Reasons for Youth Homelessness

- Main reasons for youth homelessness or unstable housing include:

  (1) Financial hardship, including intergenerational poverty, family eviction, job loss, and lack of skills/education to obtain employment;

  (2) Youth experienced abuse, neglect, abandonment, and/or family conflict and violence;

  (3) Youth were kicked out of their family's home for various reasons, including rejection due to gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

- Having experienced abuse and neglect as a reason for youth homelessness was significantly related to other reasons for youth homelessness including: family and youth substance abuse and mental health issues; and youth being kicked out of their family's home or leaving other housing (e.g., foster care) with no place to stay.

Gaps and Barriers to Accessing Services

Basic Needs

- **Housing** - 29% of youth surveyed reported unmet housing needs in the past 90 days. Most informants interviewed said that a lack of housing available for youth and young adults was a primary unmet need in Tucson/Pima County. Interviewees reported the need to have multiple housing options for youth, youth friendly shelters, and LGBTQ youth-friendly shelters.

- **Food** - 29% of youth surveyed don't get enough to eat. Barriers to accessing food include not having enough money (85%); SNAP benefits are used up before the end of the month (47%); lack of transportation (43%); and don't know where free food is available (30%).

- **Child Care** - 30% of youth surveyed are pregnant (6%) and/or parenting (27%) and need access to childcare.

- Other gaps in needed services were access to **laundry facilities** (19%), **transportation** (13%), **clothing** items (12%), and **toiletry** products (10%).

Health Care and Benefits

- 52% of respondents reported having have unmet **dental care** needs; 33% have unmet **medical care** needs; and 26% have their **behavioral health care** needs.

- 26% of youth surveyed are not enrolled in **Medicaid/AHCCCS**, when they are likely eligible for this program. Only 39% of **pregnant and parenting youth** surveyed reported receiving **WIC**, a program for which they are eligible.

Education and Employment

- Over half (56%) of survey respondents **ages 18-24 have < a high school education**. Only 38% of respondents ages 18-24 are **currently enrolled in an education program**, such as classes to complete a GED or high school.

- 69% of respondents are **looking** for **work**. 20% reported having **no sources of income**.

- Recent service gaps experienced by youth surveyed: help getting **identifying documents** (16%); help finding **a job** (10%), access to **job training programs** (10%), and classes to complete a **GED or high school education** (8%).

Recommendations/Innovative Ideas to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness	
Enhance Service Provision and Engagement	- Co-locate services to better engage and help you navigate resources that meet their needs. - Utilize youth peer mentors to support programming and outreach of homeless youth serving agencies. - Consider offering an incentive for youth to stay in touch to update their contact information, which could help pay for phone service. - Determine strategies other than the PIT count to understand the extent of youth homelessness.
Create youth friendly services and spaces	- Provide direct housing to LGBTQ homeless youth. Youth friendly and LGBTQ friendly shelter and housing are a huge need. - Get the word out about available resources through social media. - Provide youth services in a non-clinical, comfortable setting.
Provide Community Staff with Training on Youth Specific Skills	- Provide staff of youth serving agencies with more formalized training or information on how to identify and assist homeless youth. - Integrate assessment/referral for reproductive health needs into the intake process for youth. - Ensure staff are compassionate, appropriately trained, and experienced working with youth; staff should be transparent with youth about what services look like and their availability.
Improve the Response of Schools to Homeless Youth	- Identify homeless youth as quickly as possible. Youth are then referred to a designated staff member for a private conversation to determine their needs. - Train school registration staff in possible indicators of homelessness.
Provide Skill Development Opportunities for Youth	- Offer youth training in life skills and employment training. - Provide youth with skills to navigate the system and work with different agencies to get what they need – being persistent, self-advocating, etc.
Suggestions from Focus Group Youth	- Provide resources to help youth who are aging out of program/service to make smooth transition to other assistance. - Don't make program requirements too strict; encourage students who show improvement in academic achievement with additional monetary assistance. - Ensure that agencies that provide monetary assistance to youth do so in a timely manner. - Be patient with youth and try to understand the situation that they are going through. - Refer youth to resources or provide them with a resource list. If youth are on street, take them to get needed resources, such as clothes. - Promote longer term results through strategies such as case management.