Prevention of youth homelessness
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Agenda

- OHY background
- Housing instability and youth
- SSB 6560
- Process: Human centered design & co-design
- Findings
2015 Homeless Youth Act

- Established Office of Homeless Youth (OHY)
- Set 5 priority areas:
  1. Stable Housing
  2. Family Reconciliation
  3. Permanent Connections
  4. Education & Employment
  5. Social & Emotional Well-Being
Who are Homeless Youth?

- Youth (under age 18) and young adults (age 18 through 24) who are living on their own, without a parent or guardian, and are without a safe, stable living arrangement.

- Also referred to as “unaccompanied” youth
How Do Young People Become Homeless?

- Intellectual and developmental disability
- Abuse or neglect (trauma)
- Economic instability or family poverty
- Historical trauma (forced migration)
- Structural racism (housing policies, redlining, in employment)
- Sexual orientation or gender orientation leading to family abandonment
- System (foster care, justice system, behavioral health) involvement
Approx. 1,800 are unstably housed within one year of exit.
Improving Stability for Youth Exiting Systems of Care
Substitute Senate Bill 6560 (2018)
“... it is the goal of the legislature, that beginning January 1, 2021, any unaccompanied youth discharged from a publicly funded system of care in our state will be discharged into safe and stable housing.”

“The department of children, youth, and families and the office of homeless youth prevention and protection programs must jointly develop a plan...” to ensure this goal is met.
Publicly funded systems of care

- Child welfare
- Juvenile justice
- Behavioral health
- Office of Homeless Youth programs
Approach
Strategies to Develop the Plan

- Core team of agency representatives
- Input from field staff
- Stakeholder engagement
- Literature review
- Research of best practices
- Data analysis
- Co-design sessions with young people
- Co-design session with line staff from agencies
Human centered design
Human centered design

Discover

Define

Design

Deliver
Human centered design methods and tools utilized

- System maps
- Literature review
- Conceptual maps
- Root cause analysis
- Participatory research (co-design)
- Research synthesis
Co-design

Designing solutions with the people impacted by the issue.
Designing the research and design sessions
Session flow

- **Warm up**
  - Improv games to set the creative mood

- **Defining systems**
  - Joint learning about each of the systems

- **Naming the problem by system**
  - "What are the issues that you have seen, heard or experienced?"

- **Grouping & synthesis**
  - Find themes
  - Gather stories and clarification

- **Designing the ideal solution**
  - "If you had the ability to design your ideal solutions"
Co-design’s impact on young people

- Prevented tokenization
- Created a space for joint learning and healing.
- Created safe spaces for LGBTQ2 and POC youth to talk without their white peers.
- Allowed youth in rural areas to participate on statewide recommendations.
- All participants were provided $100 gift cards for their time and expertise.

“I am happy that you are doing this (recommendation design) this (group setting) way instead of talking to us individually” – Participant Yakima Session.
Learnings

• Each session will be vastly different
• Be open to iteration and improve
• Debrief, debrief, debrief
• Ensure that there is a mental health counselor available to support any young person who might be triggered by the topics their peers bring up.
• Always have lived experts on the design team.
Synthesis
Impact

System led recommendations = siloed

- Requests for housing by system population.
- Little emphasis on longer term post system stability.
- Expectation that housing only will reduce instability.
- Limited system change requests.

Youth-led recommendations = cross system & youth centered

- Identified unique opportunities for cross system impact.
- Recommendations also spanned post exit stability with ideas for community level support.
- Called out strong system changes that impact youth’s longer term stability.
Questions
Findings
What’s needed: Warm Handoff

1. Effective Transitions from Systems of Care
2. Community Connections
3. Housing
Effective Transitions from Systems of Care

- **Internal efforts** are underway in Child Welfare, Juvenile Rehabilitation, and Behavioral Health to improve transition planning prior to discharge that focus on family engagement and connection within community.

- **Improved capacity** is needed to fully implement effective transition planning for youth and young adults.
Community Connections

- Partnerships with state agencies, tribes, counties, and community-based providers

- Connections to housing navigation, basic needs support, coaching, family engagement, employment and education support, and other services that promote stability and success
Housing

- **Transitional housing** for 16-17 year olds designed to help youth make a successful transition to stable living

- Expanded **master leasing programs** for young adults with support to maintain their housing and achieve education and employment goals
Questions
Thank you!

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