-site and off-site health care, mental health care, and legal services.

Behind the scenes, a lot of planning and preparation by the YES operations and drop-in team make the daily work of the center possible. Food that youth enjoy is selected, purchased and transported to the center by the Drop-In Coordinator. Donations (food, clothing, toiletries and supplies) are received and sorted. The drop-in team schedules intakes for new youth who are seeking housing. There is a daily staff check in to prepare for drop-in hours, which covers zoning (what staff will manage each zone), capacity (staff to youth ratio) and updates on individual youth (related to housing, workforce, or supports needed). At the end of each drop-in day, staff
members complete progress notes on each youth and service and outcome data is entered into the Homeless Management Information System.

One of the challenges of being the city’s only drop-in center for homeless youth is the high demand for services. YES is constrained by physical space and staff capacity. YES can only serve 15-20 youth at a time in our current space, and only has two case managers who are providing support to more than 50 youth at a time. YES often reaches capacity before we open the doors and youth may not be able to access the center in the way that they need. This is why people often see a long line outside of YES – youth are waiting to come in! We will continue to strive to meet this demand as we serve the increasing numbers of youth who are seeking housing stability.

Operations Manager, Greg King, states “We find ourselves struggling to maintain the high level of service we provide to all of our youth to make sure all of their needs are met, while also working with a huge influx of new youth participants within the same space and with the same resources. Lately we see around 50 youth each day and reach capacity before we even open the door for drop-in. It’s gotten to the point where outside the space has become another zone that we try to cover and provide services to meet the needs of the youth in an orderly fashion. I think that this shows the dedication of the staff that they are able to adapt to these circumstances and make the best of it and do their best to provide the same level of services to the youth.”
FY17 SUCCESS

In the last fiscal year (July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017), YES achieved the following outcomes: YES

1 served 228 non-duplicated youth;

2 provided at least 1,411 sessions of staff counseling and case management to 152 (67%) youth that visited the drop-in center;

3 housed 10 youth in our rapid rehousing program;

4 provided 107 youth with housing assistance through at least 620 sessions;

5 connected 12 youth to temporary housing and 45 youth [and 10 of their children] to permanent housing;

6 assisted 49 youth in applying for public benefits and medical insurance – 32 benefits were obtained;

7 assisted 73 youth to obtain identity documents – 98 documents were obtained;

8 provided 23 youth with free access to driver’s education; and

9 provided at least 882 sessions of one-on-one employment assistance to 96 youth, which resulted in 50 youth obtaining employment.
**RAPID REHOUSING**

YES was thrilled to pilot the 1st Rapid Rehousing (RRH) Program for youth in Baltimore. This opportunity allowed YES to apply the principles of Housing First, which includes being participant-led, voluntary and without stipulations (such as sobriety or curfews). The program provided housing for ten youth, 18-24, who were literally homeless, meaning that youth were living on the streets or in a shelter. Starting in October 2016 youth were surveyed using a “transition age triage tool” that determines the many factors that cause long term homelessness. There was tremendous demand for the 10 slots – over 40 youth were surveyed and deemed eligible for the housing.

YES was also building relationships with landlords so youth, once approved, could move into their new housing immediately. Youth choice and participation in housing options are of utmost importance – and foundational – to YES. Youth were asked about the specific area of Baltimore they wished to live in and the type of housing (studio, room for rent or 1-2-bedroom apartment) they preferred.

Youth were selected based on the tool’s findings along with staff awareness of youth clients’ history of homelessness. Once selected, YES’s Rapid Rehousing Coordinator, Dylan McDonough, worked with youth to review housing options and choose a home. Then, once youth settled on a unit, an agreement was signed between the landlord, tenant and YES outlining roles, rules and expectations. A lease is then signed between the youth tenant and the landlord and the youth get what are often their first set of keys!

YES then assists with collecting donated items and basic start up furniture. YES and our youth were incredibly grateful to our housewarming sponsors who generously donated beds, sheets, linens, lamps, tables, chairs, and supplies. The Coordinator helps the youth move into their new home and checks on them daily when they first move in. The daily support tapers off to several times a week to match individual needs of youth.

As first-time renters, there were several lessons to learn quickly such as budgeting, communication about property maintenance and understanding renter’s/ landlord’s rights. YES staff spent significant time guiding youth about (1) budgeting bills, food and rent; (2) the importance of paying rent on time; and (3) ways to discuss issues with landlords and maintenance. As formerly homeless youth in the program, many youth invited their friends, who were still homeless, to come and live with them. We often helped to navigate this with the youth and the landlords, as it’s difficult for youth who have experienced homelessness to transition into permanent housing knowing that their friends and family are still on the streets.

Rapid Rehousing provided many opportunities for the youth. Dylan McDonough, Rapid Rehousing Coordinator states “Once youth had stable housing it allowed them the mental freedom to focus on jobs, mental health, and other stability goals. Youth no longer had to worry about not having a shower before going to a job interview. Youth can also focus on college and continuing education. Housing provides stability.”

**DYLAN MCDONOUGH**
Rapid Rehousing Coordinator

The funds were provided through the Emergency Solutions Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and is facilitated by the Mayor’s Office of Human Services, Baltimore City. The plan, to make
homelessness “rare and brief”, is managed by the Continuum of Care. This funding enabled full support for the first month’s rent and a security deposit. Youth pay 30% of their income towards rent, for the duration of the funding period. Participants are provided flexible and responsive case management, security deposits, and rental assistance for 3-12 months.

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

Ninety-six youth and young adults experiencing homelessness participated in YES’s workforce development program in FY17. Youth are provided with one-on-one job supports, connected to paid job readiness and sector specific training programs. Youth are also provided with support to connect or re-connect to high school, GED or college.

As a Community Connector through the Mayor’s Office of Employment Development’s One Baltimore for Jobs (1B4J) initiative, YES further developed partnerships and provided youth deeper opportunities for training and employment. 1B4J provides access to 22 network partners in Baltimore City. Through 1B4J, YES partnered with Art with a Heart (AWAH) to provide three 6-week sessions of job readiness training and Celebrate Us to provide two 8-week customer service trainings to YES youth. 1B4J also allowed YES to provide stipends for youth participation in training programs and significant barrier removal assistance to youth, such as monthly bus passes for youth in training and to those who were newly employed. YES also partnered with Mercy Medical Center to provide an 8-week dietary/transportation/custodial training program to YES youth, which resulted in four youth obtaining permanent positions with the hospital. Employment supports connected 42 youth to one or more paid job readiness or sector-specific training, 29 of whom completed one or more training program. YES also provided at least 108 sessions of one-on-one education assistance which has led YES to connect at least

---

**STAFF PROFILE**

Erica Claridy joined YES through her relationship with the Baltimore Downtown Partnership. She was already familiar with the mission prior to working at YES. She wanted to work at YES because she liked that YES stands for “helping the youth.” Erica assisted youth by handing out hygiene kits, organizing clothes, distributing bus tokens and providing an ear to youth in a situation similar to one she recently experienced. She was essential to the drop-in center as a daily support. Erica states, “If I weren’t working here I’d probably be here. YES allows youth to gain confidence and the ability to sustain themselves.” During her time at YES, Erica also made significant strides in her own journey to housing stability, including obtaining a new housing voucher, a new home to suit her and her family, and obtaining a driver’s license. All this was achieved while keeping up with her daily duties at YES. When asked what she liked most about the experience at YES she responded that she “likes to help youth feel better about themselves and making them laugh.” Erica indicates that she learned about the different personalities of youth and enjoyed helping them to find clothes. She truly valued the ability to assist youth. Erica was asked to describe YES to a stranger, and she said: “A safe place.”
seven youth to high school, GED programming, or college; and provided 68 youth with direct mental health services, 36 of whom had been seen three or more times. As a result of workforce supports and these partnerships, 50 youth obtained employment in FY17!

An important component of success in job training programs and employment is employer commitment to hire youth with an understanding of the unique challenges that they face. Empathic employers are key to removing barriers that youth often have to manage. Youth also face significant barriers related to homelessness. Many youth need a place to clean up before work, which YES can provide. Others occasionally need to be forgiven for their exhaustion when they spent the previous night outside, in a shelter or on someone else’s couch. YES can and does advocate with employers in these circumstances. YES provides case management and wraparound supports to support youth in crisis and as needs arise.

YES’s Workforce Development Program fulfills an important need by providing assistance in seeking, gaining, and maintaining employment.

**YOUTH REACH**

Established by the Maryland General Assembly in 2014 after advocacy efforts from YES youth and staff in conjunction with community partners, “Youth REACH MD (Reach out, Engage, Assist, & Count to end Homelessness) is an effort to obtain accurate, detailed information on the number, characteristics, and needs of unaccompanied homeless youth in Maryland.” In Baltimore, this effort has been facilitated by the Baltimore City Mayor’s Office of Human Services: Homeless Services Program, members of the Baltimore Homeless Youth Initiative and youth leaders.

To reach as many youth as possible there is a school based count, a site count (for youth connected to services) and a street count (for disconnected youth who may not be receiving services). Organized through a coalition of schools, youth-serving nonprofit organizations, and other service providers, youth are surveyed about their housing status and other factors related to their experience of homelessness.

YES was one of the site based centers. To engage youth YES posted fliers, hosted information sessions, and invited youth to lead the effort as youth ambassadors. Youth Ambassadors helped to plan and execute the surveying efforts by establishing street outreach teams, organizing shifts, and mapping out “hotspots.” According to YES’s Case Manager Zion Hunter, Youth Ambassadors “created a map of hotspots where young homeless people congregate to ensure the most access to youth to obtain a more accurate count.”

Youth who participated in the count were offered gift cards as incentives to complete the survey. Understandably, some youth were skeptical about why data was being collected. Hunter indicates, “I spent a lot of time helping them understand the movement at large – how an accurate number helps to drive policy and practice in the community, city and state.”

Another issue that impacted the count was that “couch surfing young people don’t consider themselves homeless.” Overall though, the count was successful. According to preliminary data, 505 unaccompanied homeless youth were surveyed in Baltimore City alone. There was a lot of prior notice about and organizing around the count and the Youth Ambassadors deserve a huge shout out for their leadership and surveying efforts!
LEGAL ADVOCACY

YES’s Case Management team devotes a significant time on navigation of the legal system for our youth. In FY17, 55 youth were supported with legal advocacy at least 271 times. A recent count indicates that Ciera Dunlap, YES’s Case Management Supervisor, assists up to 5 youth clients per day who need support for legal navigation. She serves an average of 11 youth per week with this assistance. The minimum time spent on one youth’s legal assistance is 10 hours and can go over hundreds of hours depending on (1) if there is a trial, (2) the types of charges, (3) the duration of the case and (4) the complexity of the case. Youth are provided with many types of supports including explanation of charges and available options. Youth are accompanied during pre-court, hearings, and court proceedings. Letters to the court are provided and calls are made on behalf of youth. Youth who are on probation are supported through the process. Youth are often mandated to attend YES instead of traditional adult system options and YES staff will follow the court order as required. Staff also build relationships with judges, establish relationships with the court and community partners in the effort to improve outcomes for youth. Ciera is currently working with the Docket for Homeless Persons, Office of the Public Defender and the Homeless Representation Project to help youth navigate the legal system and to expunge charges.

SPECIAL THANKS

Catchafire matched skilled professional volunteer, Evelyn Kaviani with our cause to help our mission by creating this brochure. Thank you to Catchafire and Evelyn for helping us support our cause.

CONNECT WITH US

2315 N. Charles Street, 1st Floor, Baltimore, MD 21218

410-235-7744

http://www.yesdropincenter.org

@YouthEmpoweredSocietyyesDropInCenter

Ciera Dunlap
Case Management Supervisor
EVENT HIGHLIGHTS – OPEN HOUSE 2017

We are grateful to supporters of YES for attending and participating in our Summer Open House! We had a record turnout of 80 attendees. Youth volunteered to provide tours of the drop-in center and explained what the center and its staff have meant to them. Youth shared with guests their personal stories about their journey to gaining employment and getting housed. Youth expressed deep gratitude for the supports (workforce training, case management, interview clothing, transportation etc.) received from the YES community including staff guidance, volunteer supports and donations. The program highlighted how all the internal services at YES and external supports work together to benefit youth. The program emphasized youth success in job training; both youth and allies participated in the program. This year we honored Dana Jahromi, YES volunteer of the year, who prepares and delivers hot meals for the youth every week – and asks for recipe suggestions (and feedback) from the youth! The program culminated with a powerful call to action from Delegate Mary Washington. Delegate Washington implored all of us to fight for housing and resources for youth, as “no youth should be homeless in the richest state in the country” and recognized YES’s value in partnering with youth to achieve their goals. YES also raised the highest amount of funds it has ever raised at one Open House event – and we did it with your help! We appreciate your online and in-person commitment to YES and the youth that we serve.

FUNDERS FY17

Associated Black Charities
Baltimore Community Foundation:
Baltimore Women’s Giving Circle
Baltimore Community Foundation:
Leonard & Helen R. Stulman Charitable Foundation
Baltimore Community Foundation:
Oscar G. Murray Fund
Baltimore Community Foundation:
Youth Leadership for Change
Bank of America
David and Barbara B. Hirschhorn Foundation
Harry and Jeannette Weinberg Foundation
Greek Ladies Philloptochos Society Evangelismos

Helen J. Serini Foundation
Mayor’s Office of Human Services:
Homeless Services Program
Mayor’s Office of Employment Development
The Abell Foundation
The Archdiocese of Baltimore,
Catholic Campaign for Human Development
The Fund for Change
The Kenneth S. Battye Charitable Trust
The Morton K and Jane Blaustein Foundation, Inc
The Weissner Foundation for Children Inc.
The Zavvyl and Isabelle Krieger Fund
NOTE FROM YES’S FOUNDING DIRECTOR

YES celebrates its fifth anniversary in October 2017 and I couldn’t be more proud about what it’s become. YES is a bustling drop-in center with peers and allies partnering with youth to help them walk their journeys. It is a program which deeply supports youth to connect to training, education and work. It’s the go-to Rapid Rehousing program for youth in Baltimore City. And it’s a joyful space where youth are celebrated for who they are and encouraged to become powerful advocates in our community.

None of this would be possible without the support of the entire YES community. Each donation of food, clothing, cash and time has allowed YES to serve youth more deeply. Every community partner and funder who believed in the vision for the drop-in center and in the staff made it possible to grow at each turn.

Of course without the vision and hard work of the founding youth, who were homeless or formerly homeless themselves, and who saw this need and worked tirelessly to bring it to life, we wouldn’t be here today. We owe them, and the staff who work day in and day out to carry this vision forward, the deepest gratitude for their contributions to the youth of our community.

It’s been such a pleasure to go on this journey with each of you! Thank you for your belief in YES and most importantly, for your belief in and commitment to youth experiencing homelessness in Baltimore. Each and every one of these youth are amazing and I’m so lucky to have known so many of them. Now, let’s end homelessness and help all youth become powerful in their own lives!

With love and gratitude,

Lara Law