## Purpose and Background

The Maine Statewide Continuum of Care (MCOC) was granted a Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) award in 2018 to be invested into all 16 counties of Maine, with a priority focus on rural regions of the state. The MCOC YHDP State Team, understanding that many of the youth-specific coordinated entry (CE) tools being used were not trauma-informed, identified a handful of prioritization factors they wanted the Maine Homeless Youth Provider Group (MHYPG) and the Maine Statewide YAB (Youth Action Board) to consider during the development of a tool and process. Following some research and discussion, these groups modified the Washington Balance of State (WA BoS) CE tool and process for young adults to be piloted within the MCOC and YHDP funded agencies. The intent is to build a statewide youth CE system that can be built on as Maine gains experience with CE and other providers, agencies and community partners see the benefit of participating in CE.

## Youth Action Board of Maine

The Maine Statewide Youth Action Board’s vision statement is to end youth and young adult (YYA) homelessness in the State of Maine through proper implementation of programs set forth for adults to help build and develop different projects for Rapid Rehousing, Transitional Housing, Transitional Living, Host Homes, and other supportive services through the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project (YHDP).

The YAB’s mission is to enable voices of YYA within the community to collaborate with the legislative process. The Voices of YYA are heard through the YAB so that program directors from Maine Housing, HUD, and the Continuum Of Care (COC), have a perspective which would not otherwise be available. This also includes YYA that identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community or have lived experience being homeless and or in other systems.

## Key Principles

As part of the design process, the MHYPG and the Maine Statewide YAB kept the following principles at the core of the work:

Youth created – This is a system designed to serve young people, therefore young people with lived experience need to be key designers of it.

Racial equity – It is understood that many of the systems we operate in are inherently racist. Therefore, it is a priority to create a process and tool that addresses communities of color – because after all, they are the most marginalized, yet overrepresented in those who experience homelessness and housing instability.

Diversion throughout – We want to be asking about natural support systems and available resources throughout our work with young people. It is never too late to divert a young person from the over-burdened, under-funded homeless response system.

Youth as partners – Young people are resourceful and resilient. We are committed to empowering youth to use their natural resources and resisting the urge to “save” them. Instead, we will practice seeing them as partners in solving their housing crisis.

Do no harm – We are aiming to use a phased approach so we are not repeatedly asking trauma inducing questions.

Easy access – To ensure the resources are easily accessible, CE points of entry should include both mobile and site-based strategies.

Innovation - We are trying new things. Status quo is not effective, which means we are going to take some risks, try new things, fail fast and make corrections along the way.

Inclusion- The current youth homeless response system relies heavily on traditional HUD, FYSB and state funded providers. It is our intent to join with other community partners to identify and serve youth in communities (especially rural ones) that are underserved and to help those communities build their capacity to end and prevent youth homelessness locally.

Community Choice – We recognize that Maine is a large, rural state with limited service hubs. Our priority is to ensure youth are able to stay in their community of choice whenever possible.

The coordinated entry system is intended to be low-barrier and must also adhere to state, federal, and local anti-discrimination laws. Young people are not screened out of coordinated entry based on any of the following criteria:

* Having too little or no income
* Having poor credit or financial history
* Having poor or lack of rental history
* Having involvement with any system of care, including but not limited to the juvenile justice system, child welfare system, mental health or substance use treatment, etc.
* Having active or history of alcohol and/or substance use
* Having a history of victimization
* The type or extent of disability-related services or supports that are needed
* Lacking ID
* Lacking proof of U.S. Residency Status
* Any actions that are perceived as indicating a lack of “housing readiness,” including perceived resistance to receiving services

**MCOC Young Adult Prioritization Tool**

If this is the first interaction you are having with a youth begin the conversation with some relationship building questions. Example: **What brought you here today? Tell me a bit about yourself. What does a typical day look like for you?** If you already have a relationship with this youth, simply confirm what you think you know. Better safe than sorry-we don’t want to miss anything.

**Diversion efforts start from the beginning.** Utilize the Diversion Assessment/ Exploratory Conversation Tool to ask about natural support systems that may be available to this youth.

## Contact Information

* Full Name:
* DOB:
* **Under age 18? [ ]  Yes [ ] No**
* Pronouns:
* What are your preferred languages?
* Please provide any working phone number(s), or the phone of a voicemail service or friend/family member we could call (Please tell me the name and relationship to the person for each phone number provided):
* Please provide working email addresses you use, if any:
* Which of the contact methods listed above is your preferred contact method? Do you prefer text messaging or phone calls? We will try this method first when attempting to reach you.
* Are there any other ways that we can get in touch with you?

## Housing Preferences

Are you seeking any of the following due to a disability? (If yes, you may have to provide documentation of disability-related need.)

**[ ]  Wheelchair accessible unit**

**[ ]  First floor/elevator (little to no stairs to your unit)**

**[ ]  Other accessibility \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**[ ]  N/A**

Youth Choice

For heads of household who are 18 yrs. or older: Would you like to be considered for housing programs that are:

[ ]  **Youth-specific only:** (Youth-specific programs have a focus on young populations; they may be able to offer drop-in spaces for youth, as well as community-building and connections with other youth)

[ ]  **Adult programs only:** (Adult programs serve youth who are 18-24 but may not have built in community space or activities to connect with other youth. They can help you find those opportunities. ***(Requires completion of Maine’s standard Coordinated Entry assessment***)

[ ]  **Both Adult and Youth-specific programs: (*Requires completion of Maine’s standard Coordinated Entry assessment and MCOC Youth and Young Adult Prioritization tool)***

## Geographic Preference

What are the areas you are willing to live in (specific cities or regions)? Are there any places you definitely don’t want to live? You can change your mind about where you would like to live at any time.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1.** **Red Are your current (within the last two weeks) basic physical and emotional needs being met?** (examples: Do you have clothes, food, shelter?  | ☐ Yes (0) ☐ No (2) |
| **2. Red Are you unsafe in your current situation?**  | [ ]  Yes (2)[ ] No (0) |
| **3. Yellow Has your housing ever been disrupted due to your race, gender identity, sexuality, religion, or due to war, ethnic, tribal or religious violence?** | ☐ Yes (1) ☐ No (0) |
| 4. **Yellow** **Do you have a natural support system? (suggest examples) Follow up questions to gather more information about diversion opportunities here include:*** What does your support system look like? What can you rely on them for?
* How about your extended family like aunts/uncles, grandparents, cousins, etc.?
* How about any people from the school(s) that you currently attend or have attended in the past?
* How about any friends you may have?

 **When you are in need, are there people in your support system that you can trust? (young person and staff can come to a conclusion togther)** | ☐ Yes (0) ☐ No (1) |
| 5. **Red** **Do you have any minors in your care currently or do you expect to soon?** | ☐ Yes (2) ☐ No (0) |
| **6. Yellow** **Have you ever felt like you needed, requested or received supports while in school?** **-** Some examples could be an IEP (individual education plan), a 504 Plan, wrap-around services, behavioral plan/ supports, English as a Second Language (ESL,)speech therapy, school social work or Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS)? | ☐ Yes (1) ☐ No (0) |
| **7. Yellow Have you received services from or been in any one of the following systems**  foster care, adoption, mental health services, drug and/or alcohol treatment, juvenile justice, or court systems (including immigration proceedings) | ☐ Yes (1) ☐ No (0) |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Red(2)\_\_\_\_ | Yellow(1)\_\_\_\_ | Score: /10 |

## Next Steps

 Please review the information below with the participant.

[ ]  **Wait Times**

Wait times can change from time to time based on how many people are interested, and the openings that are available.

[ ]  **What should I do to try to find housing if I am not matched with housing opening?**

We encourage you to keep thinking about other ways you may be able to move out of homelessness, like with roommates or people you know at the same time you are applying for affordable housing.

[ ]  **Who will I hear from if I am matched to a housing opening?**

If you are matched to a housing opening the providing agency will reach out to you.. They are going to use all of the contact information you have given us to try to connect with you as quickly as possible. If any of your contact information changes, let me know and I can change it in the system. You can check in with me as well.

[ ]  **Am I automatically approved for the housing openings when I’m matched?**

 No, this is an initial discussion to see which programs and providers can best meet your needs. Each provider can decide who participates in their program based on additional factors. When an opening is available you can chose whether to take what is offered or wait for something that better suits your needs.

## Prioritization Policy

Health and Safety are worth 2 points, and History of Displacement/Systems Involvement will be worth 1 point.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 2pt.  | Safety/Health needs |
| 1pt.  | History of Displacement/Systems Involvement |

The young person with more red factors would be prioritized over a young person with yellow factors.

EXAMPLE:

Jason has 4 yellows and 0 reds = 4 points

Karen has 0 yellows and 3 reds = 6 points

Aaron has 1 yellow and 2 reds = 5 points

Bobby has 2 yellow and 2 reds = 6 points

Jacob has 2 yellows and 3 reds = 8 points

The prioritization would then be:

1. Jacob
2. Karen
3. Bobby
4. Aaron
5. Jason

**Implementation Notes and Q&A**

1. If you are doing the assessment with two or more young adults in a household, each youth should complete a separate assessment. Prioritize the household based on the highest score.
2. Use information and any previous knowledge you have to get an accurate score during the assessment phase. The tool is intended to be used in a relationship building way. As the relationship evolves and more information is shared, you should update the tool to ensure the individual has an accurate score and is prioritized accordingly.
3. Since many folks may be transitioning from one tool to this Y&YA Tool, you may take into consideration how they would have answered had they been asked these questions when they were first prioritized. You can take into consideration the situation and/or environment they were in (see questions 1 & 2).