

2011-2014

Strategic Plan Summary

Adopted by the YouthLink Board of Directors July 2011



Youthlink

Each night in Hennepin County, Minnesota, more than 3,000 men, women, children, and young adults are homeless.

Of this number, nearly half are children, and reports from the Wilder Research Center suggest that the number of homeless in the state is rising.

An estimated 13,000 people statewide are homeless on any given night, according to Wilder's research.

Hennepin County's Office to End Homelessness reported that from July 2007 through June 2008, roughly 5,500 children and young adults in the Minneapolis Public Schools were identified as homeless.

YouthLink's service area is the Twin Cities' seven-county metro area (including Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington counties), although a majority of youth served is from Hennepin County.

Homelessness negatively impacts the lives of youth by creating increased health problems, subjecting them to hunger and poor nutrition, and leading to psychological issues. In general, homelessness is a serious threat to the overall well-being of any youth.

The goals of Hennepin County's plan to end homelessness by 2016 include:

- prevention efforts to keep people in their current housing;
- outreach activities to provide housing and other resources;
- the creation of housing opportunities;
- access to housing services;
- programs to help individuals and families build personal income; and
- enhancing existing service systems.



YouthLink and the Youth Opportunity Center (the collaborative service-delivery model hosted by YouthLink) are essential parts of this larger system of services, working closely with Hennepin County's Office to End Homelessness and other collaborative partners to improve services for youth in crisis, particularly youth experiencing homelessness.

Long before Hennepin County announced its plan for ending homelessness, YouthLink had built an innovative culture of helping youth address an array of crises, particularly homelessness, using cross-agency collaboration as a means of selecting and executing the right interventions and strategies to meet youths' needs. YouthLink has continued its spirit of innovation over the years, and maintaining an innovative approach was a central topic of discussion during the strategic planning process.

The primary topic addressed by that process was how youth-serving agencies can better fulfill their mission to help end homelessness for young people, and more specifically, how YouthLink can leverage its relationship with the Youth Opportunity Center to best meet the evolving needs of youth in crisis or experiencing homelessness. During 2010-11, those involved in developing this YouthLink strategic plan also explored other topics such as what current trends and needs were affecting youth in the YouthLink service area, what YouthLink was doing to meet them, and what YouthLink should do in the future to meet those needs as they continue to change with population shifts.

Vision

Empowering youth to shape their futures by providing a safe, supportive, respectful, and responsive community of excellence. YouthLink is the place where the *end* of homelessness and the *end* of poverty begin for youth served.



Mission

To build healthy relationships with youth and the community to address youths' urgent needs so that doors of opportunity are opened to futures of empowerment, connectedness, and self-reliance.

2011-2014 Strategic Goals

1. Interventions/Strategies

- Foster innovation and maintain relevancy for all YouthLink and Youth Opportunity Center participants.
- Become experts on data about homeless youth.

2. Staffing

- Ensure high-quality interventions, strategies, and staffing, and increase emphasis on training and staff development.

3. Community Collaborations

- Continue existing collaborations with the Youth Opportunity Center and others and build new ones that enable youth to receive coordinated, integrated homeless services.
- Encourage resource sharing among YouthLink and Youth Opportunity Center partners, including shared services agreements, development of joint fundraising proposals, and collaboration on contracts, purchases, and services.

4. Agency Visibility

- Increase community understanding of YouthLink and Youth Opportunity Center interventions and strategies.
- Obtain greater visibility among key stakeholders for the work of YouthLink and the Youth Opportunity Center.

5. Financial Stability/Sustainability

- Improve and sustain the strong financial position of YouthLink and the Youth Opportunity Center.
- Design and implement a comprehensive fundraising plan.

6. Governance

- Focus on supporting priorities of the strategic plan.

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