

# A School-Community Initiative WITH YOUTH VOICE

to improve resources for unstably housed youth

## A GUIDE BOOK

for youth-serving organizations  
and educational institutions



Heather Mosher, Ph.D.  
Institute for Community Research

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# I | THE GUIDEBOOK

*A guidebook  
is nothing  
more than a  
guide - it's  
what you do  
with it that  
matters.*

Community-based initiatives that are driven by youth voice and that establish strong linkages between schools and community organizations have an important role to play in the effort to end youth homelessness in Connecticut.

This guidebook:

- ◆ underscores the “why” of building a youth-adult school-community (YASC) initiative to improve resources for unstably housed youth;
- ◆ describes the core components of the process;
- ◆ discusses steps for building a YASC initiative;
- ◆ shares an example of a developing YASC initiative in a Connecticut community and its successes thus far; and
- ◆ includes some tools for developing partnerships, building knowledge through community-engaged research, and using this knowledge to strengthen service coordination and guide action toward improving resources for unstably housed youth.

## 2 | WHY DO THIS

*“Lasting  
change is not  
possible  
without  
community.”*

*- Howard Fuller,  
a prominent school  
reform leader<sup>1</sup>*

### Why a Youth-Adult School-Community Initiative?

Youth homelessness is a national problem and presents significant challenges to communities and school districts. The impact of housing insecurity on youth is extensive, influencing young people’s lives in many ways with regard to their physical and mental health and their overall life trajectory. Longer periods of homelessness lead to higher rates of substance use, sexual risk behaviors, early parenthood, unemployment, incarceration, mental illness, suicide, and poor educational and health outcomes for youth.<sup>2-27</sup> In the most recent annual point-in-time youth count survey in Connecticut in 2015, approximately 3,000 youth were estimated to be experiencing homelessness. Based on the results of this survey, 40% of youth respondents indicated that they had no permanent place to live for over a year.<sup>28</sup> Only 63% of homeless 16- and 17-year-olds reported attending school regularly.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the significant impact of youth homelessness on individuals, families, schools, and communities, it is a problem often left unrecognized and particularly challenging to resolve because of its hidden nature. Youth experiencing housing instability avoid shelters and other adult services, tend not to disclose their housing situation to adults, and often reject the label “homeless” because of the associated stigma. Based on national data on best practices, a coordinated community response is vital to ending youth homelessness.<sup>29</sup> Also vital is the use of effective methods to identify and engage youth at risk for or actually experiencing homelessness and connecting them with the help that they need to end their homelessness permanently. Both of these things depend on the participation, collaboration and coordination of many people and institutions within a community. Of particular importance, and often missing, from these efforts, is the involvement of youth and school systems.

Increasingly, community-based initiatives across the country are demonstrating how youth-adult partnerships and school-community collaborations can improve outcomes for young people, families, and communities. School-



*“Every  
successful  
individual  
knows that his  
or her  
achievement  
depends on a  
community of  
persons  
working  
together.”  
Paul Ryan*

community collaborations have resulted in improved access to health and social services, expansion in after-school enrichment programs, reduced delinquency, and stronger pathways to employment and post-secondary education for young people.<sup>30</sup> Effective youth-adult partnerships have shown positive impact on the development of youth and led to more effective and responsive community institutions that respond with resources, policies and programs that better serve youth and communities.<sup>31</sup> When initiatives such as these include youth voice and a youth-driven focus, they establish strong linkages between schools and community organizations. Youth-adult school-community (YASC) initiatives can thus have an important role to play in the effort to end youth homelessness.

Schools are one of the largest institutions that serve unaccompanied homeless and housing insecure youth; however, there are few examples of communities across the nation that have established productive partnerships with schools to address youth homelessness. There is a clear need in Connecticut for such partnerships. In a survey by the Institute for Children, Poverty & Homelessness, Connecticut schools ranked second to last across the nation in 2015 for identifying homeless students and in linking young people to educational resources and other help they need.<sup>32</sup> Schools can become isolated islands disconnected from community organizations, resulting in far less awareness of resources available to youth and a reduced capacity to efficiently link students to available services. The involvement of school systems in the process of establishing better means to address youth homelessness is critical.

Developing an effective community response also requires youth involvement to better understand barriers for young people in reaching out and receiving the help they need. Effective youth involvement is a partnership between adults and young people - one in which young people work in full partnership with adults to tackle an issue that has significant impact on both youth and communities. Listening to youth and being responsive to their needs is critical to effectively identifying and connecting youth to what they need. Negative past experiences with programs that are perceived to be uncaring and judgmental of youth is a major barrier to help-seeking for unstably housed youth.<sup>33</sup> Involvement of youth in initiatives to end youth homelessness honors what youth see and experience, and increases the effectiveness of our resources, policies and programs that serve youth and communities.

*A YASC initiative is a promising model for communities in tackling youth homelessness.*

A YASC initiative is a promising model for communities to tackle youth homelessness at the local level. In Torrington, Connecticut, a YASC initiative is underway and has demonstrated successful outcomes thus far. The overall goal of a YASC initiative is to build youth voice and a collaborative infrastructure for youth and adult partners to use research tools and collective capacity to improve local system response to youth homelessness. Outcomes include: a) improving understanding of barriers for youth in accessing available resources and how to improve access to resources; b) building collective capacity of the high school and community organizations to identify unstably housed youth and connect them to help, and c) improving resources, programs and policies to reflect the needs and preferences of youth.

Collaborative efforts such as these have the potential to improve schools, strengthen communities, and lead to better educational and life outcomes for young people. However, while informal collaborations are relatively simple to create, establishing a strong and coordinated partnership can be more complicated. Therefore, understanding and putting into practice key aspects of a youth-adult community-school initiative is critical to its success. This guidebook describes best practices for creating a YASC initiative in your own community.

# 3 | THE PROCESS

*“It’s not about a collaborative ... it’s about collaborating to be effective.”*

Research on the best practices of social change initiatives, community-based interventions, youth voice, and school-community collaborations consistently point to five important drivers of change. These drivers are fundamental components of a successful YASC initiative process. Each driver is described in the table below. The table also indicates the section of the guidebook where the specific drivers are discussed in more detail.

DRIVERS	KEY MECHANISMS	SECTION
LEADERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Cultivate the right mix of leaders (youth, school, community stakeholders)</li> <li>◆ Inspire motivation and ownership</li> </ul>	4   PLAN
PARTNERSHIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Build youth-adult partnership</li> <li>◆ Establish school-community collaboration</li> </ul>	4   PLAN
DATA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Build knowledge that informs action through community-engaged research methods</li> <li>◆ Conduct evaluations throughout the initiative to reveal what's working and what's not</li> </ul>	5   DISCOVER
RESOURCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Know and utilize available resources</li> <li>◆ Build on assets and strengths of community</li> </ul>	5   DISCOVER
INFORMED ACTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Target multiple levels for change (individuals, institutions, policies, etc)</li> <li>◆ Inform actions based on partnerships, resources, and data, and prioritize “quick wins” to build momentum</li> </ul>	6   BUILD

A YASC initiative integrates two data-driven strategies:

1. *Youth Participatory Action Research* to build youth voice and a collaborative infrastructure for youth and adult partners to use research tools for improving systems and solving issues critical to the community.
2. *Participatory asset mapping* to document local resources and systems that serve unstably housed youth and to engage community stakeholders in collaborative systems change efforts to improve resources.

## Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)

YPAR is a  
collective  
approach to  
research with  
youth as co-  
researchers.

YPAR is an evidence-based program consisting of a series of interactive and hands-on activities that builds youth voice and a collaborative infrastructure for youth and adult partners to use research tools to improve systems and solve issues critical to youth and to the community. The Institute for Community Research's YPAR program for youth ages 14-24 is nationally recognized and has been extensively evaluated and documented through multi-year federally funded research.<sup>34-37</sup>

Facilitated by professional researchers and experts in community-engaged research, youth are trained as community researchers and co-develop research models and methods, carry out data collection using mixed methods approaches combined with analysis and reflection, and often use art forms (e.g., photography, video, etc.) for inquiry and for dissemination of findings to the broader community.

YPAR is an evidence-based approach for positive youth development. The YPAR curriculum, *Youth Empowerment Through Action Research*, actively engages youth in all phases of the scientific discovery process. The YPAR approach has been shown to increase school attachment, student attendance, civic engagement, adult-youth partnerships, and social justice for vulnerable youth.

Youth and young adults who have participated in YPAR programs often assume leadership roles in their community, taking on decision-making positions in local organizations and promoting systems change to address community problems. YPAR's focus on youth-adult partnerships also results in local organizations being more responsive to youth needs in community problem-solving.



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## Resources:

ICR's YPAR Curriculum (2008) can be ordered from the Institute for Community Research at <http://www.icrweb.org/resources/>.

ICR's YPAR Curriculum for Oregon (2014, abridged version) is available for free at <https://public.health.oregon.gov/HealthyPeopleFamilies/Youth/Pages/youth.aspx>.research

Research for Organizing Toolkit is available for free from the Urban Justice Center at <http://www.researchfororganizing.org/>.

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## Participatory Asset Mapping

*Participatory  
asset mapping  
is a way to  
build assets  
through the  
mapping  
process.*

Participatory asset mapping is a method of research used by communities to document local assets and to develop strategic plans to improve systems and build on resources and strengths of communities.<sup>38-41</sup> Assets are different types of resources that are useful to a community and reflect community strengths, resources and values. Assets come in many forms and include people, physical structures or places, services, businesses that provide jobs, cultural symbols, and attitudes/beliefs, among others. Participatory asset mapping engages community stakeholders in the process of analyzing their local situation and builds momentum for community planning. The process offers a way to not only map an array of formal and informal community assets, but to *build assets* by strengthening the effectiveness of people and organizations to find solutions to problems within the community.

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## Resources:

Participatory Asset Mapping Toolkit by Community Science is available for free at: <http://www.communityscience.com/knowledge4equity/AssetMappingToolkit.pdf>

Identifying Community Assets and Resources by Community Tool Box: <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/identify-community-assets/main>

Asset Mapping by UCLA Center for Health Policy Research: [http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/programs/health-data/trainings/Documents/tw\\_cba20.pdf](http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/programs/health-data/trainings/Documents/tw_cba20.pdf)

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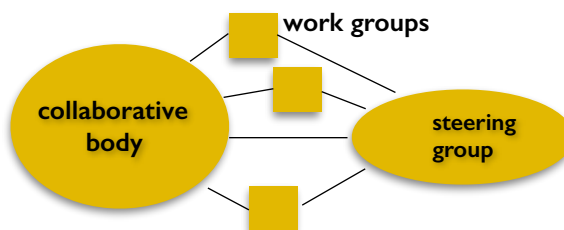
# 4 | PLAN

*“Effective collaboration requires vision, cohesive policy, leadership, infrastructure, & capacity building”*

Research has consistently demonstrated that school-community initiatives and youth-adult partnerships require significant structural supports and formalized mechanisms in order to succeed. This section offers tools for planning the major steps of a school-community initiative with youth voice to improve local system response to youth homelessness.

## Step 1: Identify youth and adult key partners

A YASC initiative needs a wide range of stakeholders. A basic collaborative infrastructure for a YASC initiative includes youth, school representatives, McKinney-Vento Liaisons and a wide array of community stakeholders.



Community stakeholders may include agencies and organizations focused on providing programs for education, literacy, youth development, and the arts; health and human services; juvenile justice; vocational education; and economic development. They also may include various sources of social and financial capital, including youth, families, religious groups, community-based organizations, civic groups, and businesses.

### **TOOL A:** *Identifying key stakeholders for the steering group (in Appendix)*

Identifying the right mix of youth and adult key partners to participate in the initiative is critical to the success of the collaborative infrastructure. Avoid heavily recruiting from your own social/professional network. There are significant limitations to this approach. People have the tendency to be connected to individuals who are similar to ourselves (similar occupation, gender, age, etc) - this is called homophily (ie., “love of the same”), a well-established principle in social network studies.<sup>42</sup> If you start with a steering group that is diverse, this will impact the diversity of the collaborative as a

whole, as well as the range of resources and supports for sustaining the initiative.

A diverse steering group is important for:

- ◆ attracting important stakeholders to participate in the initiative;
- ◆ creating an accurate and useful map and analysis of resources; and
- ◆ accessing resources to support youth involvement, overcome challenges, build new assets, and expand new opportunities.

As most individuals have limited time, be creative about how to reduce barriers to participation in the steering group. Many people may be able to participate only if it is incorporated into their roles at work or at school. Identify individuals who would benefit from this role, and show how the work aligns well with their job and would make their jobs easier. For example, some school guidance counselors may not be aware of the array of resources that are available to youth, or may not be knowledgeable about the protocols for youth to access resources, so they may be highly motivated to be involved because it directly makes their work easier.

Keep in mind that individuals may need formal approval and support from an administrator, boss, parent, or other person to participate in a significant way in the initiative. Be prepared to spend time introducing the idea of the YASC initiative to relevant groups of stakeholders to build interest and support.

## Step 2: Establish a steering group

A steering group should consist of five to ten motivated individuals that meet regularly (ideally on a weekly basis) during the PLAN phase. The role of the steering group is to identify/recruit youth and support their participation, cultivate leaders, and facilitate community engagement in the initiative. Specific tasks in the PLAN phase that the steering group is responsible for include:

- ◆ define the goals and timeline of the initiative
- ◆ identify and access resources needed
- ◆ develop an authentic youth-adult partnership
- ◆ employ strategies to overcome challenges and resource constraints
- ◆ coordinate events or activities to gather data and insights about the issue and to map and analyze resources
- ◆ design or select tools to track progress and outcomes

- ◆ establish formalized institutional partnerships and mechanisms for sharing information and making decisions

In later phases of the initiative, the role of the steering group will shift to encompass a host of other tasks such as exploring ways to share facilities, equipment, and other resources; expanding opportunities for community service, internships, jobs, recreation, and enrichment; developing pools of nonprofessional volunteers and professional pro bono assistance; making recommendations about priorities for use of resources; raising funds and pursuing grants; and more.

*Partnerships are more than positive personal connections; they are stable, synergistic, working relationships with a purpose.*

Once the steering group is formed, the next step is to establish an effective partnership. Partnerships are more than positive personal connections; they are stable, synergistic, working relationships with a purpose. This requires clear roles, responsibilities, and mechanisms for performing tasks, solving problems, and mediating conflict. As a youth-adult partnership, youth are treated as partners. They have a meaningful role and have a say in steering the processes and outcomes. Please see the Resources below on building effective partnerships. The community example at the end of this section provides good information about the array of roles needed within the steering committee.

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## Resources:

### Partnership Assessment Checklist

Strengthening Partnerships - Community School Assessment Checklist (2000):

<http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/csassessment.pdf>

### Youth-Adult Partnerships Guide

Youth-Adult Partnerships in Public Action (2008, The Forum for Youth Investment): <http://forumfyi.org/files/YouthAdultPartnerships.pdf>

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## TOOL B:

*Defining goals  
(in Appendix)*

## Step 3: Define goals and timeline

In general, the goals of a YASC initiative to address youth homelessness are to enhance access to services by youth, improve identification of youth experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity, coordinate resources, and increase the effectiveness of assisting youth in exiting homelessness. Other goals may include: decreasing school drop-outs, reducing chronic absenteeism,



and improving school connectedness and academic performance among students.

**TOOL C:**  
*Developing a  
timeline and  
work plan  
(in Appendix)*

Establish a timeline that details the mechanisms and milestones to address key phases, tasks, and processes for systemic change. The timeline should include infrastructure and operational mechanisms for:<sup>30</sup>

1. Creating readiness and motivation for change:

- ◆ Build interest in YASC Initiative
- ◆ Introduce idea to relevant groups of stakeholders (youth, school, community, etc)
- ◆ Establish commitment to collaborative effort
- ◆ Identify leaders to participate in different levels of the initiative (steering committee, work groups, etc)

2. Plan and initial implementation:

- ◆ Formulate plans for starting up and phasing into a large-scale initiative
- ◆ Establish and train working groups
- ◆ Create mechanisms for effective communication, information sharing, and problem solving to ensure transparency and build collaboration
- ◆ Establish methods to collect pertinent data on resources, barriers to accessing resources, and gaps
- ◆ Establish a system for quality improvement

3. Formalizing partnerships and maintaining motivation:

- ◆ Formalize partnerships for data sharing and mechanisms for decision-making
- ◆ Develop creative strategies to maintain momentum (ongoing advocacy, expand support for partnership, create capacity building and training opportunities to cultivate and support leaders, celebrate “wins” at every stage to keep people motivated)
- ◆ Ongoing evaluations and documentation to demonstrate results
- ◆ Effective communication to share results and demonstrate progress

## Step 4: Develop work groups and youth voice

There are many tasks for a steering group to carry out. To reduce the burden on the steering committee and to cultivate more leaders in the initiative, form

work groups to carry out different roles and activities. A representative from the steering committee may be involved in a work group to facilitate effective communication and ensure alignment of activities. If this is not possible, develop mechanisms for effective collaboration and communication between groups.

*A critical driver  
of a YASC  
initiative is  
authentic  
youth-adult  
partnerships.*

A critical driver of a YASC initiative is authentic youth-adult partnerships. A youth-adult partnership means that young people share power with adults in the design, implementation and evaluation of the programs that serve them. Adults may initiate the involvement in the initiative, but youth are encouraged to take on meaningful leadership roles and to perform actions independently with the support from adult partners. Establishing a work group of youth as part of the leadership structure of the initiative is important for developing youth voice and an authentic youth-adult partnership. Youth voice refers to the distinct ideas, opinions, attitudes, knowledge and actions of diverse groups of young people as a *collective body*.

So, how does an initiative facilitate youth voice? It is critical that youth be involved in the steering group; however, this alone does not represent youth voice. Similarly, a youth work group alone does not represent youth voice, although one of the goals of the youth work group may be to facilitate youth voice in the initiative. Youth voice involves using processes to engage and learn from a large number of youth with different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) is an evidence-based practice that supports youth engagement by making youth and adult community members equal partners in a collaborative research process. Facilitated and trained by researchers, young people and adult partners learn how to carry out community-engaged research to solve local issues that are important to them. Youth play an active role in carrying out all aspects of the research. The approach helps equalize youth-adult power imbalances and can contribute to building trust and collaboration between youth and adults. The YPAR process will be discussed in more detail in the next section (DISCOVER).

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## Resources:

Youth Engagement: Empowering Youth Voices to Improve Services, Programs, and Policy (2013). CYCC Network. Available at: <http://www.cyccnetwork.org/files/YouthEngagementSummary.pdf>

Full CYCC report available at [www.cyccnetwork.org/engagement](http://www.cyccnetwork.org/engagement)

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## Community Example

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The first YASC initiative in Connecticut began in Torrington in January 2015. The Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness and The Institute for Community Research introduced the concept of the initiative to the Superintendent of Torrington schools, a high school assistant principal, and the local McKinney-Vento Liaison.

Vital to the initiative was commitment from school administration, and Torrington High School (THS) was supportive and enthusiastic about the idea. THS mentioned several reasons for their interest: 1) a recognized need for a program in the school that connected unstably housed students to supports and resources in the broader community; 2) the potential for high impact on student awareness and engagement in issues related to youth homelessness; 3) a positive experience in the past with a participatory action research class offered to students at the high school; and 4) strong alignment of the program with existing curriculum and a desire to use action research as an integrating framework/curriculum for students in a 4-year high school graduation project (involving planning, research, and action/advocacy).

The steering committee consisted of five individuals: the Torrington McKinney-Vento liaison from the Education Connection, an assistant principal from Torrington High School, a professional researcher with expertise in YPAR and participatory asset mapping from the Institute for Community Research, and a representative from the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness. The group met once weekly over the duration of the six month launch period. The project was funded by the Connecticut Department of Education to support the development and pilot testing of such an initiative in CT as an effective means to building the capacity of communities and schools to improve identification of unaccompanied runaway and homeless youth and referral to resources and help.

Key roles and tasks were defined for each steering group member. These included:

School representative (THS assistant principal):

- Introduce concept of initiative to school and students
- Identify and recruit students to be involved in the steering group and in a youth work group

- Access school resources to support youth involvement (e.g., school credits, meeting space, transportation, involving staff to remove barriers to participation and to offer support for participating students)
- Regularly communicate with the Board of Education, school staff and student body about initiative progress and vision
- Recruit staff and students to participate in community mapping event

#### Community representative (McKinney-Vento Liaison):

- Build readiness for youth-adult partnership and school-community collaboration among youth-serving organizations in Torrington
- Recruit specific youth-serving organizations in community to participate in the initiative
- Regularly communicate with youth-serving organizations to keep them engaged and aware of progress and the need and timing for their involvement
- Recruit stakeholders to participate in community mapping event
- Identify and secure community location for the mapping event
- Provide training on the McKinney-Vento law and youth homelessness in Torrington at the community event

#### Researcher/YPAR expert (ICR):

- Facilitate the building of infrastructure for youth-adult partnerships in the steering group and in the larger collaborative
- Facilitate planning for the community asset mapping process
- Facilitate youth work group to plan for asset mapping, develop activities, recruit youth, and train youth as facilitators of the community mapping process with adult partners
- Coordinate the mapping event with youth and adult stakeholders
- Write a report that shares findings from event
- Create a Google map of resources for high school-aged youth in Torrington

#### Homelessness expert (CCEH):

- Manage registration for mapping event
- Recruit and offer youth legal advocacy consultation by Center for Children's Advocacy to provide training to youth on youth rights at the community event
- Assist with co-facilitation and coordination at community event



# 5 | DISCOVER

*Ongoing discovery is important to managing the change process.*

This section provides examples of participatory research methods that can be used by a YASC initiatives to build knowledge, engage stakeholders, and inform collective action.

Action driven by data and discovery is one of the core components of a successful YASC initiative. Discovery should occur throughout the initiative to inform solutions and to manage the change process. Create a process for ongoing data collection and analysis to evaluate progress and track outcomes.

At the start of the initiative, the purpose of discovery may be to:

- ◆ determine the scope of youth homelessness at a local level
- ◆ identify and map the array of assets that are available for youth in the community
- ◆ understand key barriers for youth in accessing assets
- ◆ reveal the gaps in meeting the needs of unstably housed youth
- ◆ bring to light ways to improve resources for unstably housed youth that are creative and driven by the community

## Approaches to Discovery

Selecting the right research approach and methods are important to achieving the many goals of the initiative that go beyond a basic need for more knowledge. Integral to discovery is both a process for gaining knowledge while simultaneously engaging communities, building partnerships, and aligning efforts. The knowledge-building process involves coming to a new understanding about an issue through interactive questioning, dialogue, research, and continuous improvement of ideas. Engaging community partners in the research process is important in creating readiness and enhancing the climate/culture for change. Because youth homelessness is a socially sensitive topic, using a YPAR approach

to discovery can facilitate solutions that are culturally-sensitive, relevant and effective because youth are directly involved as partners in the process.

## Youth Participatory Action Research

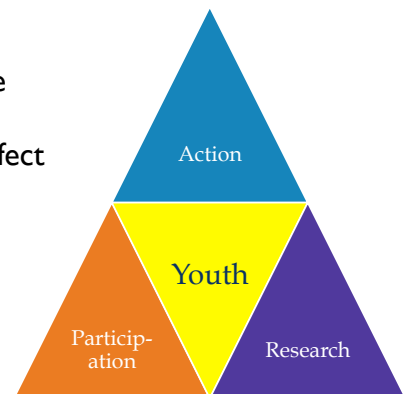
Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) is a collective approach to research that builds on youth experience and involves youth and adults as partners in an action research process to address real life problems that are important to youth and the community at large. The action research process builds the capacity of youth and adults to become authentic partners in carrying out all aspects of research. Young people and adult partners can learn how to carry out community-engaged research to better understand how to improve local system response to youth homelessness.

Earlier sections of the Guidebook highlighted the importance and relevance of using YPAR in a YASC initiative. This section will describe the core components of YPAR and the steps involved in the process.

### Core Features

#### ◆ Youth are valued as experts.

Unlike traditional research where the expertise comes from researchers, in YPAR, youth are recognized as experts on issues that directly affect their lives. YPAR with its youth focus is rooted in positive youth development. Both YPAR and positive youth development focus on building on the strengths and experiences of youth, and engaging youth as partners in decision making around issues that directly affect them.



#### ◆ Youth and adults participate as equals.

YPAR strives for youth-initiated, shared decisions with adults. The *youth-driven* approach is based on the premise that young people become active participants and learners when they hold the lead. Youth and community members become equal partners in research, rather than as subjects or participants of research.

The goal of this approach is to empower and promote youth-adult partnership, develop leadership, provide opportunities for youth voice, and opportunities for communities to participate in all stages of the

research, starting from identifying the issue for action research to collecting data, conducting analyses and implementing action that is informed by the research.

Another feature of YPAR is that it is not just about individual learning or individual participation. YPAR is also focused on promoting collective empowerment through teamwork and mutual learning.

#### ◆ Use of data to drive change.

YPAR uses rigorous social science research to understand what causes an issue and how to change it. In YPAR, any research method can be used as long as it is appropriate to achieve the aims of discovery. However, since a focus of YPAR is to build allies and partners, some research methods are more interactive, and thus are appropriate in facilitating this collaborative process while simultaneously gathering evidence. An explicit goal of YPAR is to generate knowledge that is “actionable,” which means that it has direct impact for social change. A feature of YPAR is that there is an explicit link between action and research. Research informs action, and action informs research. The idea is to learn about how to change an issue through studying how things change as a result of intentional actions.

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## Community Example

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In Oregon, YPAR is being used as a method to embed positive youth development and authentic youth engagement in public health. This approach was launched in 2005 as an effort to bring youth voice and leadership into the state planning process around the issue of teen pregnancy. Elizabeth Thorne, Adolescent Health Policy and Assessment Specialist at the Oregon Health Authority, wrote:

*“First crafted in 1994, the Oregon Teen Pregnancy Prevention Plan is an example of a statewide strategy for young people that was not always crafted with young people. While student focus groups had been a way to collect data on youth, youth remained passive information givers rather than active information gatherers. Youth PAR emerged as a method to bring youth into the strategic planning process, while still operating within an evidence-driven public health framework.”*

In 2014-15, Oregon Health Authority partnered with the Institute for Community Research to develop a Youth Participatory Action Research

Curriculum Adapted for Oregon, and evaluate its effectiveness for seven youth-serving organizations across Oregon. Data from this evaluation suggest that YPAR is a promising approach that can and should be adapted and utilized in multiple youth serving sites and settings across the state. To view the evaluation report, go to: <https://public.health.oregon.gov/HealthyPeopleFamilies/Youth/Pages/youth.aspx>

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## YPAR Steps

The YPAR process follows similar steps to most research projects, including issue identification, planning, data collection, data analysis, and dissemination. However, since participatory action research is a team-based approach that involves community members who have no (or limited) experience with research, there are unique steps and activities in YPAR to build the capacity of a team to carry out research that



is both rigorous and directly applicable to solving a community problem. For example, specific training activities in YPAR build a cohesive group, equalize group dynamics through shared decision-making, and create a working environment in which youth and adults are learning from each other and helping each other to develop skills. A combination of research methods are selected not only because it captures new knowledge about an issue, but because the methods also help to achieve other aims. With this in mind, consider the following questions when selecting YPAR research methods:

- Do the research methods help to achieve the goals of the initiative? **(Purpose)**
- Are the research methods practical given local resources/constraints? **(Feasibility)**
- How much do the research methods engage key stakeholders in the knowledge-building process, and build community leadership and ownership over the process? **(Community Driven)**
- Do the research methods produce research products or results that are accessible and engage different audiences? **(Accessibility)**
- Do the research methods facilitate the successful uptake or application of evidence and research findings into policy and practice? **(Impact)**



Use Table 2 as a tool for selecting the appropriate research methods to achieve the goals of your YASC.

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## Community Example

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### Community-based Asset Mapping Workshop with Youth Voice

The YASC initiative in Torrington, Connecticut, hosted a “Community Conversations and Action Workshop” designed for youth, educators, and youth service providers to work together to examine youth homelessness and create a community plan for improving system coordination and access to local services.

The workshop was designed to:

1. Promote youth involvement as equal partners in systems change efforts in Torrington;
2. Educate youth, educators, and community youth-serving organizations around youth homelessness, teen legal rights, and resources that are available for youth in the community;
3. Build new youth-adult partnerships and community-school partnerships for improving coordination of services and system response to youth homelessness; and
4. Produce a useful community tool: a community map that locates resources, barriers and gaps in services available for unaccompanied homeless and unstably housed youth and an action plan for local system improvement.

The Community Conversations and Action Workshop was held on May 20, 2015, in a public space (Coe Memorial Park) in downtown Torrington. The high school offered the workshop as a field trip for high school students, and arranged a school bus to take students and school staff to and from the workshop. The event was designed as a 5-hour workshop with large and small group activities.

A total of 41 high school students participated in the workshop, with approximately a third of the students having experienced unstable housing or who had friends who had been unstably housed. Six representatives from community service organizations and four staff from the high school also participated. Community organizations included: Torrington Youth Service Bureau, Annie C Courtney Foundation, FISH shelter, Education Connection,



**Table 2. Approaches/Methods to Discovery**

<b>Approaches/ Methods</b>	<b>Uses</b>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
<b>Individual Interviews</b>	To understand individual's life experiences, views and opinions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Interactive; relationship-building</li><li>- Provides in-depth understanding of resources used by youth, barriers to access, and ways to improve access</li><li>- To understand meaning behind quantitative data</li><li>- Suitable for private or sensitive questions</li><li>- Elicits stories/narratives</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Time-consuming to conduct; requires a lot of staff time</li><li>- Quality depends on ability of interviewer</li><li>- Manual data entry / transcription is costly</li><li>- Small sample size increases bias if sample is not diverse</li></ul>
<b>Group Interviews</b>	To gather information and opinions from a group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Interactive; relationship-building</li><li>- To understand meaning behind quantitative data</li><li>- Suitable for building consensus and understanding the range of views</li><li>- Elicits stories/narratives</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Quality depends on ability of facilitator</li><li>- Outspoken individuals can "hijack" discussion</li><li>- Manual data entry / transcription is costly</li><li>- Small sample size - not a good representation of larger population</li></ul>
<b>Survey / Questionnaire</b>	To gather individual responses to questions that are essay or closed-ended multiple choice style	Can get a lot of information from a large number of people in short time with limited cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Need time and skill to develop a good survey</li><li>- Costs to entering data for paper surveys</li><li>- Data collection more impersonal; doesn't build relationships</li></ul>

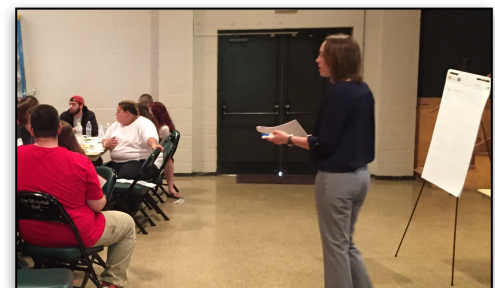
**Table 2. Approaches/Methods to Discovery (CONTINUED)**

<b>Methods</b>	<b>Uses</b>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Limitations</b>
<b>Geographic mapping / Spatial analysis</b>	To visualize, question, analyze and interpret spatial data to understand relationships, patterns and trends.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Useful in understanding the role of geography and opportunity</li><li>- Visuals are compelling and engage communities and policymakers</li><li>- Can identify gaps or location barriers</li><li>- Helps to design environmental strategies</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Limited explanation to why there is more or less of the activity in the geographic area</li><li>- Sensitive information is difficult to obtain accurately</li></ul>
<b>Visual documentation</b>	To capture individual stories/experiences or community narratives/assets by photographs and videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Photos can be used to tell different stories</li><li>- Youth enjoy taking photographs</li><li>- Elicits critical thinking, analysis, lived experience</li><li>- Visuals are compelling and engage communities and policymakers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Represents only one moment in time</li><li>- Photos need interpretation</li><li>- Cost of digital cameras and of displaying photos and editing videos</li></ul>
<b>Youth asset mapping</b>	To learn what youth identify as assets in the community, map their locations, and collect information about resources and community narratives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Can easily integrate geographic mapping, visual documentation and interviews</li><li>- Facilitates youth voice</li><li>- Youth enjoy active and interactive process</li><li>- Can build relationships between youth and adults in community</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Need collaboration with other community members to adequately inventory up-to-date community resources</li></ul>

**Table 2. Approaches/Methods to Discovery (CONTINUED)**

Methods	Uses	Advantages	Limitations
Community-based asset mapping event with youth voice	To identify community assets based on the experience of diverse stakeholders, and engage stakeholders in community planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engages diverse stakeholders in data collection and analysis</li> <li>- Builds relationships between stakeholders</li> <li>- Facilitates youth voice and youth-adult partnerships</li> <li>- Youth and adults enjoy interactive process</li> <li>- An <i>asset-building</i> strategy that strengthens the effectiveness of people and organizations to find solutions to problems within the community</li> <li>- Integrates data collection and analysis</li> <li>- Can use data immediately to discuss and build consensus for community planning</li> <li>- Data collection in one event</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Challenging to get key stakeholders in the room at one event</li> <li>- Quality of map and ownership of plan depends on who is able to come to event</li> <li>- Time-consuming to coordinate</li> <li>- Need trained facilitators</li> <li>- Need 8-10 staff or volunteers to facilitate/assist at event</li> </ul>

3. Developing an action plan to remove barriers and improve system response. (This step is described in the BUILD section.)
4. We included a 30-minute “working lunch” for youth and adults to receive youth rights training by the Center for Children’s Advocacy.



## Workshop Documentation

The outcomes of this workshop were documented through the following data collection methods:

- Observations and notes collected during the workshop
- Group and individual interviews post workshop
- Online survey emailed to participants after the workshop

**Workshop data (n=51).** Data collected during the workshop included:

- Assets used by youth in Torrington (number, type, location)
- Barriers that youth experience while trying to access assets
- Priority areas of concern
- Action plan that included strategies to address barriers and improve system
- List of participants' contact information and areas of interest in continuing the work

(See Appendix for examples of workshop data in the form of an Asset Chart and Barriers.)

**Interviews (n=11).** We conducted three follow-up interviews with facilitators and participants after the workshop: a group interview with the steering group and workshop facilitators (n=8), a group interview with two community service providers, and an individual interview with the school nurse. We used semi-structured open-ended interviews to explore the following areas: a) participants' expectations of the workshop, b) changes in attitudes toward working in partnership with youth to improve access to services for youth, c) changes in knowledge about assets and barriers for youth, and d) changes in motivation to be part of taking action to address youth homelessness in Torrington (see Appendix for Interview Guide.)

**Online Survey (n=14).** The online survey consisted of 31 questions, focusing on participants' experiences at the workshop, their perception of the usefulness of the workshop, and their motivation and attitudes toward sharing information and continuing the work. Survey questions were primarily 5-point Likert response scaling, with a few open-ended questions. We sent an email to workshop participants that included a hyperlink to an online survey via SurveyMonkey. The online survey was administered online between June 2nd and 15th (see Appendix for



Online Survey Instrument). A total of 14 workshop participants completed the survey. Eight survey respondents were students (2 sophomores, 5 juniors and 1 senior). Two of the eight students had experienced housing instability, and seven students had known a teen that had experienced housing instability. Half of the students (4) reported that they rarely miss school, three students reported missing school at least a day each month, and one student reported missing at least a day each week. Two school staff and 4 community providers also completed the survey.

**Limitations.** Although we received some feedback from students via the online survey and school staff reported what they had heard from students regarding their experience at the workshop, we were unable to collect data from a large number of student participants due to the timing of the workshop which occurred at the end of the school year. Therefore, the survey sample size was low and we were unable to conduct interviews with students over the summer holiday.

## Workshop Outcomes

Based on data from the survey and interviews, the majority of participants rated the overall experience at the workshop as “excellent” and felt that the workshop was “very” to “extremely” valuable.

### ◆ Increased knowledge of youth homelessness, youth rights, and available resources

Most students (5 of 7) who completed the survey reported that they learned a lot about assets that were available in Torrington, and a lot about the different types of barriers for youth to access services and resources. A high school student (junior) wrote: “It raised a lot of awareness for the teens and even the adults.” Two school staff expressed in a follow-up interview that they had seen immediate action by students to share information and help other youth connect to services within hours of participating in the workshop. Both school staff described a student who referred a peer to a guidance counselor because he had recently become homeless. They commented:

*Within hours of us returning to school, we had a student who had been at the session refer a student to [school guidance counselor] because he had recently become homeless. So within an hour of the whole process we were getting kids who were referring other kids, who were saying “You don’t need to be afraid, go talk to [school guidance counselor]! We can help you.*

*[The workshop] really resonated with this student that he was able to help [a friend] who didn’t realize that there was this help out there for him. [His friend’s] family just threw him out of the house and he had nowhere to go. The student had been to the workshop and he said [to his friend], ‘Come on, we are going to fix this.’ It was only a matter of a few days. It was amazing.*

Community service providers and school staff also reported that they learned a lot from the workshop. In the survey, a service provider stated that the training in the workshop helped them “to better articulate legal rights to families.”

One of the community providers commented in a follow-up interview that:

*Overall the feedback I got from Youth Service Bureau and the shelters was that they were really happy to be there and they really got a lot out of it. They want to be part of the bigger picture. We had a great group discussion ... Everyone, even the school nurse, loved being a part of it. School nurses are right into this work because they know the kids so closely.*

Another adult (school staff) expressed:

*I learned a lot about the resources that were in town... I didn’t know about the other resources for the kids. And places that they could go, [and] the fact that [youth] were so aware of not being able to seek out some of the resources in town... So to learn this from the kids was really impressive.*

All participants (except one) who completed the survey reported that they had shared information from the workshop with at least one other person. When asked how many youth they had shared information with, participants reported a total of 28 youth with whom they had shared information about their legal rights, or about services, resources, or

persons in the school or community who could help them get resources. They reported that most of these youth were living in unstable housing situations.

#### ◆ Building youth voice and youth-adult partnership in local system change efforts

The majority of participants (12 of 14) who completed the survey reported that they felt “very” to “extremely” energized about getting involved in future efforts to continue this work. Overall, participants believed strongly that they (in partnership with other youth and adults in Torrington) could make a difference in improving access to services for youth who are living in unstable housing situations.

A community service provider wrote that the workshop “involved youth in a way they are not usually asked to be.” A high school staff member described her surprise at the collaborative format of the workshop:

*Actually, I thought initially it would be more somebody explaining to the students involved in the workshop, not realizing how directly involved the students would be and how much they had to offer. So that was a pleasant surprise. I was thinking that the students were going and people would be talking kind of at them and not really with them and really involving them in the workshop. It was really interesting.*

Another school staff member expressed:

*[Many of these] kids never get asked for their opinion and they don't get included in these kinds of things... I think it's probably one of the few times that they were treated as equals in a group that included adults. That their voice was equally important, so I think that's good for our kids...and I'm hoping it's going to be good for our community as well; that they bring that same enthusiasm into turning these things into reality.*

Adults also valued the collaborative format of the workshop. Several community service providers wrote in response to an open-ended question on the survey:

*This workshop was valuable because providers and teenagers were able to talk about issues facing our youth. We were able to hear from the teens*

*what they felt they needed from the community partners. I loved hearing the resources/assets that the kids knew about and wanted to learn about.*

A representative from the high school expressed similar feelings in an interview:

*I was really impressed with the maturity, with the knowledge, with the cooperation of the groups. Some of the kids that they brought were not the most stellar students, a lot of them have behavioral issues or socio-emotional issues. Some of them were the ones who stood up and led the group and expressed their ideas and I was really impressed. I was impressed with the group that came and sat with some of the adults and to hear what they had to say and how well-versed they were in some of these things and how they weren't afraid to express their feelings and talk about that they need more cooperation with the board of education and that they need more cooperation with the administration of the school. And they were saying 'they don't listen to us and we need people who will represent us' and that they really... I thought that was really mature of them to say that and not be afraid to say that.*

An adult partner expressed surprise to find so much commonality in goals between youth and adults. She expressed:

*It was amazing to me that the youth and adults had a lot of the same goals. When we put ours up there, we said oh yeah, they said the same things. And then to find that some of the things they said, as an adult I probably should have thought of that...*

#### ◆ **Building new connections/partnerships between the school and broader community**

One of the goals of the workshop was to build stronger connections between the school and community resources. Recognizing that building collaborative systems and partnerships takes time (more than one workshop), there was some indication after the workshop that participants had already started talking about making those connections stronger. One school staff member commented in an interview:

*I shared a lot with my co-workers... Were you aware of that this, this and this is available and that the kids can do this? Did you know that these kids are really concerned about x, y, and z? We had a pretty good dialogue about what was out there. And reinforcing that we should be connecting*

*more with the outside resources so that we, too, can be more of a resource and direct students to the right place and the right person. We do that within our own little cocoon of the school but [it was good] to know that there are other resources that we can direct them to.*

#### ◆ **Developing new connections between groups of teens at school**

An observation made by both teens and school staff was that the workshop process helped to develop new connections between teens from different social groups who normally did not interact with one another or work together as a team on an issue. A student and school staff member commented:

*It pulled all the high school students together as a team to better our beaten community! (High school student)*

*They were a mixed group. Some of them were our ‘frequent flyers’ as far as discipline, and some of them were our ‘heavy hitters’ as far as academics... The frequent flyers are the ones I see in my office all the time. I know their moms and dads by their first names... Some of those kids would have never, ever spoken to one another in the course of a school day. Ever. They wouldn’t even have been in the same spaces in the building because of the classes they take. So it really helped us from the point of view of getting them to understand each other better, which was great. (School staff)*

#### ◆ **Creating a local resource map and information regarding resources for youth**

During the workshop, 155 distinct assets were identified as available to youth in Torrington, with half of the assets located in the high school. Participants expressed:

*I was surprised by how many resources there are for youth in Torrington. (High school student)*

*The thing that really stood out when pulling the list together was that the two very basic foundation needs, shelter and food, were the least named resources. (Workshop facilitator)*

*I thought it was interesting because some of the assets that were noted by the youth were some of those services [that had] people representing those organizations [at the workshop]. Like Susan B Anthony was*

*identified by youth as an asset. The woman from Susan B Anthony was there, so I think they were like ‘wow, the kids are seeing us!’ FISH was [named] as a resource and the shelter outreach worker was there, so I think that was very eye opening for the providers. I think that pumped them up to say ‘we want to help.’ So I think it was very empowering for the adults who perhaps learned a little more that day. (Service provider)*

◆ **Improving understanding of barriers for youth to access available resources**

Rich discussions during the workshop revealed nine major barriers for youth to access resources. Barriers included:

1. Lack of communication about resources available to youth;
2. Transportation barriers to accessing resources;
3. Lack of health insurance;
4. Criteria/documentation requirements (e.g., some services are only court-ordered/accessed by getting into trouble; require parental permission; need application to see guidance counselor; age requirements);
5. Restrictive/limited hours of operation;
6. Financial costs (e.g., membership fees, food, library books, medical);
7. Discrimination (or fear of discrimination) based on race, language barriers, citizenship/undocumented status, gender/sexual identity, and mental health status;
8. Personal pride, fear and social stigma (e.g., denial of issue, norm to “keep it inside the family,” fear of involving DCF and consequences to family, abusive relationships at home, mandatory reporting, don’t want law enforcement involved); and
9. Parental barriers (absent, unsupportive, manipulative—do not want youth to tell others)

In reaction to the list of barriers, a student commented: “It feels like you need resources to get to the resources.”

### ◆ Building consensus on an action plan to improve local community access to resources

Workshop participants identified four priority areas of concern, and developed an action plan for each. The greatest priority for action was to expand free or very low cost programs for youth in order to address financial barriers. The second priority was to enhance communications to youth about what resources are available to teens. The other areas of priority were to focus on expanding and improving access to transportation for low-income youth (offering free transportation for youth or based on income level, adding additional routes, stops, and times), and to develop youth-led campaigns to increase youth voice and reduce stigma around homelessness and accessing services for housing or mental health, among others. For more details, the Torrington Action Plan is included in the Appendix.

Only weeks after the workshop, several participants reported that they had already started taking steps toward implementing recommendations from the workshop. For example, a school staff member wrote that she was developing a presentation to the Board of Education to look into a school-based health clinic in Torrington. Another school staff member commented that students were enthusiastic about starting to work on the action steps. She expressed:

*I still see kids in the hallway and they are like ‘What’s happening with this?’ And I’m like, ‘We’re getting ready to look at what the next steps should be.’ And they remain excited about it.”*

Typical of most surveys, our survey included a final question that asked, “Do you have any other comments, questions, or concerns?” Often, final open-ended questions such as these are left unanswered by participants. However, one of the youth participants (senior, housing unstable) responded:

*Not at the moment. Well, when will the next workshop be?*

Although this is only one participant, we felt that the statement was indicative of the overall enthusiasm shown by youth to be included in efforts to address youth homelessness in Torrington.



## Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, the community mapping workshop met YASC initiative milestones and resulted in numerous positive outcomes. Based on the lessons learned during the process of implementing the workshop, the steering group recommends the following to reduce barriers for youth participation in the workshop and to enhance the workshop for future communities:

- ◆ Identify school staff that are well-connected and have supportive relationships with diverse youth in the school, and involve them early on in the process to be part of the steering group. Examples often mentioned by youth are “cool teachers,” teachers who advise special clubs, guidance counselors, coaches, and school nurses. They have the established connections with youth that can remove some of the barriers to recruiting youth to the program, particularly unstably housed youth who may have few adults that they trust. These adults can also provide important support to youth throughout the initiative.
- ◆ The PLAN phase is critical to the success of the initiative, and therefore it is important not to rush through this phase. It requires regular meetings by the steering group to develop adult-youth, school-community infrastructure that will support youth, meet the goals of the initiative, and that will attract youth (particularly youth who have had experience with housing insecurity or homelessness) to participate in the initiative.
- ◆ If barriers exist that cannot be overcome in recruiting youth who have had experience with homelessness/housing instability to the steering group or to participate in the initiative through YPAR, the Community Conversations and Action Workshop can be used as a vehicle to reaching youth, building trust, and stirring interest. We recommend youth facilitators at the workshop.
- ◆ The timing of the PLAN phase is important, and is best to occur before the start of the fall school semester in order to maintain the necessary continuity of youth-adult collaboration to work on the issue.
- ◆ We recommend that fall semester involve the community-engaged “research” phase and spring semester involve the community-engaged “action” phase of the process. If the delay is too long before moving into the “action” phase, this can result in a significant loss of motivation and momentum toward systems change.

The steering group identified the following workshop components as important to producing positive outcomes:

- ◆ Offer food at the workshop. Food is a great incentive to get teens to an event. Also, active brains need food and the activities in the workshop require active participation by everyone.
- ◆ Identify and recruit diverse youth to the workshop. School staff sought to reduce stigma associated with youth homelessness by involving the student body and community as a whole to discuss and tackle the issue. Including diverse groups of youth had another purpose, which was to begin to plant the seeds for a school-based campaign to raise awareness about youth homelessness.
- ◆ Enlist school social workers, guidance counselors and psychologists to recruit youth who have had experience with homelessness/housing instability (UHY) to the workshop. Participation of UHY in the workshop is critical to understanding informal assets that UHY are using to deal with their housing situations, the barriers that UHY may encounter when trying to access services, and to creating solutions that are appropriate and effective for youth.
- ◆ Involve key adult stakeholders in the workshop. Ownership and commitment to systems change stems from participating in analysis of the problem and designing solutions. Involve community stakeholders who are part of the system that needs improvement. Without their participation, effective change will not be realized. In addition, invite adult stakeholders who would be open to working with teens in a collaborative way.
- ◆ Have a higher ratio of youth participants to adult participants. More youth in the room in combination with adults who are comfortable with youth-led activities can open opportunities for increasing youth voice and participation in the workshop.
- ◆ A school-community partnership hosting the workshop encourages participation by school staff and broader community stakeholders.
- ◆ Hold the workshop in a community space that is accessible, youth-friendly, and symbolic of civic engagement. A field trip outside of school is an incentive for broader youth participation, and holding the workshop in a space that is civic-centered stimulates community dialogue and collaboration.

- ◆ Train youth to facilitate or co-facilitate the small group activities. Youth relate to other youth. Youth facilitators can build trust and promote honesty and dialogue with peers in unique ways. Youth facilitators also serve as role models for the value of youth leadership and voice in community efforts to address the issue of youth homelessness.
- ◆ Begin with youth-only and adult-only small groups when discussing assets and barriers. We found this particularly important for the following reasons: a) the asset identification activity is the first small group activity during the workshop, and so having youth-only groups allows youth to get comfortable working with other youth in a group format before adding the complex social dynamics of a mixed youth-adult group; b) youth-only and adult-only groups during the asset mapping activity allowed for friendly competition between youth and adults in identifying assets; c) documenting assets named by youth and adult groups separately can offer insights to participants about the commonalities and differences in perceptions between youth and adults, reinforcing the value of working together to address youth homelessness; and d) separate groups allows for more honest responses and dialogue among youth when discussing barriers to accessing services when representatives from service organizations are not participating in the same conversation.
- ◆ When prioritizing and strategizing for action, use mixed youth-adult small groups. One of the goals of the workshop was to promote youth-adult partnerships in local systems change efforts, and so finding ways for youth and adults to work together on identifying solutions is important in laying the foundation for this partnership.

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## Resources:

### Examples of Youth Asset Maps

Torrington Asset Map: [https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?usp=sharing\\_eid&mid=zObZkPmWe38Q.k9qYO\\_dXtm2g](https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?usp=sharing_eid&mid=zObZkPmWe38Q.k9qYO_dXtm2g)

Fairfield County Asset Map: [http://cceh.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Fairfield-County-Youth-Resources-and-Assets\\_CCEH-2015.pdf](http://cceh.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Fairfield-County-Youth-Resources-and-Assets_CCEH-2015.pdf)

New Haven Asset Map: <http://www.newhavenyouthmap.org/CommunityMap/>

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## More Resources:

### Guides for Analyzing Different Types of Data:

ICR's YPAR Curriculum (2008) can be ordered from the Institute for Community Research at <http://www.icrweb.org/resources/>.

### See Appendix for Examples of Materials for Asset Mapping Workshop:

Facilitator Guide for a Community Asset Mapping workshop

Workshop promotional flyers

Workshop agenda

Asset Chart from workshop

Barrier Chart from workshop

Interview guide to assess workshop

Online survey instrument to assess workshop

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# 6 | BUILD

This section offers recommendations for building and maintaining a data-driven YASC initiative to improve the local response to youth homelessness.

## Use Data from Discovery Phase to Plan Collective Action

It is fairly common practice for researchers to interpret data and develop recommendations for communities. Although this approach may seem most practical and efficient, it limits opportunities for community engagement, facilitating ownership, and building consensus for collective action. The plan of action developed by the initiative will need to be driven by the community as a whole. Thus, taking a participatory approach to interpreting data and developing a data-driven community plan is recommended. In the case of the community-based asset mapping workshop with youth voice, this collaborative planning process is already built into the workshop. However, this collaborative planning process may need to be integrated in the data analysis phase if other research methods are selected.

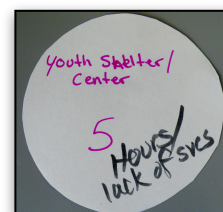
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## Community Example

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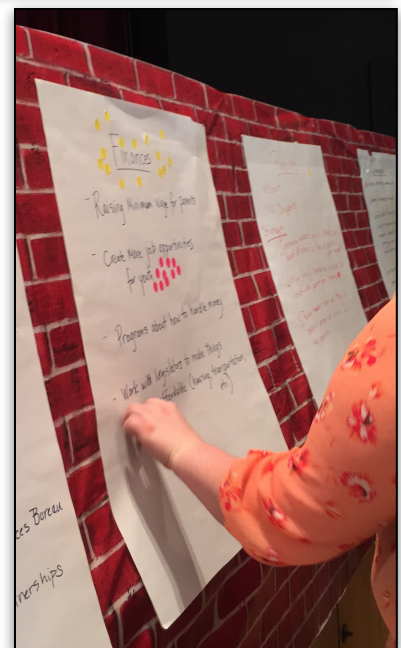
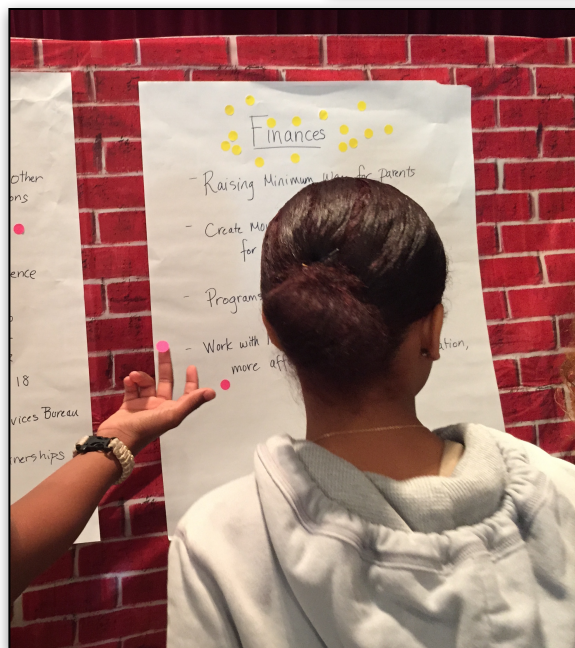
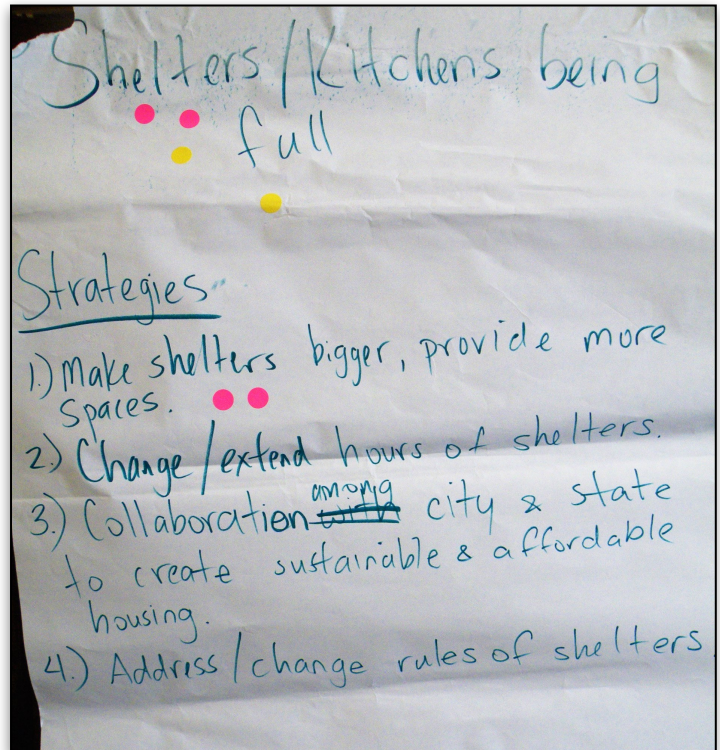
### Torrington Example: Planning for Action

The initiative in Torrington focused on planning for action during the last part of the 5-hour community-based asset mapping workshop. During the lunch break, facilitators compiled all information from small groups and created a poster for each priority area of concern that described a significant barrier for youth to access resources or help. Then, the facilitators listed all of the action strategies developed by participants. These strategies described



Priority Area of Concern

how the community could reduce barriers to access and improve resources for youth. The strategies were listed on each poster according to the priority areas of concern or barriers mentioned by workshop participants. After lunch, each poster was hung on the wall to create a “museum walk” so that workshop participants could walk around the space and vote on the areas and strategies that they believed should be given priority to address by the community. Each workshop participant was given six stickers: three to vote on areas of concern (barriers) and three to vote on the best strategies for addressing the barriers.



The stickers were counted and discussed, and individuals noted the areas that they were interested in focusing on as the initiative efforts continued. A follow-up meeting was scheduled to discuss the action plan and identify next steps. The Torrington Action Plan - Priority Areas is shown in Table 3.



## Building and Maintaining the Momentum

Research on social change initiatives identifies six key factors that are essential to building and maintaining community support for collective impact.<sup>43</sup> Incorporating these factors into community-based initiatives tends to lead to a greater chance of success.

### 1. Cultivate leadership and ownership

Early engagement in the initiative by community members will increase community ownership and support for the initiative. Engagement involves more than garnering support from community members. It means providing opportunities for community members to actively participate in decision-making. The initiative should cultivate community leaders, and support them to lead change.

### 2. Using a holistic approach to address complexity

Many factors can affect the success of efforts. A pitfall of initiatives is attempting to address a complex problem with a single intervention, or applying multiple interventions without understanding how they may interact—or counteract—with each other. It is not likely that a single intervention, pursued in isolation, will create lasting change. Solutions should address the complexity (the context and systems) in which communities will implement their solution. Alignment of efforts are critical to producing the outcomes that are desired.

### 3. Work with local institutions

Rather than shifting funds away from local institutions to start up new programs, consider encouraging local grantees and organizations to collaborate and adopt practices and programs aligned with the community plan driven by the YASC initiative. If leaders shift funds away from local institutions, it could harm the community more than help it.

### 4. Apply an equity lens

Initiatives must engage the right mix of people. Members of the community should not only be at the table, they should hold leadership positions as well. Achieving equitable participation requires creating a culture in which leaders



can collaborate effectively, value different perspectives and take immediate action to correct disparities of representation.

## 5. Build momentum by achieving quick wins

According to a study by Barnes & Schmitz, it often takes one to two years to develop an initiative that has substantial community engagement.<sup>43</sup> For this reason, it is challenging to achieve significant results within a grant cycle time frame. One solution to this problem is to build momentum by achieving quick wins, or early demonstrations of progress. Quick wins meet the needs of grant makers and public officials for continued support of the initiative. It also acts as fuel for the fire — early progress in meeting short-term goals can motivate individuals to stay engaged in the initiative.

## 6. Prepare community to adapt to change

Communication is of great importance to prepare community stakeholders for change during the initiative. Not all stakeholders may support every part of the change process, as some changes may affect funding decisions. Communication should:

- start early on, and occur throughout the initiative
- be transparent and disclose how decisions were made and by whom
- express empathy for the concerns of each constituency, and acknowledge the trade-offs and losses as well as expected gains by adopting a new strategy

**Table 3. Torrington Action Plan - Priority Areas to Address**

Priority	Barriers / Areas of Concern	Strategies
1	Financial barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More job opportunities for youth*****               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Put together network of employers to give youth more jobs opportunities and/or experience</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Work with legislators to make things more affordable (i.e., housing, transportation)*</li> <li>• Financial education programs for youth</li> <li>• Raise minimum wage</li> </ul>
2	Communication barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate about community resources using a variety of mediums with youth involvement (examples: TV in cafeteria, posters, flyers, social media, school website, announcements in school)*****</li> <li>• Youth-led campaign to say: “It’s ok to get help!”****</li> <li>• Increase interagency communication**</li> <li>• Increase youth voice and participation in Board of Education and city**</li> <li>• Create spaces and ways for people to connect on a regular basis*</li> </ul>
3	Transportation barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free transportation with school ID***</li> <li>• More sidewalks for safe walking**</li> <li>• Improve school to community transportation*</li> <li>• More bus stops, signs, and hours for buses*</li> <li>• Bikes: donate bikes/have free bikes</li> <li>• Carpooling organization</li> <li>• Youth ride services / reduced taxi rate</li> </ul>
	Social-personal barriers (ex: fear, stigma)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a club or campaign to support students with housing and other issues**</li> <li>• Have students speak about their experiences to others going through similar issues**</li> <li>• More youth-friendly spaces in Torrington (make the Teen Center a better place)*</li> <li>• Raise awareness of the CJR program (Wolf Pack)</li> <li>• Set up a peer-to-peer mentoring program</li> </ul>

Note: Four areas were indicated as priorities for action. The asterisks indicate number of individuals who rated the strategy as a higher priority.

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# Appendices

Tool A: Identifying key stakeholders for the steering group

Tool B: Defining goals

Tool C: Developing a timeline and work plan

Example: Facilitator guide for a community asset mapping workshop

Example: Workshop promotional flyers

Example: Workshop agenda

Example: Asset Chart from Torrington workshop

Example: Barrier Chart from Torrington workshop

Example: Interview guide to assess workshop

Example: Online survey instrument to assess workshop

## TOOL A: Stakeholder Identification & Analysis

Stakeholder Groups Organizations, institutions or groups that have a stake in the success of our initiative?	Stakeholder Representatives Individuals who have a stake in the success of the initiative and/or are connected to stakeholder groups	Level of Interest How much do our interests converge?			Influence/Power How much can they affect initiative outcomes positively or negatively?			Resources What can they contribute to initiative?	Involvement S = Steering group C = Consult P = Partner O = Other	What do we need to do to get their support?
		Low	Med	High	Low	Med	High			

Note: Key stakeholders with high level of interest and high influence to the initiative's success could provide the basis of the initiative's "coalition of support", and are potential partners in planning and implementation. Conversely, key stakeholders with high influence, but with low interest to the initiative's success could offer support by being consulted or informed.



## TOOL B: DEFINE GOALS

What are your short-term and long-term goals for this initiative? When do you expect to complete each of these goals? (This will help you develop a timeline with both short-term and long-term goals.)

### GOAL 1:

Circle One:

Short-term goal

Intermediate goal

Long-term goal

Estimated date of completion:

### GOAL 2:

Circle One:

Short-term goal

Intermediate goal

Long-term goal

Estimated date of completion:

### GOAL 3:

Circle One:

Short-term goal

Intermediate goal

Long-term goal

Estimated date of completion:

## TOOL B: DEFINE GOALS

### GOAL 4:

Circle One:

Short-term goal

Intermediate goal

Long-term goal

Estimated date of completion:

### GOAL 5:

Circle One:

Short-term goal

Intermediate goal

Long-term goal

Estimated date of completion:

### GOAL 6:

Circle One:

Short-term goal

Intermediate goal

Long-term goal

Estimated date of completion:

## TOOL C: DEVELOPING A TIMELINE AND PLAN

Instructions: Fill out the table for each goal of your initiative.

### GOAL #1:

<b>How</b> <i>(activities)</i>	<b>When</b> Start	<b>When</b> End	<b>What Is Needed</b> <i>(resources)</i>	<b>Who Is Needed</b> <i>(partners)</i>	<b>Role of Partner</b>

TOOL C: DEVELOPING A TIMELINE AND PLAN

GOAL #2:

How <i>(activities)</i>	When Start	When End	What Is Needed <i>(resources)</i>	Who Is Needed <i>(partners)</i>	Role of Partner

## TOOL C: DEVELOPING A TIMELINE AND PLAN

### GOAL #3:

<b>How</b> <i>(activities)</i>	<b>When</b> Start	<b>When</b> End	<b>What Is Needed</b> <i>(resources)</i>	<b>Who Is Needed</b> <i>(partners)</i>	<b>Role of Partner</b>

## TOOL C: DEVELOPING A TIMELINE AND PLAN

### GOAL #4:

<b>How</b> <i>(activities)</i>	<b>When</b> Start	<b>When</b> End	<b>What Is Needed</b> <i>(resources)</i>	<b>Who Is Needed</b> <i>(partners)</i>	<b>Role of Partner</b>

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			<p>As we go around the table, be ready to share with us:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. your name</li> <li>2. a place you like in Torrington, and</li> <li>3. one group agreement that you think is important for our group</li> </ol> <p>Facilitators go first, and model process.</p>		
<b>8:40 – 8:50 am      Asset Mapping Orientation      [Full group] – small groups should stay together</b>					
Time	Objectives	Activity	Key Talking Points	People/Roles	Preparation and Notes
<b>10 min</b> (8:40-8:50)	Define purpose of activity  Explain terms  Instructions for activity and competition	Instruction	<p><b>Purpose:</b>            What we are going to do now is to map out how kids get what they need in Torrington. This is called “asset mapping.”</p> <p><b>Terms:</b>  <b>What is an asset?</b> Assets are places, people, or organizations that teens can turn to for help when they need it. Assets are there when you need them AND they help kids develop into healthy, productive, successful adults. Examples: social workers in schools, hospitals, art galleries, and churches.</p> <p><b>What is mapping?</b> It’s a visual representation of where things are located. Example: signs in the shopping mall - shows all the shops and orients you to where you are at by “you are here.” We will be creating something like this, but about the things that youth should know about. SHOW EXAMPLE OF A MAP.</p> <p>We’re going to start with creating a chart that will then be used to create the map. SHOW CHART.</p>	Facilitator:	PPT, laptop, projector



			<p><b>Instructions for activity:</b> Today we are going to list the assets that are here in Torrington that high school aged kids can turn to when they need help.</p> <p><b>Explain Asset Chart:</b> Let's look at the blank handout. [Describe asset categories (on left), ask for examples from participants.]</p> <p>Describe School and Community areas (on top). We want to know what kinds of things are available in the school and outside of the school in the community.</p> <p><b>Explain group goals, roles, and incentives:</b></p> <p>"We are looking for a minimum of two really good ideas in each category and we ONLY have 15 minutes to do it."</p> <p>When the group agrees to add an idea to the map:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A recorder will write on the group map</li> <li>• The person who came up with the idea will write it on a post-it note and then run over to the community map and stick it on that map.</li> <li>• And we'll keep going like this for 15 minutes. If we reach our goal of 2 good ideas per category, then we get a prize! Airheads or chocolates.</li> </ul> <p>At the end, we'll see a large community-wide map with every group's ideas on it.</p> <p>Are we ready? Any questions about what we'll be doing?</p> <p>Okay, go!</p>		
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8:50 – 9:05 am		Asset Mapping Activity		[Same small groups – youth/adults separate]	
Time	Objectives	Activity	Key Talking Points	People/Roles	Preparation and Notes
<b>15 min</b> (8:50-9:05)	Map assets for youth within Torrington	<b>Identifying Assets Activity</b> (15 min)	<p>1. Ask if everyone understood directions, and clarify, if needed.</p> <p>Cheat sheet for instructions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have 15 minutes</li> <li>To get a prize, we need to write 2 assets for each category (must be in Torrington and ones that help youth).</li> </ul> <p>2. Ask who will be the recorder, and write the asset on the chart.</p> <p>3. Use the chart structure to ask questions about things that are available in Torrington for youth in each category on asset chart.</p> <p>When the group adds an idea to the chart:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A recorder writes the asset on the chart</li> <li>The person who came up with the idea will write it on a post-it note and then run over to the community map and stick it on that map, and quickly come back to the group to continue the discussion.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Group facilitators:</u></p>     <p><u>Timekeeper:</u></p>     <p><u>Facilitators for Community Asset Map Chart:</u></p>	<p><u>Facilitators for Community Asset Map Chart:</u> Assist participants to put post-its in a category. Stack post-its with same idea on top of each other. Will report on thickness of post-its and difference between youth/adult responses (diff color post-its)</p>
<b>9:05 – 9:10 am      Wrap-up Asset Mapping Activity      [Full group] – small groups should stay together</b>					
<b>5 min</b> (9:05–9:10)	Wrap-up	Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask groups to raise hands if they had at least 2 ideas/assets for each category</li> <li>Hand out incentives</li> </ul>	<p><u>Facilitator:</u></p>   <p><u>Time keeper:</u></p>	Candies as incentives

9:10 – 9:15 am		Introduction to Barriers Activity		[Full group] – small groups should stay together	
<b>5 min</b> (9:10–9:15)	Introduction to next activity	Instruction	<p>We've done a great job of this. Look at all of the great things here in Torrington, but some kids are still not getting the help that they need and we have to find out why.</p> <p>INTRODUCE WALL.            "This is the wall; it represents the things that get in the way from kids getting the help they need. Our task is to build the Wall with all the reasons why. Each post-it note represents a brick. When we are done, we'll talk about the things we could do in Torrington to bust down the wall."</p> <p>We're going to continue working in our same groups, and we'll use a similar process by sticking post-it notes of our group ideas on the community wall.</p> <p>This activity is not about speed; its about reflection and using our knowledge and experience with services and resources to list out the main barriers that get in the way of kids using these resources or services.</p> <p>This is an important step because if we know what the wall is made up of, we can figure out how to tear it down. This is your chance to tell us what is wrong and how best to fix it together as a community.</p>		

[illegible]

			<p>Barriers should be concreted and specific enough that we can understand them on their own when they are on the wall (without context) and so that we can create strategies to address them. An example of a barrier that could be written should look something like this: “told that teen couldn’t stay at the shelter because she didn’t have identification.”</p> <p>Facilitate discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make sure everyone has a chance to speak, and that people are being respectful of others while they are speaking</li> <li>• echo what people say so that they know that you are listening and can confirm that you are understanding them</li> <li>• clarify and ask follow-up questions to get participants to think concretely</li> <li>• promote reflection and sharing</li> </ul> <p><i>After some discussion, probe if needed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Personal barriers (e.g, pride, trust, lack of knowledge)</i></li> <li>• <i>Community barriers (e.g, transportation]</i></li> <li>• <i>Organizational barriers (e.g., staff, hours of operation, required documentation)</i></li> <li>• <i>Cultural barriers (e.g., language, cultural norms like “keep it within the family”)</i></li> </ul> <p><u>Process:</u></p> <p>When a barrier is identified by the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Someone writes in on post-it note</li> <li>• Someone sticks post-it note on the Community Wall and then returns to the group.</li> <li>• Someone records ideas on group Wall.</li> </ul> <p><u>Last 5-min wrap-up:</u></p> <p>Start reviewing list to make sure nothing big is missing.</p>		<p>each cluster a descriptive name (theme)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report out on main themes (clusters of similar ideas) with a descriptor name of what the cluster represents.</li> </ul>
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9:30 – 10:00 am		Report Out on Community Map		[Full group]	
Time	Objectives	Activity	Key Talking Points	People/Roles	Preparation and Notes
<b>30 min</b> (9:30-10:00)	Review community map  Analyze and discuss	<b>Facilitators Report out</b>  <b>Full group reflection (full group)</b>	<p>Reporter 1 describes main assets on community asset map, noting observations about thickness of piles and differences between youth/adults. (5-min)</p> <p>Reporter 2 describes main areas/themes of barriers/challenges. (5-min)</p> <p>Group Facilitator (20-min): Participant observations</p> <p>Take a minute and write down one thing that surprised you or was not quite what you expected. We really want to know what your thoughts are on all of this information, so we will come back to hear what you have written.</p> <p>[Individuals report out]</p> <p><b>Assign groups for next activity:</b></p> <p>Transition to next activity: “Now we’re going to figure out where we should go from here now that we know what’s available to youth and things that might make it difficult for youth to get what they need.”</p> <p>We are going to form groups again, but this time you will be in a <b>new group</b>. Direct participants to table featuring the number listed on their name tags. <b>Groups: youth and adults mixed</b></p>		<b>Group facilitators:</b> During report out, create replica of Community Wall on a Group Wall poster-sized paper. Just handwrite the main themes on the group wall poster.

[illegible]

		<p>it down. Let's add another complication: Let's say that we don't have limited time and money to tear down the wall. And, let's say that the rental company charges per swing with the wrecking ball. So, our task is to figure out the best strategies so that we can tear down the wall within the fewest hits.</p> <p><b>3) Activity: Identify priority areas / concerns (15-min)</b></p> <p>If we could afford 3 swings with the wrecking ball, what 3 areas should we hit? The areas you choose are the ones you think are the biggest problems that need addressed right away, and would make it significantly easier for youth to get the help they need.</p> <p>Discuss top three areas until group consensus. Then, instruct youth to write the name of the barrier (theme) on the blank circle cutout and tape over the 3 areas on the wall that they want the wrecking ball to hit.</p> <p>Ask someone to record the three areas on the Handout that will be used to Report Out to the full group.</p> <p><b>4) Brainstorm strategies (15-min)</b></p> <p>Now that we know the places we need to target on the wall to tear it down, we need to figure out exactly how to hit it to make the greatest impact. To figure out strategies, let's look at what we have available in Torrington so that we can build on what already exists. CAN BUILD ON ASSETS TO TEAR DOWN WALL.</p> <p>If you look on the Community Asset Map, what is</p>		<p>Circle cutouts on light colored paper (will be written on). Circle cutouts would represent the damage to the wall where the wrecking ball hit it.</p>
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			<p>the biggest strength you see in the community? (Discuss and record on Handout) Follow-up Qs: How can this strength be used as a strategy to tear down the wall?</p> <p>What do you think is the biggest opportunity for people who may not be currently working together to start working together more? (Discuss and record on Handout) Follow-up Qs: How can new collaborations be used as part of a strategy to tear down the wall?</p> <p>Facilitate discussion about what things should be done to make it easier for youth to get what they need.</p> <p><b>Record strategies on flip chart paper.</b></p>		
<b>11:00 – 11:20 am</b> <b>Report Out on Strengths &amp; Needs</b> <b>[Full group]</b>					
Time	Objectives	Activity	Key Talking Points	People/Roles	Preparation and Notes
<b>25 min</b>  (11-11:25)	To develop three lists:  1. Priority issues to address; 2. Strengths; 3. Opp for collaboration	<b>Groups Report out</b>  <b>(full group)</b>	<p>Ask representative from each group to tape their circle cutouts to the Community Wall in the priority areas that they want to address.</p> <p>Then, each group has 2 minutes to report their findings to the larger group. Ask them to report:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Three priority areas to address.</li> <li>2. Biggest strength in community's response to youth needs;</li> <li>3. Biggest opportunity for collaboration and change (one of the strategies)</li> </ol>	<p><u>Facilitator:</u></p> <p>Recorder: Record on computer (do not project)</p> <p><u>Time keeper:</u> Alert the speaker when 3 minutes is up. Give 1 additional minute to wrap up if necessary.</p>	<p><b>Co-facilitators:</b> During this discussion or lunch, run around room and compile all flipchart papers from groups that list strategies. Write a new list of strategies that captures all the strategies (no redundancies) on flip chart paper. When done, post newly created papers on the wall in the front of the room.</p>

35 min (11:25-12)	working lunch  learn about legal rights for youth	<b>Lunch: legal rights pres.</b>	Invite participants to quickly grab their lunch. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask youth to stay in main room for legal rights training with Stacey.</li> <li>Ask adults to go to breakout room for legal rights presentation with Michelle.</li> </ul>		
12:00 – 12:50 pm Planning for Action [Full group]					
Time	Objectives	Activity	Key Talking Points	People/Roles	Preparation and Notes
50 min (12-12:50)	Develop plans for action for the top three priority issues.	<b>Planning for Action</b>  (full group)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give each person 3 yellow dot stickers and 3 red dot stickers.</li> <li><b>Instructions and individuals put stickers on Wall and strategies.</b> We are going to identify the three priority 3 concerns on the Wall that we want to tackle first as a community. Ask that each individual stick yellow stickers on three areas of concern on community Wall and then the red stickers on what they think are three best strategies to address the concerns. (5 min)</li> <li>After stickers are up, <b>report on priority areas of concern (Wall)</b>. If three areas of concern are unanimous by # of stickers, then do not discuss further. If ties, then discuss and vote again until consensus. (5 min)</li> <li>Then, <b>report on strategies</b>, point out those with highest number of stickers (5 min)</li> <li><b>Begin to create action steps.</b> Use Action Plan Chart structure to facilitate discussion about strategies and solutions to the priority issues. (25 minutes)</li> </ol> <p>Start with priority 1, ask which of the strategies would make sense to address concern. Then, brainstorm a few steps that would be needed as part of strategies.</p> <p>Move on to priority 2, using similar process.</p>	<b>Facilitators assist</b>  <b>Facilitators assist to count dot stickers</b>   Recorder (project notes for all to see)	Keep a blank parking lot sheet to record issues that can't be addressed today but that participants nevertheless feel are important.  Computer/projector: PPT slide: Action Plan Chart

			6. <b>Build Commitment/Allies.</b> Ask participants if they are willing and able to commit to making changes that will address the issues. (10 min).		
<b>12:50 – 1:00 pm</b>			<b>Wrap up and Thank You</b>	<b>[Full group]</b>	
Time	Objectives	Activity	Key Talking Points	People/Roles	Preparation and Notes
<b>10 min</b> (12:50-1)	end event with focus on further action and connections	<b>Wrap up and Thank you</b>	<p>Thank participants and give them a brief summary of follow up steps that the planning committee will take:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We'll share all of the materials and findings from this workshop;</li> <li>• The information will be used to create a customized Google map of the resources for youth in the community. All of our ideas can be integrated into this map.</li> <li>• We'll also share our action plan for change.</li> </ul> <p>Ask participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If there is anything else they want captured from this meeting that would be valuable for their organizations to have.</li> <li>• For their suggestions for next steps moving forward. (Do they want to meet? Do youth want to set up a club at school? Elicit some ideas for what comes next.)</li> </ul> <p>If time permits, consider taking a group photo to include in newsletters, etc.</p>		<p><b>Co-facilitators:</b> After session is complete, take photographs of map and other charts and transcribe information into notes for participants.</p> <p>Be sure to collect completed copies of the handouts and remind participants to sign in if they have not already done so.</p>



Please join us for a one day field trip to eat, talk, and plan a new community-based program. Our goal is to make sure that every kid in Torrington has a safe and stable place to call home. We need your ideas on how best to make that happen.

\*\* Bus will be provided to/from THS

\*\* Pizza for lunch



location	time	
COE MEMORIAL PARK CIVIC CENTER 101 Litchfield Street, Torrington, CT	8:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.	Sign up now! Space is limited. * See Ms. Reitman for details.





# SAVE THE DATE MAY 20

## Torrington community conversation and action workshop

designed for youth, educators, and community service providers to map community assets, identify barriers and solutions for improving access to resources for teens living in temporary or unstable housing situations.



\*\* Lunch will be provided.

\*\* Reserve a seat today: <http://bit.ly/1PkQXSS>

location

COE MEMORIAL PARK CIVIC CENTER  
101 Litchfield Street, Torrington, CT

time

8:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.

Contact: Michelle Anderson  
860-489-8552

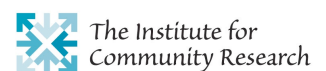
[torringtonfrc@educationconnection.org](mailto:torringtonfrc@educationconnection.org)

**AGENDA**  
**Asset Mapping for Youth in Torrington**  
**May 20, 2015**  
**8:00 am – 1:00 pm**

7:30-8:00	Sign in and Light Breakfast
8:00-8:30	Welcome, Introductions and Orientation
8:30-9:30	Activity 1: Asset Mapping
9:30-10:00	Report out
10:00-11:00	Activity 2: Strengths and Needs Analysis
11:00-11:30	Report out
11:30-12:00	Working Lunch*
12:00-12:50	Activity 3: Planning for Action
12:50-1:00	Wrap-Up and Thank You
1:00	Adjournment

\*Note: McKinney-Vento Legal Rights training presented by:  
Stacey Violante-Cote, Center for Children's Advocacy, Hartford  
Michelle Anderson, Homeless Liaison, Education Connection, Torrington

*A special thank you to the Connecticut Department of Education for funding today's meeting.  
Their support of this initiative is greatly appreciated.*



## Torrington Community Action Plan to Improve Teens' Access to Resources

Priority Areas		
Priority	Barriers / Areas of Concern	Strategies
1	Financial barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Raise minimum wage</li> <li>· More job opportunities for youth*****</li> <li>· Advocate for youth jobs through clubs or other organizations</li> <li>· Put together network of employers to give youth more job opportunities and/or experience</li> <li>· Financial education programs</li> <li>· Work with legislators to make things more affordable (housing, transportation, etc.)*</li> </ul>
2	Communication barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Increase inter-agency communication**</li> <li>· Increase youth voice and participation at Board of Education and city**</li> <li>· Community awareness campaign</li> <li>· Educate about community resources using a variety of mediums with youth involvement (examples: TV in cafeteria, posters, flyers, social media, school website, announcements in school)*****</li> <li>· Create spaces and ways for people to connect on a regular basis*</li> <li>· Hold events, like a resource fair, to increase awareness of issues and resources</li> <li>· Youth-led campaign to say: "It's ok to get help!"****</li> <li>· More opportunities for youth-adult partnerships</li> </ul>
3	Transportation barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Improve school to community transportation*</li> <li>· Public transportation</li> <li>· Bikes: Donate bikes/Have free bikes</li> <li>· Carpooling organization</li> <li>· Youth ride services</li> <li>· Free transportation with school ID***</li> <li>· More bus stops and signs</li> <li>· More hours for buses*</li> <li>· More sidewalks for safe walking**</li> <li>· Reduced taxi rate and easier to contact</li> </ul>
	Social-personal barriers (ex: fear, stigma, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Give people support for self-motivation</li> <li>· Develop a club or campaign to support students with housing and other issues**</li> <li>· Raise awareness of the CJR program (Wolf Pack)</li> <li>· Have students speak about their experiences to others going through similar issues**</li> <li>· Sponsor more forums on issues affecting youth</li> <li>· Create more youth-friendly space in Torrington</li> <li>· Make the Teen Center a better place*</li> <li>· Having a place downtown for youth</li> <li>· Set up a youth peer-to-peer or mentoring program</li> </ul>

Note: Asterisks indicate number of individuals who rated the strategy as a higher priority.

Additional Areas of Concern		
Priority	Barriers/Areas of Concern	Strategies
	<b>Relationship with parents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Community members going to homes (on behalf of school) to talk to parents (peer support)</li> <li>· More family counseling available to assist with parent/teen relationship*</li> <li>· Parent/teacher team up and assign a check-in person at school for the parent</li> </ul>
	<b>Discrimination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Advocacy on policies and practices in town around discrimination</li> <li>· Center for Children's Advocacy teen legal rights training</li> <li>· Breaking down the perception of youth as being a "threat" to the city</li> <li>· Work with business on gender/sexual discrimination*</li> <li>· Work with Gay Straight Alliance to raise awareness on homelessness</li> <li>· Peer-to-peer support</li> <li>· More opportunities for youth-adult partnerships</li> </ul>
	<b>Criteria and documentation requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Help undocumented youth get assistance with legal papers</li> <li>· Partnering with local business to look at age requirements for employment opportunities (Can't work past 10 pm if under 18; limits opportunities)</li> <li>· Loosen criteria/requirements of shelters. More shelter access for youth under age 18.**</li> <li>· Waive parental consent for youth under 18</li> <li>· Reduce requirements for Torrington Youth Service Bureau jobs</li> </ul>
	<b>Limited hours of operation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Change/extend hours of shelters</li> </ul>
	<b>Lack of housing for teens</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Make shelters bigger, provide more spaces**</li> <li>· Collaboration among city and state to create sustainable and affordable housing</li> </ul>
	<b>Lack of health insurance</b>	

Note: Asterisks indicate number of individuals who rated the strategy as a higher priority.



# Asset Map

	Community	School
	Services and Supports	Services and Supports
People (mentors, counselors, etc.)	HS FCA 11CAPS (Family+Child Adv)(Wellness) CYF Western CT Mental Health Child First CJR Wellness Center	HS Nurses Counselors Administrators Staff Even Start SKO
Places (safe, arts, recreation, social)	Teen Center Warner Arts/Education Skate Park The Hub YMCA Joseph's House	Guidance Drama Club Nurse Sports
Youth Programs (educational, jobs, etc.)	P.H.L. Part/Rec Teen Canteen Community Explorers Candy Striper NW Transit WZBG The Gathering Place Salvation Army YMCA ROTC Summer Youth Employment (YSB) YMCA ROTC	YSB Lunch Groups YSB/Family Resource Center clubs Family Resource Programs Monitoring ESL Play Groups DARE Camps - Camp Mac Even Start School Bus ALL STAR or Walk Friends
Health Care (physical, mental)	Community Health + Wellness Planned Parenthood Center for Youth + Families	School Based Health Clinics 211 FMS Brooker Memorial dental
Housing/Shelter	FISH Susan B Anthony Operation Overflow Z11 YMCA	DCF, 211 creativity! referrals
Food	FISH Soup Kitchen Friendly Hands Salvation Army Mobile Food Pantry Meats on Wheels	Free Lunch/Breakfast Schools send food home elementary



## PEOPLE

(mentors, counselors etc)

## PLACES

(safe, arts, recreation, social)

## YOUTH PROGRAMS

(educational, job, etc)

## TRANSPORTATION & MEDIA/

## COMMUNICATIONS

## HEALTH CARE

(physical, mental)

## HOUSING/SHELTER

## COMMUNITY SERVICES & SUPPORTS

9/15/2017

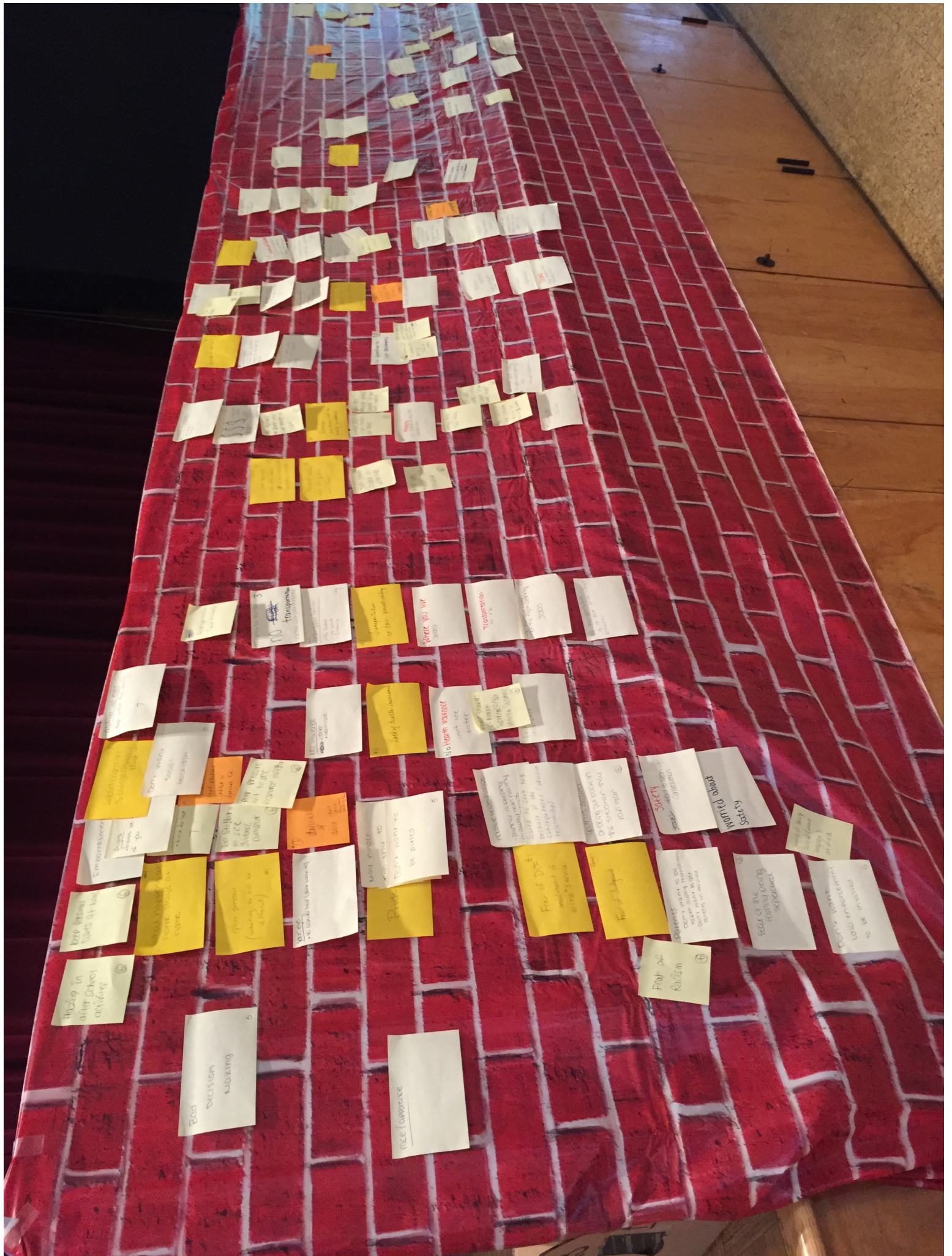
100



# The Wall

Teen Center not open long enough	Membership costs money for the YMCA	If you owe money, can't get regular lunch/ snacks	Peer pressure not to see resource officer	
Shouldn't really talk about personal problems	Too stubborn to see guidance counselors	No assistance to people who owe money to the school	People don't know about services available to them	
Can't take books out of library if you owe money	Too expensive for certain people to attend Cante	Need appointments to see guidance counselors	Need parent permission for school activities	Unsafe at the YMCA shelter
FISH closes early, doesn't give as much as you need.	Shelter run out	Hard to find the bus schedule	No assistance during breaks/ holidays	Hazing in afterschool activities
Extra steps for ESL students	Some people don't have health insurance	Susan B. Anthony mostly for women/ children		
		Fear of race	People scared to go to a cop	





Bad  
Decision  
making

rice / expense

Helping in  
after school  
activities

Keep personal  
values at bay

When people  
have things in  
front

Open person  
(looking at you as  
a friend)

Not all  
are good (but some are)

Don't want to  
be dated

When someone  
says something  
that makes  
you feel bad  
about yourself  
or your  
relationships

Fear of Dis-  
approval or  
being alone

Fear of Judgment

Put on  
Kulim

Parents  
don't always  
understand  
what you're  
going through

Fear of the  
community  
judging

Don't want  
your friends  
to be involved

Don't let  
your friends  
know  
what you're  
going through

World about  
Society

Society  
is what  
you're  
going through

No Home  
income

Help with money

Don't want  
to be involved

Don't want  
to be involved

Don't want  
to be involved

Don't want  
to be involved

Don't want  
to be involved



## Post-Workshop Interview Guide

### Interview questions:

1. Before attending the workshop, what were your expectations of it?  
*Probes:* What were you hoping that it would cover/achieve?  
What did you expect the process/experience to be like?  
What motivated you to come to the workshop?
2. Did the workshop meet your expectations?  
If yes: How did it meet your expectations?  
If not: Why not?
3. What parts of your experience in the workshop stood out the most to you?
4. What did you learn from the workshop? Did anything surprise you (or was it new to you)?
5. What was your experience like being an adult in a workshop with the majority of participants being youth?
6. How did you view your role in the workshop?
7. How do you feel about trying to tackle this issue [removing barriers to accessing services for unstably housed youth] together as equal partners with youth? As partners, how would you see your role in the effort? In what ways or areas would you like to work with youth in the future?
8. Has any of the information that you learned from the workshop affected your work?
9. Do you have any plans in using the information to make changes in your work? If so, what?
10. Have you taken any steps since the workshop to implement any of the recommendations? If so, what? How is it going?
11. Do you have any suggestions for improving the workshop? (Other communities would like to do a similar type of workshop, so we really value your feedback on how to make it better.)  
*Probes:* Any challenges? Anything more that you would have liked to see?
12. Do you have any questions for me?

## Feedback on Torrington Community Conversation & Action Workshop

Thank you for taking this survey!

**Thank you for providing us with feedback on the Torrington Community Conversation and Action Workshop. This survey is ANONYMOUS. No names and addresses are requested so your responses cannot be linked to you in any way. Thus your responses are completely confidential. This survey should take approximately 5 minutes to complete.**

## Feedback on Torrington Community Conversation & Action Workshop

### Demographics

**We first have a few demographic questions that we would like to ask you.**

1. What gender do you consider yourself?

☐

Female

☐

Male

☐

Transgender

☐

Other

\* 2. What is your race/ethnicity? (Please check all that apply.)

Black or African American

Native American

Asian/Pacific Islander

Hispanic or Latino/a

White

Other:

Other (please specify)

\* 3. Are you a teenager, educator, or community service provider?

- ☐ Teenager
- ☐ Educator and other high school staff (counselor, nurse, etc)
- ☐ Community service provider
- ☐ Other

Other (please specify)

## Feedback on Torrington Community Conversation & Action Workshop

\* 4. How old are you?

younger than 14

14

15

16

17

18

19

older than 19

5. What grade are you in?

- ☐ Freshman
- ☐ Sophomore
- ☐ Junior
- ☐ Senior
- ☐ Fifth year / Other

\* 6. Are you currently enrolled in high school?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

## Feedback on Torrington Community Conversation & Action Workshop

\* 7. How often do you miss school?

Almost every day

I miss weeks at a time

I miss at least a day each week

I miss at least a day each month

I rarely miss school

I never miss school

Other:

Other (please specify)

## Feedback on Torrington Community Conversation & Action Workshop

\* 8. Have you ever been in a situation where you were staying away from home (outside, with a friend, or somewhere else) for a period of time WITHOUT your parents/guardians because staying at home was not an option?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I don't know

\* 9. Do you know a teen who has been in a situation where they have stayed away from home (outside, with a friend, or somewhere else) for a period of time WITHOUT their parents/guardians because staying at home was not an option?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I don't know



## Feedback on Torrington Community Conversation & Action Workshop

### Feedback on Workshop

**Now we would like to ask you about your experience at the workshop and whether it was useful to you and the community.**

\* 10. Overall, how would you rate your experience at the Torrington Community Conversation and Action Workshop?

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Very good
- ☐ Fairly good
- ☐ Mildly good
- ☐ Not good at all

\* 11. In your opinion, how valuable or useful was this workshop?

- ☐ Extremely valuable
- ☐ Very valuable
- ☐ Moderately valuable
- ☐ A little valuable
- ☐ Not at all valuable

12. Why do you think this workshop was or was not valuable?

\* 13. During the workshop, how much did you learn about the assets (resources, services) that are available to youth in Torrington?

- ☐ A lot
- ☐ Some
- ☐ Undecided / Not sure
- ☐ Very little
- ☐ Not at all

\* 14. During the workshop, how much did you learn about the different types of barriers (things that make it harder) for youth to access services and resources in Torrington?

A lot

Some

Undecided / Not sure

Very little

Not at all

\* 15. How much did you learn about the issue of unstable housing for youth in Torrington?

A lot

Some

Undecided / Not sure

Very little

Not at all

\* 16. How much did you learn about legal rights that protect youth?

A lot

Some

Undecided / Not sure

Very little

Not at all

17. What legal rights did you learn about?

\* 18. How much did you feel that your voice and input was heard and valued in the workshop?

☐ A lot

☐ Some

☐ Undecided / Not sure

☐ Very little

☐ Not at all

\* 19. In your opinion, how much was your input reflected in the overall products that were created in the workshop (asset map, barriers wall, priority areas)?

- ☐ A lot
- ☐ Some
- ☐ Undecided / Not sure
- ☐ Very little
- ☐ Not at all

\* 20. How excited or energized do you feel about getting involved in efforts with others at the high school or in the community to address issues raised at the workshop?

Extremely energized

Very energized

Fairly energized

Slightly energized

Not at all energized

\* 21. How much do you believe that you (and other youth and/or adults in Torrington) can make a difference in helping to improve access to services for youth who are living in unstable housing situations?

- ☐ A lot
- ☐ Some
- ☐ Undecided / Not sure
- ☐ Very little
- ☐ Not at all

\* 22. Since the workshop, how many youth have you shared information with about their legal rights, or about services, resources, or persons in the school or community who could help them get resources?

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7
- ☐ 8
- ☐ 9
- ☐ 10
- ☐ more than 10

**Feedback on Torrington Community Conversation & Action Workshop**

23. How many of the youth that you shared information with were living in an unstable housing situation?

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7
- ☐ 8
- ☐ 9
- ☐ 10
- ☐ more than 10
- ☐ I don't know

\* 24. Have you shared what you learned at the workshop with anyone else (peer, colleague, teacher, parent, etc)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**Feedback on Torrington Community Conversation & Action Workshop**

25. Who have you shared this information with? (Please check all that apply.)

Family member

Friend

School staff person (example, teacher, counselor, and so on)

Colleague or coworker

City commissioner

Funder

Other community service providers

Other:

Other (please specify)

\* 26. Have you started taking any steps toward implementing any of the recommendations from the workshop?

☐ Yes

☐ No

## Feedback on Torrington Community Conversation & Action Workshop

27. What kinds of things have you done based on the recommendations from the workshop?

## Feedback on Torrington Community Conversation & Action Workshop

Next steps - Tell us your interests

**Please tell us what you are interested in so that we provide opportunities next fall that fit your interests.**

28. What action strategies are you interested in being a part of? (Please check all that apply).

Advocating for more job opportunities/experience for youth

Working with legislators to make things more affordable (housing, transportation, etc.)

Increasing inter-agency communication

Increasing youth voice and participation at the Board of Education and city

Youth-led campaigns about available resources and to reduce fear and embarrassment to seek help

Create spaces and ways for people to connect on a regular basis

Working with community stakeholders to improve public transportation

Advocate for youth-involvement in improving the Teen Center space

Other:

I am not interested

Other (please specify)

29. Do you think you will be available to participate in activities starting next fall (beginning of the school year)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I don't know

30. How would you like to be involved in the activities starting next year? (Please check all that apply.)

school club (during school)

after school program

a class (for example, civics class)

a community task force

other:

I don't want to be involved next year

Other (please specify)

31. Do you have any other comments, questions, or concerns?

