



**collaborative to prevent
lgbtq youth homelessness**

Strategic Plan

December 1, 2014

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*Our intent is to be inclusive of the spectrum of identities and orientations under the "LGBTQ umbrella," including but not limited to intersex, queer, gender variant, and other sexual and gender identities and orientations.

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Executive Summary

NEST is a collaborative of Houston/Harris and surrounding counties community stakeholders charged with preventing and ending homelessness for adolescents and young adults who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or those who are questioning their sexual or gender identity, by 2020. In this region, the task would change the futures of as many as 5,000 youth who are kicked out of the safety of their home, *or nest*.

NEST has five objectives:

- (1) **Facilitate better local collaboration** between stakeholders working with youth to develop & implement a comprehensive community strategy to prevent homelessness among LGBTQ youth
- (2) **Improve identification of LGBTQ youth at-risk** of or experiencing episodic homelessness through outreach, screening & assessment
- (3) **Identify, coordinate, & improve policies & interventions** to prevent LGBTQ youth homelessness across shelter and housing systems (e.g., primary and behavioral health care, child welfare, education, employment, juvenile justice, law enforcement)
- (4) **Reduce homelessness among LGBTQ youth** & improve their outcomes in the areas of permanent connections, stable housing, education/employment, & well-being
- (5) **Inform national strategies** for preventing & ending homelessness among LGBTQ youth

Each of these priorities has specific focus items to improve outcomes for LGBTQ youth that are aligned with the USICH Framework to End Homelessness in four core areas:

- (1) **Stable Housing:** increase cultural competence in youth shelters and facilities, provide better transition from foster care and find solutions for youth exiting the justice system.
- (2) **Permanent Connections:** increase advocacy for LGBTQ by service providers and connecting caregivers with resources and mentoring support to decrease the number of youth who become homeless from family rejection.
- (3) **Education/Employment:** improve graduation rates by strengthening school policies to support LGBTQ youth, provide material to school districts about how staff may advocate with existing resources and community service referrals, and support at-risk youth with helping them develop employment/career goals that achieve employment.
- (4) **Social-Emotional Well-Being:** reduce barriers for youth to access culturally competent and affirming primary and behavioral health care that includes awareness of World Professional Association of Transgender Health (WPATH) standards of care for transgender youth, as well as increase LGBTQ cultural competence with protective services and law enforcement.

Section I introduces NEST, providing details about how the strategic plan was coordinated. Additionally, the problem of LGBTQ youth homelessness is explained, including: current data demonstrating the overrepresentation of LGBTQ youth in the population of youth experiencing homelessness, barriers to data collection, and a profile of those that are at-risk.

Section II provides the local context, including community strengths and challenges. For example, strengths include: a very large and active LGBTQ community with dedicated youth programs, changing attitudes towards LGBTQ populations, and the support of the state’s largest school district with its full-inclusive nondiscrimination policy. Some of the challenges facing the community are in the areas of transportation, LGBT bias and discrimination, public policy, funding, and turfism.

Section III provides an overview of the NEST collaborative, including its vision and goals, and the key activities needed to achieve desired outcomes.

Section IV lays out NEST’s implementation plan.

Section V contains take-away points and plans for communicating about initiative progress and updates.

The Appendices includes a list of references, resources, and definitions.

Section I: Introduction

Collaborative Background

In early 2014, Houston/Harris County was offered the opportunity to be one of two communities to develop a pilot program aimed at preventing homelessness among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth. As the lead agency for The Way Home, Continuum of Care (CoC), the Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County convened potentially interested stakeholders to discuss this opportunity. At that time, it was mutually agreed that our CoC wanted to accept this offer and that the Montrose Center was best positioned to serve as manager for our local collaborative, NEST.

Our community accepted this exciting opportunity and is now part of the national LGBTQ Youth Homelessness Prevention Initiative led by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Along with the second community participating in this initiative, Hamilton County, Ohio, we were charged with developing and implementing a plan to prevent LGBTQ youth homelessness. Youth homelessness is a community issue, and LGBTQ youth are dramatically overrepresented in the population of youth experiencing homelessness, so a targeted, collaborative approach to preventing LGBTQ youth homelessness is needed. Multiple CoC partner agencies and other community stakeholders have joined together to participate in NEST planning over the past six months. Furthermore, following acceptance of the opportunity, HUD has provided technical assistance to support our local initiative efforts.

The Montrose Center, Houston's LGBT center and youth service provider founded in 1978, is the local lead agency working to facilitate plan development and implementation, secure local commitment, and identify and engage formal partners and stakeholders in this collaborative. The Montrose Center brings more than 35 years of history and commitment to addressing the needs of LGBTQ individuals in the community. NEST has brought together key stakeholders from multiple sectors, including LGBTQ-centered youth services, child welfare, juvenile justice, public school systems, homeless services, philanthropy, employment and advocacy. Many of these stakeholders are already addressing youth homelessness in the area. This group has collaborated towards development of this community-wide plan to prevent homelessness among LGBTQ youth, and to intervene as early as possible with youth already experiencing homelessness. Significantly, this plan builds on the community's local context to prevent LGBTQ youth homelessness and improve their outcomes in the four core areas that the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) Framework to End Youth Homelessness¹ outlines: permanent connections, stable housing, education/employment, and well-being.

A precursor to NEST, the Montrose Center convened the first local LGBTQ Homeless Youth Summit in 2010. The Summit became a working group of leaders representing more than 20 local youth service providers. Their first task was to compile a complete directory of services available to at-risk and

¹ http://usich.gov/population/youth/a_framework_for_ending_youth_homelessness_2012/

homeless LGBTQ youth and to identify gaps in the overall care system. This information was later incorporated into the Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County CoC plan for HUD.²

From this framework arose the current NEST collaborative, kicked off by a public forum of more than 50 key stakeholders representing more than 30 agencies on April 11, 2014. With the Montrose Center as managing agent, in collaboration with a steering committee representing youth-serving systems and providers, and with guidance from the HUD technical assistance team and the True Colors Fund, over the following months NEST tasked itself with formulating the comprehensive and community-wide strategic plan to prevent and address LGBTQ youth homelessness that this document lays out. This plan was first presented for stakeholder comment at a public community forum at the Montrose Center on September 24, 2014.

The collaborative adopted the “NEST” brand and logo in the same colors as the Hatch Youth logo, the existing LGBTQ youth programming at the Montrose Center, and to symbolize a temporary home the youth could envision as their own. Like a nest for a bird, the collaborative is intended to create a nurturing safety net for LGBTQ youth at-risk of or experiencing homelessness in which the youth can be supported, learn new skills and from which they can one day launch their adult lives as happy and healthy members of society. Through a community-wide collaboration, NEST will expand supports and services for LGBTQ youth so that they do not experience homelessness in our community. The logo can be used without the tagline to be a more discrete way of engaging youth in schools and other settings in which they might be fearful of being “outed” as LGBTQ.

LGBTQ Youth in Harris/Fort Bend County

Our community decided to participate in this national initiative for several reasons, in particular the overrepresentation of LGBTQ youth among youth experiencing homelessness. Estimating the number of LGBTQ homeless youth anywhere, but especially in the South, is a thorny task; perhaps so much so that no significant or reliable datasets exist to date for Southern states. As providers of youth care and services in Texas’s largest city, and one of the largest in the country, we compare national figures to the of experience and reports from our outreach and prevention team. Two recent reports—one issued by the Williams Institute and partners (2012), and one by Center for American Progress (2013)—offer comprehensive analyses of urban LGBTQ youth homelessness on a national scale.

LGBTQ youth make up only 5 – 7% of the general youth population (Durso & Gates, 2012). According to providers surveyed nationwide, 40% of youth receiving services identified as LGBT and were predominantly 18 years or older (Durso & Gates, 2012). In a range of studies, 10% to 25% of homeless youth in the Midwest identified as “LGBT” compared to 25% to 50% on the east and west coasts (Cray, Durso, & Miller, 2013). The role that region plays in collecting data about sexual orientation and gender identity among youth experiencing homelessness cannot be underestimated. Reluctance to self-identify is even more pronounced in the South, where LGBTQ bias is freely expressed, even in the more perceptibly tolerant urban centers. Of the 160 youth identified during the 2013 countywide point-in-time count conducted by Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County, only 1 in 5 identified as

² <http://www.homelesshouston.org/continuum-of-care/>

“gay or bisexual” (Houston/Harris County, 2013). Furthermore, 12,512 youth were identified as being homeless during the 2011-12 school year (Growing Up in Houston, 2012). With this figure and the aforementioned data, we can plausibly estimate the number of sexual and gender minority homeless school-aged youth in the Greater Houston Area to be between 2,500 (20%) and 5,000 (40%). The 2014 point in time (PIT) count reported a total of 5,351 sheltered and unsheltered youth in Houston and Harris/Fort Bend Counties. NEST’s Research and Data Subcommittee will work to develop methodology for a more robust youth count to capture a more accurate estimate of the number of homeless youth.

Outreach, at both the community and individual levels, has become essential in gauging not only the existing scope of Harris/Fort Bend County’s LGBTQ youth at-risk and homeless problem, but also in identifying the cracks in the system that homeless young sexual and gender minorities fall through. In the course of conducting street-level HIV prevention outreach, the Montrose Center and numerous other providers encounter LGBTQ youth among the homeless at the same rate as estimated above on a daily basis, and have for decades.

Project Remix, a project of the Montrose Center’s Hatch Youth program, was launched in 2011 and is dedicated solely to reaching LGBTQ homeless and at-risk youth ages 13 to 24. In addition to HIV/STI prevention, contacts are provided with education and referrals for medical care, emergency shelter, crisis intervention, food and clothing, protective services and advocacy. The core Hatch Youth program, which meets three times per week at the Montrose Center, also sees “couch-surfing” youth who have been dispossessed by their families or have left home due to conflicts stemming from orientation/identity issues. These efforts and the stories that emerge are a critical element of assessing the overall needs of our target population, and in creating an overall profile of an LGBTQ homeless youth.

According to anecdotal information from providers serving LGBT youth, the typical LGBTQ homeless youth is:

- Between the ages of 15 and 18
- Somewhat likely to identify as transgender
- Relies on friends, acquaintances or relatives (other than parents) for temporary shelter
- Uses substances frequently (typically alcohol and marijuana)
- Very likely unemployed
- Stays and moves around primarily in Montrose and adjacent inner city areas
- Has engaged in survival sex for money, shelter, food more than once within the past 3-6 months
- 3 out of 4 sexual encounters are unsafe
- Likely the victim of an older sexual predator. According to state law, minors (age 17 and under) engaged in survival sex are considered victims of trafficking.

Another distinct profile emerges for commercial sex workers. They are slightly older (17-24), less likely to identify as transgender, and more likely to use substances frequently. Not surprisingly, a majority of adult commercial sex workers originated as youth similar to the above profile.

NEST's Overarching Objectives and Intended Outcomes

NEST has five overarching objectives. These include:

- (1) **Facilitate better local collaboration** between stakeholders working with youth to develop & implement a comprehensive community strategy to prevent homelessness among LGBTQ youth
- (2) **Improve identification of LGBTQ youth at-risk** of or experiencing episodic homelessness through outreach, screening & assessment
- (3) **Identify, coordinate and improve policies & interventions** to prevent LGBTQ youth homelessness across shelter and housing systems (e.g., primary and behavioral health care, child welfare, education, employment, juvenile justice, law enforcement)
- (4) **Reduce homelessness among LGBTQ youth** and improve their outcomes in the areas of permanent connections, stable housing, education/employment, and well-being
- (5) **Inform national strategies** for preventing & ending homelessness among LGBTQ youth

As previously noted, NEST is grounded in USICH's framework to end youth homelessness. This framework includes a focus on using data to assess individual youth and system-level needs, identifying and implementing interventions that align with these needs, and monitoring progress. USICH defines these four core outcome areas as follows:

Stable housing includes a safe and reliable place to call home. Stable housing fulfills a critical and basic need for homeless youth. It is essential to enabling functioning across a range of life activities. Lack of stable housing, on the other hand, exposes young people to a multitude of risks on the streets.

Permanent connections include ongoing attachments to families, communities, schools, and other positive social networks. Connections support young people's ability to access new ideas and opportunities that support thriving and they provide a social safety net when young people are at-risk of re-entering homelessness.

Education/employment includes high performance in and completion of educational and training activities, especially for younger youth, and starting and maintaining adequate and stable employment, particularly for older youth. Achievements in education and employment increase a youth's capacity to support himself or herself and avoid future homelessness.

Well-being refers to the social and emotional functioning of homeless youth. It includes the development of key competencies, attitudes, and behaviors that equip a young person experiencing homelessness to avoid unhealthy risks and to succeed across multiple domains of daily life, including school, work, relationships, and community.

The following table summarizes NEST's overarching objectives by USICH core outcome.

Table 1: NEST Objectives by Core Outcome

Core Outcome	NEST Objectives
Stable Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that shelters, group homes, & residential treatment facilities have specific policies to support LGBTQ youth. • Eliminate barriers & improve services to LGBTQ youth across multiple service providing organizations. • Better transitions for LGBTQ youth from foster care & juvenile justice systems. • Support improved licensing standards that align with the law. • Propose plan & other strategies to address housing needs & align existing resources for housing LGBTQ youth. • Expand cross-systems collaboration between NEST & homeless providers.
Permanent Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with child welfare system to implement LGBTQ-affirming policies & practices. • Support caregivers & providers in mentoring LGBTQ youth. • Counsel families of juvenile justice-involved LGBTQ youth on permanency & acceptance. • Encourage districts/schools to work with parents on decreasing rejecting behavior directed at LGBTQ youth. • Collaborate with local, non-traditional points of contact with youth to identify, assess & refer at-risk LGBTQ youth.
Education/ Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage best practices throughout school districts. • Implement affirming & nondiscrimination policies for LGBTQ youth on all school campuses. • Engage districts & schools through homeless liaisons to support LGBTQ youth academic success including graduation. • Promote access to post-secondary education for LGBTQ youth. • Identify at-risk & homeless LGBTQ youth in schools, GED & youth employment agencies. • Improve safety & connectivity for LGBTQ youth in schools. • Support LGBTQ youth with developing employment/career goals & skills. • Expand community collaboration between schools & service providers to improve timeliness of supports for LGBTQ youth.
Social-Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase competency among providers to identify, assess & treat LGBTQ youth.

Well-being

- Eliminate barriers to primary & behavioral health care access for LGBTQ youth.
- Inform LGBTQ youth of their health care rights & best practices.
- Expand the LGBTQ youth cultural competency of hospitals & clinics.
- Provide access to comprehensive health care for LGBTQ youth in the juvenile justice system.
- Support School Health Advisory Committees in addressing LGBTQ student well-being.
- Encourage school districts to participate in the YRBS and/or school climate survey.

Section II: Local Context for NEST Implementation

NEST is a collaboration formed to end and prevent homelessness among LGBTQ youth. This collaborative will benefit the community in several ways, including: (1) identifying LGBTQ youth at-risk of experiencing homelessness, (2) engaging youth in programs, (3) expanding the LGBTQ competence of service systems for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness, (4) increasing organizational awareness of available resources in the community that can be connected to serve LGBTQ youth, and (5) developing strategies to prevent homelessness among LGBTQ youth.

Local factors contributing to homelessness among LGBTQ youth were identified at a community forum in April, 2014. The forum involved over 50 stakeholders from more than 30 agencies. During this event, participants discussed local strengths, challenges, and opportunities related to preventing LGBTQ youth homelessness. Some factors identified as contributing to LGBTQ youth homelessness included stigma and bias; negative community and family reactions, including responses rooted in religious beliefs; lack of awareness about youth homelessness at the community level; and challenges youth experience when exiting the foster care and juvenile justice or adult legal systems. Participants also noted that youth of color also seem to be at greater risk for homelessness.

However, despite existing challenges, participants in the community forum noted that local attitudes toward people who identify as LGBTQ are improving. Houston also has support from Mayor Annise Parker, some local agencies have adopted LGBTQ-inclusive policies (these agencies report that up to 30% of youth served identify as LGBTQ), and the city has begun to acknowledge that LGBTQ youth, in particular transgender youth, are in foster care. The following sections describe needs and challenges; strengths and assets, including opportunities to move NEST forward in the community; and potential barriers to NEST's success.

Needs and Challenges

Stakeholders have noted a number of needs and challenges that have informed NEST's approach. For example, there is a great need for more faith-based partners to lead and affirmatively address the scope of LGBTQ youth homelessness in their sector, since religious beliefs or authority are often used to stigmatize gender diverse and non-heterosexual identified people. For this reason, one NEST goal is to build trust between the faith-based service providers and the LGBTQ community. Other needs and challenges that community stakeholders have identified include:

- **ADULTISM.** Many organizations in the community do not include youth, youth peer-to-peer support is lacking, and some agency rules limit youth involvement.
- **COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION.** Lack of communication between and, in some cases, lack of collaboration among youth service systems (e.g., agencies are competing for limited dollars; there is not a centralized case management/data sharing/communication process; foster care placement decisions are made based on availability rather than fit with the youth).
- **CURRENT LAWS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES.** Laws in place to protect youth put up barriers to serving them (e.g., cannot house minors without parental consent, individuals may be charged with

interference with child custody if they take youth into their homes; residential childcare licensing standards that prohibit housing youth age 17 and younger on the same grounds as adults; youth may not access services because they fear being placed into custody with Texas Child Protective Services (CPS); parental permission is needed for school-based services). Current laws, policies and procedures do not adequately address the basic housing and privacy needs of transgender youth in shelters.

- **ENGAGEMENT OF THE FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY.** Lack of enough faith-based service providers and partners outside of the Montrose neighborhood currently committed to addressing LGBTQ youth homelessness and supporting at-risk LGBTQ youth in an affirming and culturally competent manner.
- **FAMILY RESPONSES AND SUPPORTS.** Too many families respond to LGBTQ identity/expression in ways that put youth at risk for becoming homeless. With the exception of Parent and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), resources for building family support and family reconciliation services are lacking.
- **FUNDING.** The system of care that the community has been able to assemble around HIV care is a model for serving hard to reach populations whom mainstream service providers are not equipped to serve. Funding for non-HIV housing, case management, outreach and primary and behavioral health services is harder to obtain than funding for the same services for people who are living with HIV.
- **HUMAN TRAFFICKING.** LGBTQ youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness have a high likelihood of being trafficked or exploited. When addressing human trafficking, sexism and homophobia may cause those seeking to help to overlook the LGBTQ victims of trafficking.
- **LACK OF CULTURALLY COMPETENT, TRAUMA-INFORMED YOUTH SERVICES.** Significant training and awareness building is needed throughout the community's youth-serving systems to provide more culturally competent, trauma-informed care for LGBTQ youth and their families. For example, LGBTQ training for foster parents is not standardized. Also, the True Colors Fund agency assessment found that few mainstream agencies include question about sexual orientation or gender identity on intake forms. Preferred name and gender pronouns are rarely, if ever, included as part of introductions in groups or when meeting new youth. Few agencies have single unit or all-gender bathrooms.
- **LACK OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR LGBTQ YOUTH.** Gender non-conforming youth face particular barriers to employment. There is a lack of training and resources available for youth seeking employment and for employers on how to become culturally competent and LGBTQ affirming.
- **LACK OF LOCAL CHAMPIONS PREVENTING LGBTQ YOUTH HOMELESSNESS.** At the onset of the collaborative, an identified problem was the lack of champions in positions of power (besides Mayor Parker) addressing the prevention of LGBTQ youth homelessness who can speak to the larger community and build buy-in for prevention and early intervention strategies.
- **MISUNDERSTANDING OF TRANSGENDER IDENTITY.** There is a lack of understanding about transgender identity. For example, agencies think they don't serve any transgender youth, use birth sex for housing assignments, have strict stereotypical and binary expectations about the type of

clothing youth are required to wear in public agency spaces, and isolate these youth to “protect” them. Current child welfare training lacks a focus on transgender youth. Homophobic comments may be challenged which is often not the case for transphobic remarks.

- **OTHER MISSING OR INADEQUATE SERVICES FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES.** There is not a coordinated system of access and assessment to adequately serve youth and minimize the need for youth to keep retelling their stories.
- **SCHOOLS.** Negative school experiences are pervasive, with many concerns about harassment and behaviors among both anti-gay and transphobic students and staff. Many schools lack gay-straight alliances (GSAs) and there is a denial of the presence of LGBTQ students and their experiences. There is a history in Southeast Texas of school districts prohibiting GSAs until legal action was taken as recently as 2011. Local school districts do not require grantees/contractors to have inclusive nondiscrimination policies and all districts, except Houston ISD (Independent School District), lack inclusive nondiscrimination policies. Also, teachers may not know how to respond when they find out students are homeless. Furthermore, homeless students are often unaware of their rights to remain in their school despite family relocations.
- **SHELTERS/HOUSING.** There is a paucity of safe housing options, as well as negative youth perceptions of existing shelters (there are approximately 24 beds for youth ages 12-17 in the Kinder Emergency Shelter which is the only shelter accepting youth age 17 and younger. It is an emergency shelter only and not a long-term solution).
- **TRANSPORTATION.** Houston and Harris/Fort Bend Counties are geographically spread out and public transit is not easily navigated; many youth are coming from outside of central Houston to access LGBTQ affirming services; and there is a paucity of transportation services within and outside of Houston. It can take many hours to travel from home to the meeting space since a transfer is nearly always required.

Strengths and Assets

This collaborative has identified key stakeholders and expanded relationships and awareness of available services for LGBTQ youth at-risk of or experiencing homelessness. By involving the whole community, opportunities for strategic planning can improve service delivery and providers can create safer spaces where families and youth are accessing services. The development of resources for LGBTQ youth at-risk of or experiencing homelessness that are culturally competent and apply best practices will require, for example, youth and family input, continued collaboration, and information sharing.

Through its process to date—planning with community collaboration, technical assistance, and data collection—this collaborative can build political will, clarify roles, and assist with marshaling resources. NEST is collaborating with Houston’s Continuum of Care, Coalition for the Homeless, to develop a coordinated assessment system to ensure that LGBTQ homeless youth are linked with the appropriate housing and services as soon as possible. Community stakeholders have identified a range of strengths and assets in the community that NEST can leverage to support its success while also building on the missions and strategies of other organizations in the community. These strengths and assets include:

- **DEDICATED LGBTQ YOUTH PROGRAMS.** The Montrose Center's Hatch Youth and Safe Zones Programs are trusted and safe places for LGBTQ youth and are looked to for training of professionals who engage LGBTQ youth.
- **FAITH-BASED COMMUNITIES.** Churches that are supportive of LGBTQ youth and are providing meals, drop-in services or other support include Bering Methodist Church Hawthorne Dinner/Open Gate, Montrose Grace Place/Grace Lutheran Church, and Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church.
- **FOUNDATIONS.** We are fortunate to have some local private funders interested in supporting this effort and involved in NEST.
- **HIV SERVICES SYSTEM.** The Montrose Center, Legacy Community Health Services, AIDS Foundation Houston, Bering Omega Community Services, Fundación Latinoamericana de Acción Social, Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans, Harris Health System, Houston Area Community Services, Bee Busy, Positive Efforts, Connect to Protect and other service providers' collaboration around HIV prevention and services.
- **IMPROVING ATTITUDES.** The attitudes toward people who identify as LGBTQ are improving as evidenced by the nine-time election of Annise Parker as City Councilmember, Comptroller and now Mayor. Two other openly LGBT advocates have been elected to City offices.
- **JAIL DIVERSION.** Houston Municipal Courts offer Homeless Court as a means of reducing the jail population and divert community members toward alternative service providers. Additionally, the Houston Recovery Center [Sobering Center], Mental Health Court, STAR [Success Through Addiction Recovery] Drug Court, GIRL Court and HPD's Homeless Outreach Team offer diversion for applicable populations.
- **LAW ENFORCEMENT.** The Harris County Sheriff's Office has taken a leadership role in developing policies on Discrimination in the Workplace and PREA and LGBTI detainees.
- **NETWORKS.** The Montrose Center is engaged in many of the service provision networks that will be needed to accomplish NEST's goals. The Center brings an integrated big-picture view as well as a youth centered approach to services addressing HIV, social support, substance use, anti-violence, homelessness, suicide prevention and mental health. The Homeless Youth Network was founded in 1998. The LGBTQ Homeless Youth Summit met for three years leading up to this collaborative to share resources and information and lay a foundation for collaborative services. Many of these members are participating in the development of NEST. The Homeless Youth Network, which consists of numerous agencies across the city that are addressing youth homelessness, include Cathedral Health Ministries, The Center for Success and Independence, Covenant House Texas, DePelchin Children's Center, Harris County Protective Services for Children and Adults, Mental Health Mental Retardation Authority (MHMRA) of Harris County, and Texas Department of Family and Protective Services in Region 6. Hatch was a member during the early years.
- **RESOURCE DIRECTORIES.** CPS's Community Youth Services Resource Directory lists the most commonly used resource and referral, United Way, as well as church and government resources available to the general public serving youth. The CoC is developing a coordinated access system that will include an assessment and registration in the HMIS.

- **SCHOOLS.** Houston Independent School District (HISD) has the area's only fully inclusive non-discrimination policy. Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network Houston (GLSEN) has the only active chapter in the state of Texas. Many of the local postsecondary universities and colleges in the area are LGBTQ affirming and have LGBTQ student organizations and resource centers. The Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Welcoming Schools Project, an LGBT-inclusive approach to addressing family diversity, gender stereotyping and bullying and name-calling in K-5 learning environments, is working in four pilot schools in Houston Independent School District.
- **SHELTER.** CPS's Kinder Emergency Shelter provides youth who are in crisis with a safe, short-term, home-like environment until they can be returned home or to another longer-term placement. Additional resources include housing and drop in centers such as Salvation Army and New Hope Housing.
- **SUPPORT SERVICES.** Other community-based organizations/services identified as potential assets to NEST include: Beacon Drop In 18+, Church Under the Bridge, Dan's House of Hope (a cancer center designed specifically for teens), SNAP (food stamps), Hawthorne Dinners, Houston Police Department's Homeless Outreach Team (HOT), Montrose Grace Place, A Simple Thread, H.A.Y Center Preparation for Adult Living Program, Harris County Safety Net Program, Covenant House Mobile Street Outreach, Salvation Army Greater Houston including its Perry Street Apartments residential services program, and the Transgender Education Network of Texas.

Challenges and Potential Barriers to Our Success

During the course of the planning process, NEST participants identified potential challenges that could impede NEST's success. These include:

- **FUNDING.** Houston/Harris/Fort Bend Counties has the capacity to support a service system for LGBTQ youth within the mainstream services system. It has yet to be tested whether funders will step forward and support this effort.
- **HETEROSEXISM.** Continued bias is evidenced by the recent backlash to the Houston Equal Right Ordinance meant to end of sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination in the City of Houston.
- **PUBLIC POLICY.** The political system in Texas is especially challenging in regards to LGBTQ issues for both adults and youth. The State is currently appealing an overturn of the ban on marriage equality. The State has not yet cleaned up the Texas Penal Code to remove 21.06 Sodomy Law found unconstitutional by Lawrence v Texas in 2003. The Romeo and Juliet Law continues to discriminate against LGBTQ youth.
- **TRANSPORTATION.** Harris County is 50 miles across and 1,704 square miles. The public transportation system is fragmented and struggles to cover the area efficiently.
- **TURFISM.** While there have been great strides in coming together to address homelessness, service providers can still move further along the continuum toward greater collaboration.

Section III: Overview of NEST

This section provides an overview of NEST, beginning with its vision, core goals, and overarching objectives for the community. Next, inputs that support and inform the collaborative are described, followed by summaries of NEST's activities, planned outputs, outcomes/impact, and milestones, and concludes with a review of planned continuous quality improvement strategies that will help to shape the collaborative as it moves forward.

Vision

In Harris/Fort Bend Counties, Texas, homelessness among LGBTQ youth ends by 2020 and LGBTQ youth at-risk of, or experiencing, episodic homelessness achieve positive outcomes.

Goals

This community commits to a coordinated service delivery model that is data-driven and utilizes recognized best practices. The collaborative will expand knowledge and inform strategies in Harris County to:

- (1) Prevent homelessness for LGBTQ youth at-risk or experiencing homelessness, and
- (2) Intervene early to prevent episodic and chronic homelessness among LGBTQ youth.

Objectives

NEST has five objectives:

- (1) **Facilitate better local collaboration** between stakeholders working with youth to develop & implement a comprehensive community strategy to prevent homelessness among LGBTQ youth
- (2) **Improve identification of LGBTQ youth at-risk** of or experiencing episodic homelessness through outreach, screening & assessment
- (3) **Identify, coordinate, & improve policies & interventions** to prevent LGBTQ youth homelessness across shelter and housing systems (e.g., primary and behavioral health care, child welfare, education, employment, juvenile justice, law enforcement)
- (4) **Reduce homelessness among LGBTQ youth** & improve their outcomes in the areas of permanent connections, stable housing, education/employment, & well-being
- (5) **Inform national strategies** for preventing & ending homelessness among LGBTQ youth

Inputs

Collaborative inputs include the following:

- *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent & End Homelessness* (including the USICH Framework to Prevent & End Youth Homelessness)

- Existing knowledge; recommended practices and interventions; and resources for preventing LGBTQ youth homelessness
- Existing local capacities (e.g., infrastructure to collaborate, technology) and system competencies
- Local funding
- Local lead organization (the Montrose Center), partners, and other stakeholders such as: best practice training experts, continuum of care providers, faith-based community, foster care organizations, funding community, homeless service providers, juvenile justice, law enforcement, primary & behavioral health providers, and school liaisons.
- Technical assistance (TA) from US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) team & other federal agencies listed in the acknowledgements, and from the True Colors Fund.

Key Activities

Collaborative participants identified activities to be completed in the short-term to ensure success of NEST:

Infrastructure

- Secure memorandum of understanding (MOUs) between entities participating in NEST
- Present the NEST plan to the Continuum of Care and solicit feedback from providers
- By November 15, 2014, revise the plan based on additional feedback from community stakeholders

Youth and Family Voice

- Engage youth, families, and family organizations in providing input on the plan and in participating in plan implementation, through outreach via Hatch Youth, PFLAG and other LGBTQ youth affirming organizations

Advocacy

- Expand training to staff in the child welfare system to raise awareness about the needs of LGBTQ youth and build their competency for working with them.
- Ensure LGBTQ youth are specifically mentioned as a vulnerable population in state-level human trafficking laws.
- Ensure that policies and practices in juvenile detention facilities are aligned with best/recommended practice for those LGBTQ youth in their care and those who upon release cannot return home

Child Welfare

- Expand nondiscrimination policies and practices based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression within the child welfare system
- Collaborate with DFPS Region 6 to develop and implement a DFPS mentoring program for LGBTQ youth involved with the child welfare system who are at-risk of, or experiencing, homelessness

Criminal Justice/Legal

- Work with juvenile justice housing providers (detention facilities, treatment centers, jail, etc.) to be more LGBTQ affirming through provision of resources
- Providing counseling and supports to families of LGBTQ at-risk and recently homeless youth
- Increase LGBTQ competency, acceptance and awareness education trainings for all youth and staff
- Research best practice recommendations to strengthen policies and training of staff of juvenile probation/detention departments on working with youth who will not have a stable housing situation once they are released and work with HCJPD to implement best practice recommendations

Education and Training

- Survey licensed residential child care agencies for safety for LGBTQ youth in care and LGBTQ cultural competency
- Identify existing resource guides (e.g., United Way 211, Blue Book), review for culturally competent language and affirming organizations and advise guide sponsors of any recommended changes to improve cultural competence
- Enhance existing LGBTQ training infrastructure and resources
- Identify existing opportunities to increase cultural competency and awareness about homelessness-related issues among LGBTQ youth in various systems and settings that serve them (e.g., alternative schools, criminal/juvenile justice system, community-based organizations)

Employment

- Review, select, and adapt as necessary, evidence-based practices for connecting at-risk and homeless LGBTQ youth with employment opportunities

Funding

- Raise awareness in the funding community about NEST; educate funders about the issue of LGBTQ youth homelessness, including causes, prevalence, specific needs and best practices
- Ongoing engagement with funders throughout NEST's implementation

Research and Data

- Establish and identify definitions for youth homelessness and housing instability situations experienced by youth
- Collect data to identify the magnitude of unstable housing situations experienced by Youth
- Collect data and share findings on housing instability situations that LGBTQ youth experience

Schools

- Identify Districts to be involved in the initial phase of the Initiative
- Improve access to Community Resource Identification and Networking
- Implement affirming policies and procedures – best practices, discipline policies

Shelter and Housing

- Examine the policies of housing and service providers and work to develop flexible policies for youth who have difficulty obtaining necessary documentation
- Facilitate in-person meetings with faith-based leaders and LGBTQ-affirming service providers to discuss how these stakeholders can help to address LGBTQ youth homelessness
- Promote permanent connections to families, and develop and implement supports for families for at-risk LGBTQ youth such as programs to reunify LGBTQ youth with their families after an out-of-home placement or after they have run away
- Work with foster families in the child welfare system to be affirming and provide safe, supportive placements for LGBTQ youth
- Complete a draft plan for providing housing to LGBTQ youth who are homeless to be reviewed by community stakeholders

Primary and Behavioral Health Care

- Select and begin implementing an evidence-based tool for identifying, screening and assessing LGBTQ youth for their risk of homelessness and implementing interventions to prevent homelessness. The tool will need to be congruent with the CoC Coordinated Access tool.
- Review and select evidence-based practices for identifying, assessing, and providing at-risk and homeless LGBTQ youth with culturally competent, comprehensive primary and behavioral health care.
- Develop an information resource for LGBTQ homeless or at risk for homelessness youth that informs them of their primary and behavioral health care rights and the services available to them.
- Engage local primary and behavioral health care providers to youth to become culturally competent to serve LGBTQ youth and their families and to use the best practice to identify, screen, assess and treat at-risk LGBTQ youth.

Outputs

The key short-term outputs that the collaborative will produce include:

- Findings from surveys of shelters, group homes, and residential treatment facilities licensed by the state to examine LGBTQ affirming policies
- Written summary of hours for shelter beds/services and access barriers for LGBTQ youth
- Expanded LGBTQ youth cultural competency curriculum for training that can be adapted to all service sectors
- Development and dissemination of a resource guide that summarizes LGBTQ-affirming for LGBTQ youth and their families in the community.
- Unified age category definitions for homeless youth that are consistent across homeless and homeless prevention service providers
- Written summary of the availability and cultural competency of housing for LGBTQ youth at-risk of homelessness, and related gaps
- Expanded resources and supports for schools, in particular homeless education liaisons

- A best practice toolkit for primary and behavioral health care
- Broader collaborative participation in preventing LGBTQ youth homelessness

Outcomes and Impact

Intervention strategies should strengthen the protective factors in which a youth is lacking and reduce the risk factors with which a youth is burdened. Improvements on risk and protective factors can serve as pathways to achieve better outcomes in stable housing, permanent connections, education and employment, and well-being.³ Using the USICH framework, the collaborative will affect the following short-term outcomes for LGBTQ at-risk youth:

- (1) Stable Housing:
 - a. Decreased homelessness
 - b. Improved consumer friendly documentation requirements for temporary, transitional or permanent housing, including the portability and storage of these documents so that homeless youth can more easily obtain housing and other services that contribute to their stability
 - c. Expanded access to safer housing options
 - d. Improve quality and quantity of data on which to base planning decisions
- (2) Permanent Connections:
 - a. Increased number of affirming staff in schools and service providers
 - b. Improved family-youth connections, including decreases in the proportion of LGBTQ youth becoming homeless because of family rejection associated with their LGBT identity/expression
- (3) Education/Employment:
 - a. Improved communication with school district personnel about LGBTQ resources and issues
 - b. Improved referral processes from the school to community services for youth and families
 - c. Increased graduation rates
 - d. Improved support for developing career goals and achieving employment
- (4) Social-Emotional Well-Being
 - a. Reduced barriers for accessing culturally competent and affirming primary and behavioral health care
 - b. Increased awareness of rights for LGBTQ youth in accessing primary and behavioral health care
 - c. Increased awareness of World Professional Association of Transgender Health (WPATH) standards of care by primary and behavioral health care for transgender youth

Milestones

The NEST plan will measure progress towards goals and successful implementation by:

- Steering committee and subcommittees representing community stakeholders convene and participate in NEST implementation. By December 2016

³ These USICH outcome areas are defined in the introduction to this plan.

Advocacy Subcommittee

- Increasing the number of shelters, group homes and residential treatment facilities with policies adopted or under development. By March 2016
- Written implementation plan for simplifying and storing documents for youth age 17 and younger; compiled document requirements for housing and service providers; simplified and unified organizational policies where possible. By August 2015

Child Welfare Subcommittee

- Sample non-discrimination policies provided to essential stakeholders; Texas Department of Families and Protective Services (DFPS) Region 6 (Houston) has adopted a non-discrimination policy as well as visible evidence of cultural competency and sensitivity. By June 2015
- Prevention and mentoring plans implemented. By December 2016
- Reunification unit to counsel and support youth in the juvenile justice system and their families. By December 2016

Criminal Justice Subcommittee

- Laws regarding housing homeless youth cataloged and advocacy organizations engaged. By March 2015

Education and Training Subcommittee

- Awareness campaign developed and implemented. By December 2016
Screening tool selected and implementation plan developed. By December 2016

Employment Subcommittee

- Formal partnerships with schools and program developed; LGBTQ youth career development curriculum developed and shared with schools; surveys completed; resources distributed. By December 2016

Funders Subcommittee

- Funders attend convenings; funders toolkit developed and disseminated; local funders become involved in NEST. By December 2016

Primary and Behavioral Health Care Subcommittee

- Evidence-based practices identified; providers commit to adopting them. By December 2016
- Barriers identified, shared and reduced. By September 2016
- Education materials created and disseminated; compilation of model policies developed; advocacy subcommittee engaged in work with primary and behavioral health care providers on strengthening areas of policy and practice. By December 2016
- Available community care identified. By June 2015

Research and Data Subcommittee

- Needs assessment conducted and results shared; findings from other data analyses shared. By September 2016.
- LGBTQ questions integrated into YRBS survey, data gathered and analyzed. By December 2016

Shelter and Housing Subcommittee

- LGBTQ youth and family members involved in planning and implementation of NEST's work. By December 2016
- Gaps analysis completed, intake forms revised as needed. By March 2016
- Resource guide created and distributed and housing providers trained. By June 2015 and September 2016
- Common language selected; language incorporated into agency intake forms and other information collected on youth, where appropriate. By December 2015

Schools Subcommittee

- Compilation of policies created; sample policies for implementation developed and distributed locally as well as through the Texas School Safety Center (TSSC) that can distribute information throughout Texas; at least two schools and two community colleges or institutions of higher education that do not currently have safe zones are in the process of adopting such policies. By December 2016
- Engage districts and schools through homeless liaisons to support LGBTQ youth academic success including graduation. By December 2016
- School training curriculum developed, resource lists disseminated and training opportunities listed. By December 2016
- Safe place practices added to Student Residency Questionnaire (SRQ); data gathered and analyzed and best practice tools shared. By December 2016
- Resources to guide school district and alternative education interaction with LGBTQ youth developed; at least one community meeting held with necessary stakeholders to train school police and alternative education staff. By December 2016
- Formal partnerships with schools and program developed; LGBT youth career development curriculum developed and shared with schools; surveys completed; resources distributed. By December 2016

Continuous Quality Improvement and Evaluation

The process of implementing and evaluating NEST objectives will be rooted in the collaborative's mission and vision. To assess progress and outcomes associated with NEST activities, rigorous data collection and analysis is necessary. This includes identifying the data available and supplementing it with surveys and point-in-time counts. This also includes tracking progress on implementation of the objectives and activities, examining successes and barriers/challenges and factors contributing to these; and identifying opportunities to enhance NEST quality. These analyses will be aggregated and organized into easily digestible bites of information that will be compared to NEST's outcome measures and timeline. Semi-annual reports will be compiled and shared with the partners and other stakeholders in the community to inform continued implementation. The reports will analyze progress on NEST's key activities and timeline.

Importantly, activities will be adjusted in response to available data, reports and stakeholder feedback. Any objectives that are off track may undergo a more intense analysis at regular steering committee

meetings to determine if any assumptions used in the plan need correction. Any revisions will be reviewed with the relevant subcommittees and other stakeholders and implemented using the comments to inform the changes. Additional training or technical assistance (TA) will be sought particularly in areas that are off track from the timeline or activities and measures. The collaborative will update this plan based on revisions approved among the steering committee members.

Furthermore, NEST will collaborate with the HUD TA team around its documentation and evaluation of the collaborative. This will provide useful data to inform local quality improvement planning. For example, the HUD TA team will document the planning process and assess NEST's impact over time.

Section V: Conclusion

The steering committee has made it an early objective to work with the Continuum of Care to conduct the data collection necessary to create a clearer picture of LGBTQ homeless youth in the area. While we have anecdotal information through service providers and some youth, it is important to compare that qualitative information with quantitative data. As a group, we are committed to describing the problem, improving the cultural competency of all systems and their participants to work with LGBTQ youth who are at-risk for or experiencing homelessness, and implementing strategies and interventions that prevent and intervene early to address LGBTQ youth homelessness as steps toward ending LGBTQ youth homelessness by 2020.

We know how critical it is that all sectors of our community embrace the planning process and agree to move towards ending youth homelessness by 2020. The area is fortunate to have the participation of service providers, faith-based groups, law enforcement, schools, the child protection system, primary and behavioral health care providers and many other professionals and volunteers who are in a position to support positive changes in the lives of LGBTQ youth at-risk for or experiencing homelessness. Together, these resources present a tremendously valuable local capacity to successfully move NEST's plan forward.

This plan is a starting point for NEST and our local commitment to ending LGBTQ youth homelessness. We will work to leverage our local strengths while addressing our local needs to move this plan forward. We will adapt this plan as the initiative moves forward and we learn more about what is working and where resources might need to be redeployed. Furthermore, the collaborative, including members of the steering committee and all of the subcommittees, are committed to increasing the participation of the community and youth in NEST as its implementation process moves forward.

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Houston/Harris County. Retrieved from [http://www.homelesshouston.org/wp-](http://www.homelesshouston.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/CoC-Action-Plan.pdf)

National Recommended Best Practices for Serving LGBT Homeless Youth

<http://www.lambdalegal.org/publications/national-recommended-best-practices-for-lgbt-homeless-youth>

A Practitioner's Resource Guide: Helping Families to Support Their LGBT Children, SAMHSA Pub id: PEP14-LGBTKIDS

Seeking Shelter: The Experiences and Unmet Needs of LGBT Homeless Youth Center for American Progress: Andrew Cray, Katie Miller, and Laura E. Durso September 2013

<http://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/LGBTHomelessYouth.pdf> Center for American Progress, 1333 H St. NW, 10th Floor, Washington, D.C. 20005

U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness Framework to End Youth Homelessness <http://usich.gov/>

USICH Opening Doors, Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness 2010 and Amended 2012 http://usich.gov/opening_doors/

Resources

Administration for Children, Youth and Families (including screening tool) <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/>

The Alliance for Economic Inclusion <https://www.fdic.gov/consumers/community/AEI/overview.html>

Chapel Hill <http://unc.edu/>

The Choice Program <http://www.choiceprograms.org/>

Equal Access Rule <http://blog.hud.gov/index.php/2012/02/06/new-hud-rule-on-equal-access/>

Family and Community Engagement (FACE)

<http://www.houstonisd.org/cms/lib2/TX01001591/Centricity/Domain/8339/FACE-CommResourceGuide-Final-03-2014.pdf>

Family Acceptance Project <http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/>

Frees Foundation <http://freesfoundation.org/>

Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network <http://www.glsen.org/>

Human Rights Campaign <http://www.hrc.org/>

Kartemquin Films – The Homestretch <https://kartemquin.com/films/the-homestretch>

The LA Gay and Lesbian Center <http://www.lalgbtcenter.org/>

Lambda Legal <http://www.lambdalegal.org/>

LYRIC Middle School of San Francisco <http://lyric.org/>

Maryland Healthy Transitions Initiative <http://mdtransition.org/>
<http://www.mdtransition.org/uploadedfiles/HTI%20service%20description.pdf>

McKinney Vento Act <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/publications/facts/McKinney.pdf>

National Alliance to End Homelessness <http://www.endhomelessness.org/>

Out for Education <http://outforeducation.org/>

Out Proud Together Youth <http://optyouth.org/>

Preparation for Adult Living http://www.hc-ps.org/Preperation_for_adult_living_PAL.htm

Romeo & Juliet Law <http://sex-crimes.laws.com/statutory-rape/romeo-and-juliet>
<http://www.criminaldefenselawyer.com/resources/do-statutory-rape-laws-apply-same-sex-situations.htm>

Runaway and Homeless Youth and Trafficking Prevention Act
<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/s2646>

Ruth Ellis Center <http://www.ruthelliscenter.org/>

SCORE Houston <http://www.scorehouston.org/>

Starbucks' Interview Program <http://www.youthcare.org/starbucks-interview-program>

Texas School Safety Center <http://txssc.txstate.edu/>

Thresholds <http://www.thresholds.org/>

True Colors Fund <http://truecolorsfund.org/>

U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Affairs <http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD>

U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness <http://usich.gov/>

Vera Institute <http://www.vera.org/>

You Gotta Believe <http://yougottabelieve.org/>

Youth MOVE (Motivating Others through Voices of Experience) <http://www.youthmovenational.org/>

Georgetown University Self-Assessment Checklist for Personnel Providing Services and Supports to LGBTQ Youth and Their Families <http://nccc.georgetown.edu/documents/final%20lgbtq%20checklist.pdf>

Blue Book HIV Resource Guide <http://www.rwpchouston.org/>

Acronyms

ACASI - Audio Computer-Assisted Self-Interview
ACYF – Administration for Children, Youth and Families (Federal)
CoC – Continuum of Care
CMS – Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services
CPS – Child Protective Services
CTI – Critical Time Intervention
DFPS – Department of Family and Protective Services (Texas)
EBI – evidence-based intervention
FACE – Family and Community Engagement
FAFSA – Free Application for Federal Student Aid
FQHC – Federally Qualified Health Center
GIS – Geographic Information System
GLSEN – Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network
GSAs – Gay Straight Alliance
HCPS – Harris County Protective Services
HCJPD – Harris County Juvenile Probation Department
HERO – Houston Equal Rights Ordinance
HHS – Harris Health System
HMIS – Homeless Management Information System
HRC – Human Rights Campaign
HUD – U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
HYN – Homeless Youth Network
IGP – Individual Graduation Plan
IRB – Institutional Review Board
ISC – Incident Command Structure
LEA – Local Education Agency
LGBTQ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning
MOU – Memorandum of Understanding
PFLAG – Parent and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
PIT – Point in Time (homeless count)
PEIMS – Public Education Information Management System

RHY – Runaway and Homeless Youth

RHYA – Runaway and Homeless Youth Act

SRQ – Student Resource Questionnaire

TASB – Texas Association of School Boards

TEA – Texas Education Agency

THEO – Texas Homeless Education Office

TSSC – Texas School Safety Center

UTMB – University of Texas Medical Branch (Galveston)

WPATH – World Professional Association for Transgender Health

YRBS – Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Appendix B: Local Partners and Supporters

Local Lead

The Way Home – Harris County Continuum of Care lead by the Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County

Local Manager

- [the Montrose Center /Hatch Youth](#)

Other Organizations

- Advocacy Incorporated
- [AIDS Foundation Houston, Inc.](#)
- [Association of Family and Community Integrity \(AFCI\)](#)
- [Baylor College of Medicine](#)
- [Baylor Teen Health Clinic](#)
- [Bnai Brith Youth Organization \(BBYO\)](#)
- [Bee Busy](#)
- [Behavioral Health Alliance of Texas](#)
- [Bering United Methodist Church](#) Hawthorne Dinner
- [Catholic Charities](#)
- [Cenpatico](#)
- [Harris County Protective Services for Children and Adults](#)
- [City of Houston-Mayor's Office](#)
- [Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris Co.](#)
- [Communities in Schools](#)
- [Covenant House Texas](#)
- [Community Services Department \(CSD\), Harris County](#)
- [Corporation for Supportive Housing \(CSH\)](#)
- [Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District \(CFISD\)](#)
- [DePelchin Children's Center](#)
- [Equality Texas](#)
- [Funders Together](#)
- [Grace Lutheran Church](#)
- [Harris County Juvenile Probation Department](#)
- [Harris County Office of Social Services](#)
- [Harris County Protective Services \(HCPS\) Youth Services](#)
- [Hay Center](#)
- [Homeless Youth Network of Harris County](#)
- [Houston Area Community Services \(HACS\)](#)
- [Houston Independent School District](#)
- [Houston Police Department Homeless Outreach Team](#)

- [Legacy Community Health Services](#)
- [Love146](#)
- [Mayor's Anti-Gang Office - City of Houston](#)
- [Mental Health America](#)
- [Mental Health and Mental Retardation Authority \(MHMRA\) of Harris County](#)
- [Montrose Grace Place](#)
- [National Association of Social Workers \(NASW\) Texas](#)
- [Network of Behavioral Health Providers](#)
- [New Hope Housing](#)
- [Office of Council Member Stephen Costello](#)
- [Office of County Commissioner Steve Radack](#)
- [Office of State Representative Jessica Farrar](#)
- [One Voice Texas](#)
- [Open Gate Homeless Youth Ministries](#)
- [Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast Texas](#)
- [Rainbow Pages Houston](#)
- [Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church](#)
- [Rice University](#)
- [Safety Net Project](#)
- [Salvation Army](#)
- [SEARCH Homeless Services](#)
- [Skills 4 Living](#)
- [Southwest Key Programs](#)
- [Stand Up for Kids](#)
- [Strawbridge United Methodist Church](#)
- [Texas Homeless Education Office \(THEO\)](#)
- [The Center of Success and Independence](#)
- [The Simmons Foundation](#)
- [The Woman's Home](#)
- [Transgender Center](#)
- [Transgender Education Network of Texas](#)
- [University of Houston](#)
- [University of Texas School of Public Health](#)
- [University of Texas School of Nursing](#)
- [Veterans Administration](#)
- [West Side Homeless](#)
- [Women's Resource Center](#)
- [YES Prep](#)
- [YMCA](#)
- [Youth Ranch](#)

Most organization's websites links are contained above

Appendix C: Logic Model for NEST

Vision		Goals				
In Harris County, Texas, homelessness among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, & questioning (LGBTQ) youth ends by 2020 & LGBTQ youth at-risk of, or experiencing, episodic homelessness achieve positive outcomes.		This community commits to a coordinated service delivery model that is data-driven & utilizes recognized best practices. The collaborative will expand knowledge & inform strategies in Harris County to: (1) Prevent homelessness for LGBTQ youth at-risk of experiencing homelessness & (2) Intervene early to prevent episodic and chronic homelessness ⁴ among LGBTQ youth.				
Objectives						
(1) Facilitate better local collaboration between stakeholders working with youth to develop & implement a comprehensive community strategy to prevent homelessness among LGBTQ youth (2) Improve identification of LGBTQ youth at-risk of or experiencing episodic homelessness through screening & assessment (3) Identify, coordinate, & improve policies & interventions to prevent LGBTQ youth homelessness across systems (e.g., behavioral health, child welfare, education, health, juvenile justice, law enforcement) (4) Reduce homelessness among LGBTQ youth & improve their outcomes in the areas of permanent connections, stable housing, education/employment, & well-being (5) Inform national strategies for preventing & ending homelessness among LGBTQ youth						
Population	Inputs	Priority Activities	Outputs			
Youth between the ages of 12 & 24, who are either at-risk of homelessness or who are or experiencing episodic homelessness. Local Context <table border="0"> <tr> <td> Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy efforts & politics Availability of & access to culturally competent services, programs, shelters, & housing Collaboration in the community across youth-serving systems (e.g., behavioral health, child welfare, education, juvenile justice, law enforcement) & “turf” concerns Community awareness of prevalence & causes of LGBTQ youth homelessness Culture Economic development & financial resources Faith-based organizations Funding and funders Geography (e.g., urban/rural communities, size) Leadership LGBTQ advocacy & service organizations Social/family attitudes toward LGBTQ identity/expression (e.g., bias, discrimination, violence) </td> <td> Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies & expected practices Cultural competency of staff Availability of developmentally appropriate youth services Leadership Use & coordination of data </td> <td> Youth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness of & willingness to access supports “Coming out” status Previous access to supports Previous history in jails/prisons or group homes Risk factors (e.g., emotional distress, family rejection, lack of stable housing, substance use, mental health challenges) Socio-economic demographics Strengths & protective factors (e.g., employment, positive friends, school connection, supportive adults, survival skills) </td> </tr> </table>	Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy efforts & politics Availability of & access to culturally competent services, programs, shelters, & housing Collaboration in the community across youth-serving systems (e.g., behavioral health, child welfare, education, juvenile justice, law enforcement) & “turf” concerns Community awareness of prevalence & causes of LGBTQ youth homelessness Culture Economic development & financial resources Faith-based organizations Funding and funders Geography (e.g., urban/rural communities, size) Leadership LGBTQ 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practices & interventions, & resources for preventing LGBTQ youth homelessness Existing local capacities (e.g., infrastructure to collaborate, technology) & system competencies Local funding Local lead organization (The Montrose Center), partners, & other stakeholders such as: best practice training experts, continuum of care, faith-based community, foster care, funding community, homeless service providers, juvenile justice, law enforcement, primary & behavioral health providers, school liaisons Technical assistance (TA) from HUD team & other federal agencies 	Needs Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess local strengths, challenges/needs, & opportunities Collect data & identify population needs Local Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify & engage key stakeholders that represent youth, youth-serving agencies, organizations that serve persons experiencing homelessness (e.g., local continuum of care), & non-traditional partners (e.g., libraries) Facilitate structures (e.g., Steering Committee and subcommittees) for local leadership, collaboration, & coordination Local Plan Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a strategic plan that is dynamic & flexible, based on needs assessment findings, current service gaps, & based on evidence-based & recommended strategies Local Plan Implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement strategies for preventing LGBTQ youth at-risk of homelessness & intervening early when it occurs Identify & obtain new resources Align existing resources Standardize models for best practices Create performance dashboards Implement communications strategies Technical Assistance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize available TA Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measure & document progress in achieving collaborative goals 	Needs Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of needs assessment findings Local Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings of steering committee & subcommittees Local Plan Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local strategic plan Local Plan Implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of plan strategies Local collaborative reports (October 1, 2014; October 1, 2015) Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation results
Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy efforts & politics Availability of & access to culturally competent services, programs, shelters, & housing Collaboration in the community across youth-serving systems (e.g., behavioral health, child welfare, education, juvenile justice, law enforcement) & “turf” concerns Community awareness of prevalence & causes of LGBTQ youth homelessness Culture Economic development & financial resources Faith-based organizations Funding and funders Geography (e.g., urban/rural communities, size) Leadership LGBTQ advocacy & service organizations Social/family attitudes toward LGBTQ identity/expression (e.g., bias, discrimination, violence) 	Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies & expected practices Cultural competency of staff Availability of developmentally appropriate youth services Leadership Use & coordination of data 	Youth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness of & willingness to access supports “Coming out” status Previous access to supports Previous history in jails/prisons or group homes Risk factors (e.g., emotional distress, family rejection, lack of stable housing, substance use, mental health challenges) Socio-economic demographics Strengths & protective factors (e.g., employment, positive friends, school connection, supportive adults, survival skills) 				

⁴ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Defined as either (1) unaccompanied homeless individuals who have been continuously homeless for a year or more, OR (2) unaccompanied individuals with a disabling condition who have had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.

Strategic Plan for NEST, Collaborative to Prevent LGBTQ Youth Homelessness

National Context		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy organizations & related efforts • Federal guidance & regulations • Federal support for addressing LGBTQ youth homelessness (e.g., USICH identification of LGBTQ youth as a population at-risk) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal support for this collaborative • Legislation, such as McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance, & Runaway & Homeless Youth Acts • Published research & recommended policies/practices 	
Outcomes & Impact		
<u>Planning Outcomes (Months 1-6)</u>	<u>Intermediate Outcomes (Months 7-18)</u>	<u>Long-Term Outcomes (Months 19+)</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanded local partnerships • Coordination of existing funding and, where feasible, identification & dedication of new funding • Identification of community need(s)—(data) • Identification of evidence-based or promising practices • Identification & promotion of existing resources • Identification of strategies to support and sustain collaborative (e.g., funder resources) • Increased participant & community awareness of LGBTQ youth homelessness • Increased community engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased collection of accurate data on LGBTQ youth homelessness • Every at-risk or homeless LGBTQ youth has a stabilization option • Every stakeholder has tools to assess & connect LGBTQ youth to prevention & early intervention services • Increased community awareness of LGBTQ youth homelessness & youth homelessness generally • Decreased risk factors & increased protective factors for LGBTQ youth • Expanded cross-system collaboration • Expanded alignment of community resources based on best practice & current need • Expanded availability of training for programs to ensure best practices are implemented • Increased participation of diverse agencies & non-traditional partners in local efforts • Increased capacity & expanded quality of services for LGBTQ youth (e.g., improved cultural competency at agencies) • Improved youth satisfaction with services 	<p>Continuation of intermediate outcomes plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased implementation of prevention & early intervention strategies (e.g., screening) • Increased community acceptance & adult support of issues LGBTQ youth experience • More positive school & agency environments for LGBTQ youth • Reductions in the number of LGBTQ youth becoming homeless • Successful practices shared with other communities

Appendix D: Terminology from True Colors Fund

TERMINOLOGY

*this is not a comprehensive list, and differing opinions exist about some of the terms included here. It is always best to ask a person what terms they use to describe themselves and to use those terms respectfully.

Sex

The classification of people as male or female. At birth infants are assigned a sex, usually based on the appearance of their external anatomy. (This is what is written on the birth certificate.) However, a person's sex is actually a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics.

Gender Identity

One's internal, deeply held sense of one's gender. For transgender people, their own internal gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Most people have a gender identity of man or woman (or boy or girl). For some people, their gender identity does not fit neatly into one of those two choices. Unlike gender expression (see below) gender identity is not visible to others.

Gender Expression

External manifestations of gender, expressed through one's name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behavior, voice, or body characteristics. Society identifies these cues as masculine and feminine, although what is considered masculine and feminine changes over time and varies by culture. Typically, transgender people seek to make their gender expression align with their gender identity, rather than the sex they were assigned at birth.

Sexual Orientation

Describes an individual's enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to another person. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay, or bisexual. For example, a person who transitions from male to female and is attracted solely to men would identify as a straight woman.

Lesbian

A woman whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction is to other women. Some lesbians may prefer to identify as gay (adj.) or as gay women. Avoid identifying lesbians as "homosexuals," a derogatory term.

Gay

The adjective used to describe people whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attractions are to people of the same sex (e.g., *gay man*, *gay people*). Sometimes *lesbian* (n. or adj.) is the preferred term for women. Avoid identifying gay people as "homosexuals", an outdated term considered derogatory and offensive to many lesbian and gay people.

Bisexual, Bi

A person who has the capacity to form enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attractions to those of the same gender and to those of another gender. People may experience this attraction in differing ways and degrees over their lifetime. Bisexual people need not have had specific sexual

experiences to be bisexual; in fact, they need not have had any sexual experience at all to identify as bisexual.

LGBT / GLBT

Acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender." LGBT and/or GLBT are often used because they are more inclusive of the diversity of the community. Care should be taken to ensure that audiences are not confused by their use. Ensure that the acronym is spelled out on first usage.

Queer

Traditionally a pejorative term, *queer* has been appropriated by some LGBT people to describe themselves. However, it is not universally accepted even within the LGBT community and should be avoided unless describing someone who self-identifies that way or in a direct quote. When Q is seen at the end of "LGBT," it typically means queer and/or questioning.