## Assessing Youth Defined Needs for Housing Supports in Vermont

A report for the Youth Homelessness Prevention Plan Committee of the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness and Chittenden County Homeless Alliance

July 2018

Authors:

Youth Homelessness Prevention Plan Committee, Youth Engagement Subcommittee:

Anna Berg, Statewide Youth Engagement Coordinator, Vermont Youth Development Program

Christine Linn, Director of Youth Development, Youth Services, Inc of Windham County

Bethany Pombar, Director, Vermont Coalition of Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs

**INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT OVERVIEW:**

The Youth Homelessness Prevention Plan Committee began meeting in 2017 to create a plan for reducing the occurrence and length of youth homelessness in Vermont. Incorporating the experience and recommendations of youth who have experienced homelessness and housing insecurity was identified as an essential component of any plan and, as such, the youth engagement subcommittee was formed.

The subcommittee developed two tools aimed at capturing youths' voices around housing challenges in Vermont: a series of peer-facilitated focus groups and an online survey. Subcommittee members collected data from focus groups and online surveys over the course of eight months by coding audio recording transcriptions and notes taken during focus groups and grouping survey results into overarching issues, categories, and themes.

**FOCUS GROUPS**

*Outreach strategy*

Subcommittee members felt it was important to incorporate input from youth who live in multiple areas of the state in order to assure that a multitudinous array of experiences with housing instability was captured. Five VCRHYP-funded agencies were contacted, from as wide of a geographic range as possible, to serve as host sites for the focus groups. The Groups were hosted by the following local youth serving agencies: Youth Services, Inc. in Brattleboro; Outright Vermont in Burlington; Northeast Kingdom Youth Services in St. Johnsbury; and The Junction Youth Center in White River Junction.

The subcommittee recruited youth for the focus groups by contacting local service providers and asking them to identify potential participants. These service providers included housing

support partners as well as agencies providing other kinds of youth services. Several follow-up emails and social media posts were made in the months leading up to each focus group.

***Compensation:***
Focus group participants were given a $25 gift card at the conclusion of the focus groups. Dinner, childcare and transportation were provided for participants as needed.

Peer facilitators were provided a $125 stipend for participating in a brief training[1], co-facilitating the group and then debriefing at the conclusion of the group.

***Demographic:***
Focus groups were open to youth aged 14 to 25 with personal experiences of housing instability or homelessness, or with self-identified high-risk factors for either.

***Participants***:
Participation was capped at 12 total youth per location in order to assure that focus group conversations were naturally flowing. In total, thirty-one youth aged 14 to 26 participated in focus groups from October to December of 2017. A break down of age and location of participants can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1**

| Age Group | # of Participants | | Focus Group Location | # of Participants |
|:---:|:---:|---|:---:|:---:|
| 14-17 | 5 | | Brattleboro | 11 |
| 18-21 | 19 | | Burlington* | 1 |
| 22-25 | 6 | | St. Johnsbury | 10 |
| 25+ | 1  (26 yo) | | White River Junction | 9 |

*Due to low turn-out the Burlington focus group consisted of a one-on-one interview.*

***Facilitation:***
Subcommittee members solicited assistance from VCRHYP member organizations to locate peer facilitators from each community. Peer facilitators were trained and then worked with an adult partner to lead the focus group in their area. A second subcommittee member was present to take notes and observe. Each focus group was recorded.

---

[1] See appendix for facilitator guide

***Length and scope:***
Each focus group lasted for approximately 1.5 hours with a half-hour alloted for both set-up and debriefing/clean-up.

Before each focus group, peer facilitators were provided a list of questions and coached on how to guide the conversation while providing enough space for all participants to answer each question. Participants were given the choice to pass for any reason. Questions focused primarily on youth's challenges while homeless and/or precariously housed and solicited input about what was or would be most helpful for securing and sustaining stable housing.

**ONLINE SURVEY**
***Outreach*:**
Subcommittee members sought the assistance of key personnel at the state and local levels to assist with the wide distribution of the online survey. The survey was distributed electronically through collaborative partners across Vermont with several reminder emails to encourage participation and highlight the importance of consumer feedback.

***Compensation:***
Survey respondents were given optional entry into a random drawing for $100.

***Timeline and demographic:***
In early 2018, an online survey was released to solicit feedback from young people aged 14-25 with lived experiences of being homeless or precariously housed. The survey was open from January 16 to February 8, 2018 and participation was anonymous.

***Participants*:**
Fifty-nine respondents started the survey and thirty-eight respondents completed the survey. Of the 59 respondents who started the survey, 10 (17%) were 14-17 years old, 33 (56%) were 18-21 years old, 11 (19%) were 22-25 years old, and 5 (8%) were older than twenty-five. Twenty-one participants were screened out after answering the first two questions, which indicated that they were either younger than fourteen, older than twenty-five or did not have lived experiences of homelessness or housing instability.

**SUMMARY OF THEMES**
***Unique experiences mean unique needs***
Each youth has their own unique experiences with housing instability, which results in needing a unique and flexible system of support. One theme that appeared was that youth in these situations often lack both the concrete supports and community supports  that would create a

"safety net" to protect from risks and unmet needs. Critical resources that make up this "safety net" include: Flexible Housing Supports; Employment and Life Skills Development; and Healthy Adult and Peer Relationships. We found that most youth learn about services through their social networks, which evidences the need for services to support social capital.

# FINDINGS

## 1. Youth in VT have multiple & varied experiences with homelessness.

Across the board, both survey respondents and focus group participants reported a wide and varied spectrum of experiences with homelessness and housing instability. Table 2.1 shows the types of housing instability survey participants have experienced since their 13th birthdays.[2]

**Table 2.1**

| # | *Literally Homeless:* |
|---|---|
| 15 | Lived on the street or outside in a tent or other arrangement by myself or with friends |
| 15 | Lived in a place not meant for housing (car, abandoned building, etc.) by myself or with friends |
| 14 | Stayed at a youth shelter |
| 10 | Been homeless while living with parent/guardian |
| 9 | Stayed at an emergency or warming shelter for adults |
| # | *Precariously Housed:* |
| 33 | Couch-surfed at a friend's house |
| 24 | Couch-surfed at a family member's house |

The fact the thirty-eight respondents chose a total of sixty-three experiences indicates that youth frequently have more than one, if not several, types of experiences with literal homelessness and precarious housing.

---

[2] Participants could select more than one option

Similarly, Table 2.2 illustrates that events which precipitate homelessness are often multifaceted, with the majority of respondents reporting that they were kicked out from where they were living or left foster care without stable housing.

**Table 2.2**

| # of youth | |
|---|---|
| 35 | Been kicked out from someplace where you had been living |
| 11 | Left foster care without a place to go |
| 4 | Exited an institutional setting (like a detention center or mental health facility) without housing |
| 2 | Been evicted because of owing rent |
| 3 | Been evicted for other reasons |
| *A follow up question for "been evicted for other reasons" and an open ended comment box resulted in these additional responses:* | |
| 3 | experiences of domestic or sexual violence |
| 3 | family instability |
| 1 | law enforcement involvement |

## 2. Young people need flexibility, skills, and supportive relationships.

*What do young people need? "Maybe a little love" - Brattleboro Youth*

When asked during the focus groups and in the online survey what young people need to avoid homelessness, youth responded within a couple different themes: Being able to practice independent living skills, having supportive employment, having opportunities to grow relationships, having real conversations about the future and personal goals, and having access to flexible financial support for housing and basic needs. From these themes, we identified three main critical support categories: Flexible Housing Supports; Employment and Life Skills Development; and Healthy Adult and Peer Relationships.

***Flexible housing supports***
Survey respondents ranked flexible and long-term financial supports as the most important supports needed to avoid homelessness - rental assistance vouchers for private housing, rental

down-payments, and more localized affordable housing were ranked in the top three. Respondents indicated a strong preference for private housing over public housing and, contrary to focus group participants, felt emergency youth shelters are least likely to help. Finally, although not an articulated option on the survey, participants wrote-in a preference for work-trade housing and assistance navigating systems in *Other*.

**Table 3**

| Housing Support Needs | Priority |
|---|---|
| A rental assistance voucher I can use for any apartment/house | 71% |
| Help with a rental down payment, without any ongoing financial help | 60% |
| More affordable housing where I live | 53% |
| A housing voucher I can use at a local housing project | 42% |
| A long-term (up to 18 months) program where I live with other people and get support services | 37% |
| Help catching up with rent so I don't get evicted | 29% |
| A short term (less than 90 days) program where I live with other people and get support services | 21% |
| An emergency youth shelter that's only open at night | 13% |
| None of the above | 13% |
| Other: <br> Work-trade options <br> Assistance with disability applications | 8% |

***Employment, life skills, and relationships***
Both survey respondents and focus group participants were given a list of resources related to daily care, personal well-being, relationships, and education/employment. They were asked to rank items into three categories - essential, helpful, or unnecessary - based on how much of a priority they were for supporting success among young people struggling with housing instability.

Very few resources were categorized as *unnecessary* - only thirty-five votes identified any item as *unnecessary* between both focus group and survey responses - compared to 256 items categorized as *helpful* and 212 as *essential.*

**Table 4.1:** Top 10 resources in each category

| Essential<br>(212 total votes) | Helpful<br>(256 total votes) | Unnecessary<br>(35 total votes) |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Getting a job | 1. Getting a job | 1. Romantic relationships |
| 2. Keeping a job | 2. Keeping a job | 2. Higher education |
| 3. Physical safety | 3. Physical safety | 3. Relationship with co-workers |
| 4. Budgeting skills | 4. Budgeting skills | 4. Relationship with family |
| 5. Good mental health | 5. Good mental health | 5. Exploring hobbies |
| 6. Emotional safety | 6. Emotional safety | 6. Family planning |
| 7. Earning a livable wage | 7. Earning a livable wage | 7. Relationships with friends |
| 8. Having a safe person | 8. Family planning | 8. Landlord relationships |
| 9. Cooking skills | 9. Cooking skills | 9. Access to phone/wifi |
| 10. Transportation | 10. Having a safe person | 10. Planning for future |

*Weighted averages:* The subcommittee also analyzed scores based on weighted averages. Ratings were assigned numerical values (Essential = 2; Helpful = 1; Unnecessary = 0). Each resource rating was calculated based on total votes across all three categories, and those individual resources were grouped into rated resource types.

**Table 4.2** Rating by weighted average

| color key: | Daily Care/Skills | Personal Well-being | Relationships | Ed/Employment |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| Type of Support | Score (0-2) |
|---|---|
| Getting a job | 1.87 |
| Keeping a job (not quitting or getting fired) | 1.85 |
| Physical safety | 1.76 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Budgeting skills | 1.74 |
| Emotional safety | 1.72 |
| Good mental health | 1.70 |
| Earning a livable wage | 1.69 |
| Having a safe person to reach out to | 1.63 |
| Good physical health | 1.59 |
| Transportation - rides or public transit (buses, etc.) | 1.57 |
| Cooking skills | 1.56 |
| Setting and maintaining healthy boundaries | 1.54 |
| Grocery shopping skills | 1.53 |
| Driving - my own car and license | 1.48 |
| High school (tutoring, graduation, etc.) | 1.47 |
| Family planning (sex education, etc.) | 1.46 |
| Home maintenance skills (cleaning, simple repairs, etc.) | 1.46 |
| Child care | 1.46 |
| Access to phone/computer/wifi | 1.44 |
| Landlord relationships | 1.37 |
| Making plans for the future | 1.35 |
| Relationships with friends | 1.26 |
| Relationships with co-workers | 1.22 |
| Relationships with family | 1.20 |
| Relationships with adults (non-family) | 1.20 |
| Exploring hobbies and passions | 1.15 |
| Relationships with a romantic partner | 1.06 |
| Higher education (college, trade programs, etc.) | 1.05 |

**Table 4.3:** Weighted averages by category

| Daily Care 1.51 | Personal Well-Being 1.58 | Relationships 1.35 | Ed/Employment 1.5 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cooking<br>Driving<br>Grocery Shopping<br>Home Maintenance<br>Phone/Computer/Wifi<br>Transportation | Good Mental Health<br>Good Physical Health<br>Emotional Safety<br>Exploring Hobbies<br>Physical Safety | Adults (Non-Family)<br>Boundaries<br>Childcare<br>Family<br>Family Planning<br>Friends<br>Landlord<br>Romantic Partner<br>Safe Person | Co-Worker Relations<br>Future Planning<br>Getting a Job<br>Higher Education<br>High School<br>Keeping a Job<br>Livable Wage |

Based on this analysis, it becomes apparent that youth have a broad and varied sense of what they need to successfully live independently. The ability to earn wages and then successfully manage their money are key components to avoiding housing crises, but youth also recognize that there are less obvious factors that contribute to sustained housing stability: taking care of their minds and bodies through supporting their mental health, knowing how to buy groceries and cook, having safe people to lean on, etc.

***Surviving before thriving***

It was interesting to note, if not unsurprising, that participants prioritized having their basic needs met and ranked survival items (work, health, food) as necessary while items linked to thriving (hobbies and relationships) were viewed as less important. A known protective factor for young people in the age group surveyed is the ability to have a vision for the future.[3] Youth in crisis do not always have the luxury of envisioning the future as they struggle to get their needs met. During the focus group conversation, facilitators were able to delve into this topic in more depth - asking youth what things they would want to be able to focus on if their basic needs were met. The top responses were hobbies and passions, higher education, and building relationships. It wasn't that these items were unnecessary to their life overall, they were just seen as privileges that they could not prioritize or access while they struggled to survive.

While personal relationships ranked lower overall, all youth reported that having at least one safe and supportive person was important. Where conventional wisdom often tells us that youth don't want adults in their lives, the youth we talked to reported a different story, identifying non-family adult supporters as vital to their success.

---

[3] Masten, A. S., Herbers, J. E., Cutuli, J. J., & Lafavor, T. L. (2008). Promoting competence and resilience in the school context (79).

## 3. Youth need and want good supports

Focus group participants reflected on the transformations they experienced after finding a good support system, whether through building up natural supports like peers or family, or through relationships with service providers. Many youth described "good support" as someone who cares about you unconditionally, who pushes you forward, and believes in your ability to succeed.

### *Relationships with peers who have similar experiences*
Youth valued their networks and connections to peers. One major theme was how important it is for young people to have time with peers who have experienced similar things. This was both articulated and enacted within the focus groups - many youth used this as a time to share and compare their stories with others who might understand, and hear what resources had worked for their peers.

### *Person-centered, reliable and non-judgemental service provision*
Youth expressed an appreciation for flexible and creative services. Particularly, participants valued workers who are flexible when it comes to seemingly arbitrary boundaries, who do what needs to be done to make the youth feel cared for and listened to, and who get things done quickly. Participants valued supporters who took time to ensure that youth understood services, talked with them to identify goals, trusted their opinions about what was best for them, celebrated successes, recognized their hard work, and acknowledged mistakes while offering positive support.

Youth expressed that community-based programs, friends, and other people experiencing housing instability, are more helpful than state services, and that these community resources feel better to be connected to. Many youth mentioned wanting more targeted supports to help them continue to live with their families - supports that included overarching support not just for them but also for their families.

When asked how they feel they are perceived by service providers and how this affects their access to services, youth reported having a wide range of experiences with providers. They expressed gratitude for those they had strong relationships with, but many youth stated that they feel they are viewed negatively or impartially by service providers. To describe this negative view they used phrases like, "I'm just another kid/case," [they think I'm] "fragile and in need of help," or [they think I'm] "trying to work the system."  They reported that many service providers don't see them as individuals.

Youth felt that some service providers focus too heavily on program goals and requirements, even if those requirements cause unintentional barriers or don't match with the youths' needs. Participants talked about how some workers take it personally when a youth doesn't comply to all program expectations - which then might result in the worker not being helpful or supportive. Participants also reported that bias exist based on individuals' reputations or how well they can follow directions, and these biases seem to impact the support they receive. Navigating program expectations as well as provider relationships were both hurdles that youth reported having to navigate to receive ongoing strong support. The importance of being able to make mistakes without fear of consequences was brought up multiple times.

### Well-trained workers

Youth want strong agencies and well-trained staff. They were very aware of the impact undertrained and rotating staff have on their progress in a given program. Youth explained that they want staff who were not only well-trained in the aspects of their work, but also in cultural sensitivity and youth-centric approaches, and who have clear and reasonable boundaries. Facilitators noted that this theme - well-trained and versatile workers - was discussed in various ways in every focus group despite it not being a direct question from the facilitators.

Subcommittee members heard stories from youth about unclear expectations that seem to change from worker to worker and program rules or boundaries that don't make sense to them. Participants expressed a need for organizations that have good professional development and oversight of their programs. Additionally, youth espoused a need for good internal communication - agencies and workers who communicate with transparency and clarity directly with the youth they serve. Participants want youth-centric and flexible services that focus on what youth prioritize as necessary instead of youth having to fit into the specific molds created by many different programs and patchwork together services.

### Targeted services

Participants highlighted groups that need targeted support due specific and/or unique needs. These conversations focused on comprehensive and non-judgemental services for LGBTQ youth, youth struggling with substance-use, and pregnant and parenting youth.

### Streamlined services, especially when transitioning out

Finally, youth relayed the importance of better better organized case management, where youth have one person who helps them keep track of everything else they're connected to and can guide them through a smooth transition out of services.

## 4. Outreach isn't working and it's hard to ask for help

***What might help and where to find it***
Youth feedback in this area highlights that youth-serving agencies need to both increase outreach efforts and clarify the scope and target of services. When asked what makes it difficult for young people to get help when they need it, 63% of respondents told us that a large barrier was that they didn't know what would be helpful, and 57% said they didn't know where to go for help.

Youth were asked to tell us how they learn about helpful services and programs, rating specific information sources from *most* to *never*.[4] *Most* was rarely selected, only soliciting 24 total votes, compared to *never* which gathered 108 votes. *Some* and *rare* were selected 76 and 72 times respectively.

Web-based information, including websites and social media, and word of mouth through friends and family were reported as the primary sources of information. When reviewers combined the responses for *most* and *some, online other than social media* garnered the most votes [20]. Social media [19] was a close second. Friends [14], family [13] and school [13] were tied for third most frequent sources of information. Traditional forms of media - radio, tv or newspapers - were the least likely to be seen as resources for information about services.

The survey did not offer a choice for referrals from other service providers, but did offer an open ended comment section, in which a majority of comments were linked to information coming from other social service connections.

**Table 5:** Overview of top three choices in each frequency category

| I get **Most or All** information here [24] | I get **Some** information here [76] | I **Rarely** get information here [72] | I **Never** get information here [108] |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Online - other than social media (7)<br>2. Friends (4)<br>    Family (4)<br>3. Social media | 1. Social media (16)<br>2. Online (13)<br>3. Friends (10) | 1. Family (12)<br>2. TV (11)<br>    Friends (11)<br>3. School (8)<br>    Newspaper (8)<br>    Radio (8) | 1. Radio (21)<br>2. TV (19)<br>3. Newspaper (17) |

---

[4] The scope of frequency include a four-point scale: Most, Some, Rare and Never.

To increase successful targeted outreach, participants recommended that organizations make information available at the following sites:

- Social media
- Schools
- Facebook
- Local wifi hotspots, like libraries
- Places where youth hang out - bus stops, churches or malls

***Asking For Help: Natural and peer supports are most important***

> *"For a while I thought I shouldn't reach  out to anyone, I could handle it by myself, but then I realized need to take initiative." - St. Johnsbury Youth*

Respondents were asked to report on how comfortable they would be asking different types of supports for help in the event of housing insecurity.[5] Reviewers found that overall there was a strong discomfort with asking for help from identified potential supports, with more youth ranking connections in the *uncomfortable* or *no way* categories than the *super* or *pretty comfortable* categories. *I don't know* outranked any other response. In focus groups, many youth reported that they would not have anyone to go to if they didn't have somewhere to sleep. There was a sense that services from support organizations take too long and many youth didn't feel as though reaching out for help to service providers was an option.

Participants reported feeling most comfortable with personal connections (parent, friend, sibling, grandparent, or other family member), with peers and family members ranking highest. Youth in focus groups explained that they would be most likely to ask someone who had also experienced homelessness for advice, and word of mouth was an important tool for youth trying to access resources. Overall youth were least comfortable asking service providers[6] and people they work with.

---

[5] A five-point scale to assess comfort level was used: super comfortable; pretty comfortable; I don't know, uncomfortable but I would; and no way.

[6] Defined here as: someone at school, a police officer, a youth worker, a local youth homelessness service agency.

**Table 6**

| Potential helpers ranked by comfort level of asking for help | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Super comfortable: | Pretty Comfortable: | I don't know: | Uncomfortable but I would: | No way: |
| Parents (9)<br>Friends (7)<br>Youth Worker (7)<br>Local Youth Homeless Service Agency (6)<br>Sibling (5)<br>Grandparent (5)<br>Police Officer (4) | Friend (11)<br>Sibling (10)<br>Parent (8)<br>Grandparent (7)<br>Friend's Family (7)<br>Another Family Member (6)<br>Youth Worker (6) | Another Family member (14)<br>Friend (10)<br>Grandparent (10)<br>Friend's Family (9)<br>Siblings (8)<br>Local Housing Agency (8)<br>Local Youth Homeless Service Agency (7) | Coworker (12)<br>Local Housing Agency (12)<br>Friend's Family (11)<br>Friend (9)<br>Local Youth Homelessness Service Agency(11)<br>Youth Worker (5) | Someone at School (26)<br>Police Officer (24)<br>Coworker (18)<br>Youth Worker (15)<br>Local Youth Homelessness Service Agency (14) |
| 43 | 55 | 156 | 60 | 97 |

Many helpers received multiple ranking categories, for instance police officers ranked in both the *super comfortable* top tier with four votes and also the *no way* top tier with twenty-four votes. Reviewers noted that *youth worker* showed up in every comfort level ranking, echoing the above findings that youth have varied experiences with youth care workers - some having supportive and successful connections, and others feeling like their needs were not met.

Through the course of the focus group series, observers noted that there was a strong contrast between youth who had access to a youth center, like a teen center or youth-centric space, and those who didn't. Youth with access seemed far more connected to other youth, adult staff, and services and relied heavily on the teen space for both emergency intervention and ongoing support.

## *5. Emotional barriers create concrete barriers*

> *"There's nothing more detrimental than feeling like it's hopeless" - St. Johnsbury Youth*

**Self-perpetuating stigma**

Focus group participants were animated when discussion arose about the stigma attached to homelessness. Many reported feeling that homeless youth are targeted by local law

enforcement or perceived as a "burden" on society and described situations that illustrated this point. Additionally, many youth talked about how the stigma often creates barriers to accessing services. Youth reported being afraid of judgement from others and felt there was a lack of understanding in their communities about the realities of homelessness. Many felt isolated and vulnerable. Participants also discussed internalizing these stigmas and harboring self-judgement and poor opinions of themselves. Youth provided insight highlighting that the stress of instability perpetuates housing instability - often feeding the stigma around homelessness.

**Unreliable services**

Participants also expressed frustration at long wait-lists and unreliable services, reporting that workers often say they'll do something that doesn't come to fruition. There was a concern that staff and services would disappoint them as well as a general distrust of institutions. Respondents reported feeling as though services were not client-centered and service providers who maintain their own agenda, despite a client's self-identified goals, instilled distrust. Clear communication, transparency and valuing youth's wants and needs was recommended.

**Communication and Transportation**

Across the board, participants reported more concrete barriers such lacking a phone, computer, and transportation, which makes it harder to access resources. Unsurprisingly in our rural state, 43% of responses affirm struggles with accessing supports due to unreliable or nonexistent public and/or alternative transportation.

Half of survey participants didn't want to admit they needed help, and a third were worried about the stigma attached to accessing services. There is an implication here for stereotypes faced by young people at risk and how service providers can make themselves more approachable and less stigmatized.

In the open ended comment section, we also heard from participants that people from marginalized populations, such as LGBTQ or people of color, are not being served well and feel like services need to be adjusted to serve them well.

## 6. "If I had three wishes for my community…"

> *"[I wish for] less judgement. Not all young homeless people are thugs."*
> *-Survey Respondent*

In both the focus group discussion and survey, youth had a holistic and nuanced understanding of their experiences as part of a larger community. When participants were asked to share three wishes they would use to improve their community, overwhelmingly the responses were

related to communities being more affordable overall - including housing, healthcare, food, and access to jobs that paid livable wages.

Youth also wanted to see more youth-friendly activities and events, more opportunities to learn basic skills in school or at youth service agencies, better sexual health services, more access to emergency shelter, better public transportation, kindness between community members, and safer, healthier communities that could ease the drug issues affecting so many.

We categorized each wish into five different domains: Affordable Communities, Supportive Public Services, Community Spaces and Recreation, Kindness and Understanding, and Health and Safety (Police Relations). Each individual wish is listed in **Table 7** by domain, as well as broken into how directly it relates to housing. Looking at the wishes in this light, highlights how many services, supports, and adult actions that don't seem to be connected to housing are actually key components to wellbeing and housing stability.

*(#) - Number of times response was given when there were multiple similar wishes*
*Others not included in the chart: no bed bugs (maybe referring to shelters?); more animals*

**Table 7**

| Wishes Directly Related to Housing/Homelessness | Wishes Indirectly Related to Housing Stability |
|---|---|
| **Affordable Communities** | |
| More affordable housing* (5) <br> Free dignified housing (2) <br> Cheaper places to live <br> Affordable access to basic needs <br><br> *Some Section 8 waiting lists are over a year* | More jobs/wider variety of jobs (5) <br> Better jobs/better paying jobs (4) <br> Free food for the community (2) <br> Affordable daycare (2) <br> Free public transportation <br> Universal basic income <br> Free health care |
| **Supportive Public Services** | |
| More shelters (2) <br> Housing supports <br> Build houses for people in need <br> Shelters open all day (especially in winter) <br> More support for homeless college students <br><br> More public/government help (2) | More public transit options (4) <br> More substance abuse support (3) <br> Extra help for abuse victims (2) <br> Better mental health coordination <br> Help for postpartum mothers <br> Transportation to childcare <br> More support for finding work |

| More funding for services that help | Education and life skills supports<br>School Choice |
|---|---|
| **Community Spaces and Recreation** | |
| | Better and safer community areas (3)<br>Better and more activities for teens (2)<br>More community groups<br>More adult sports teams/programs |
| **Kindness and Understanding** | |
| Less judgement about homelessness(2)<br>More awareness about homelessness | Supportive and caring adults/parents (2)<br>Open minds for everyone<br>More gender-free public restrooms<br>More love for other humans regardless of race, creed, or sexual orientation<br>Professionals putting person before paycheck |
| **Health and Safety** | |
| Privacy<br>Slumlords not renting unsafe buildings | Less drugs/drug use (6)<br>Support for family planning<br>More resource officers at schools<br>Better police support<br>Less cyclical familial abuse |