

Program Work Statement

Program Goals and Objectives

LifeWorks Street Outreach Program conducts mobile outreach and operates a drop-in center for transition age youth (16-26) experiencing homelessness.

The Street Outreach program's primary goals are:

- 1) Conduct mobile outreach to identify and build rapport with youth experiencing homelessness.
- 2) Provide basic needs and safety planning to increase youth's safety and well-being.
- 3) Provide housing navigation and Coordinated Assessments to identify appropriate permanent housing options and address barriers.
- 4) Screen youth for exposure to human trafficking and sexual exploitation and provide appropriate referrals.
- 5) Conduct ongoing individualized outreach to reduce attrition from services and maintain an accurate community census of youth experiencing homelessness.

Program Clients Served

LifeWorks Street Outreach will prioritize services for unaccompanied youth (up to age 26) and households headed by youth experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Most youth report that they do not identify with the general adult population experiencing homelessness and often avoid seeking services at adult focused providers and avoid encampments or other locations where adults experiencing homelessness congregate. Youth focused outreach conducted by staff who are experienced engaging youth is crucial to ensure that youth experiencing homelessness in Austin have equitable access to appropriate housing programs and wraparound services.

Street Outreach enrollment is very low barrier. The only information required to determine service eligibility is the participant's name, birthdate, and housing status. Low barrier access helps staff build trust with youth who are reticent or unwilling to engage in comprehensive services. As staff build trust and rapport, youth are more willing to access services and resources that support their safety and well-being. Staff verify that youth meet criteria for unsheltered homelessness as defined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Initial verification may be determined by Street Outreach staff who observe or engage the participant at a shelter, on the street, and/or in a place not meant for human habitation; through a youth's self-declaration of homelessness; or third-party certification by another agency with a program designed to serve persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness, including printout from HMIS. As youth access additional services, including Coordinated Assessment, staff collect more comprehensive information and certifications regarding youths housing status to confirm eligibility and prioritization for CoC housing programs and supportive services. In addition, Street Outreach serves youth who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic/dating violence and have no other residence, documented by self-certification.

Program Services and Delivery

Street Outreach has developed an innovative, individualized engagement strategy as part of the campaign to end youth homelessness. The program uses community HMIS data to identify youth who have not accessed services for more than 30 days and have no record of securing permanent housing. Street Outreach staff attempt to reconnect with youth using all known contact information, including phone, text, email, social media, and youth's social networks. Staff attempt to reengage youth for 90 days before closing their enrollment in Street Outreach. Staff then create a Be on the Lookout (BOLO) notice in HMIS to ensure youth are reconnected with services quickly if they later access any CoC provider. This targeted outreach process ensures youth remain engaged in services while they are

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navigating to permanent housing. This process has also greatly improved the real time accuracy of the census of youth experiencing homelessness by identifying youth who have self resolved, left the area, or otherwise no longer need CoC services. LifeWorks Research and Evaluation team created and published a free guide in 2020 for other communities interested in implementing targeted outreach.

System for Collecting and Reporting Program Data

LifeWorks stores active participant files and data in a HIPAA compliant password protected database, D365, or in locked cabinets at LifeWorks properties. All staff with access to D365 and participant files receive training on HIPAA, Texas privacy laws, and LifeWorks privacy and confidentiality policies at hire and annually thereafter. Staff sign a non-disclosure agreement before gaining access to D365 and are prohibited from accessing any information about participants that is not required for them to perform essential, assigned functions. Additional participant data is entered in the Austin/Travis County CoC Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to facilitate community coordination and referrals. LifeWorks does not release or disclose any information about participants without express written consent from the participant or their guardian.

LifeWorks Grants and Contracts Compliance (GCC) staff oversee reporting to external funders. Reports are generated directly out of D365 by the Program Services Coordinator, Program Director, and IT department staff. The IT team builds data elements for performance measures into D365 and trains program staff to ensure data required for reporting is entered timely and accurately. Performance measures requiring HMIS data elements are reported directly from the database by the HMIS Administrator. GCC compiles and reviews all reports prior to submission and works with program staff to address any data entry or reporting issues.

Performance Evaluation

The Street Outreach Program Director and Program Services Coordinator routinely review participant data, including demographic information, performance measures, and participant feedback surveys, to assess how well the program is reaching and serving different populations. Monthly supervision of program staff is structured for staff to share feedback about opportunities to refine services and improve equity and inclusiveness in program operations. If issues are identified through program data or staff feedback, program managers and staff collaborate to adapt services, access training and support, and/or solicit participant feedback on how to improve support for participants.

The Program Director and Program Services Coordinator monitor minor program changes through ongoing staff supervision and data reviews to assess if adaptations are achieving desired results. LifeWorks GCC team provides support if program staff identify opportunities to make more significant changes to program operations. This includes updating program funders, ensuring any proposed changes are within the scope of existing contracts, and submitting any amendments if necessary. GCC also reviews program performance regularly through external reporting. When program performance indicates that participants are not achieving expected outcomes, GCC meets with program managers and staff to identify whether the issue can be addressed through staff training and support or if there may be issues with program design or service delivery methods.

Quality Improvement

Regular program performance monitoring, monthly staff supervision and feedback processes, and participant satisfaction surveys provide ongoing opportunities for program led adaptations and improvements to service delivery. In addition, LifeWorks has established a Board approved Performance and Quality Improvement (PQI) Plan to guide agency wide program assessments and establish accountability for continuous quality improvement. PQI workgroups, comprised of diverse staff across departments and levels, review a percentage of open and closed files (monthly), data collection

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and quality (monthly), and risk assessment and critical incident reviews (quarterly).

LifeWorks Research and Evaluation Team leads additional analyses of programs with an equity emphasis, which may include formal evaluations with IRB approval and comprehensive assessments of program impact. Other periodic assessments may include reviews of the program's logic model, deeper analyses of participant data to identify trends, interviews with program staff, and participant engagement through interviews, focus groups, or surveys.

Finally, LifeWorks engages an external consultant to develop a comprehensive agency strategic plan every 4-5 years and undergoes accreditation through Council on Accreditation every 4 years. These activities include comprehensive reviews of agency policies, procedures, and operations and each program's logic model, theory of change, and overall performance. Strategic planning and reaccreditation ensure programs use best practices and evidence-based practices where appropriate to support the best possible outcomes for participants.

Service Coordination with Other Agencies

Due to the fluidity of participants in Street Outreach, Outreach Navigation Specialists do not carry formal caseloads and are not included in external fidelity reviews of the Strengths Model. Outreach Navigation Specialists attend weekly group supervision sessions with Case Managers in other LifeWorks programs to facilitate service referrals and wraparound support for participants.

Street Outreach collaborates actively with Austin's broader homeless response system and youth serving systems. Street Outreach maintains partnerships and referral relationships with other service City of Austin Public Health RFP 2022 004 Homeless Crisis Response Form 2: RFP Proposal Page 24 of 41 providers, including drop in centers (Sunrise Community Church, Austin Clubhouse), mental and physical health providers (Integral Care, People's Community Clinic, CommUnity Care), shelters, trafficking and abuse survivor services (SAFE Alliance, Refugee Services of Texas) and other housing providers in the CoC. LifeWorks also maintains upstream partnerships with Department of Family and Protective Services and Travis County Juvenile Probation Department to proactively identify youth at risk of exiting these systems into homelessness.

Staff proactively share information about housing navigation, Coordinated Assessment, permanent housing programs, and additional supportive services to encourage youth to engage in services. However, staff never require youth to participate in any services or tell youth what their goals/needs should be. When youth are interested in engaging in more comprehensive services, staff partner with youth to identify their goals and assets. Based on youth goals, staff help youth determine eligibility for wraparound services. Street Outreach provides warm referrals by introducing youth directly to staff in other programs and transporting youth to service sites via car ride or bus pass.

Service Collaboration with Subgrantees

LifeWorks is a member of the Travis County Affordable Supportive Housing Collaborative. The Collaborative is leveraging federal American Rescue Plan Act funds to develop a new supply of deeply affordable housing units, including units dedicated to persons exiting homelessness. LifeWorks is in the initial planning stages of developing a property that will include 120 deeply affordable units dedicated to persons exiting homelessness. LifeWorks is working with Travis County and a developer to leverage tax credits and other financial incentives to provide sustainable funding for supportive services for residents. This will ensure residents have access to resources that support their long-term stability. Adding permanently affordable housing and supportive services to Austin's homelessness response system will help address the affordable housing crisis, which is one of the most significant challenges to ending homelessness in Austin.

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Community Planning Activities

LifeWorks is a member of the Austin/Travis County CoC and collaborates closely with local agencies, City and County government, and other stakeholders to advance systemic efforts to end youth homelessness. LifeWorks and ECHO (the Austin CoC lead agency) co led the development of Austin's Coordinated Plan to End Youth Homelessness with over 50 stakeholders, endorsed by Austin City Council in 2017. This plan provides the framework for increasing collaboration among providers to better meet the unique needs of youth experiencing homelessness. LifeWorks secured a Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 2017, which catalyzed further collaborations, including the launch of a youth focused Rapid Rehousing Collaborative with SAFE Alliance and Caritas of Austin. LifeWorks Research and Evaluation team provides bimonthly dashboards that assess the progress of the campaign to end youth homelessness and guide ongoing strategies and decision making.