



NUY and NUY Safe Homes Information for HRA Discussion

Purpose: This is a quick review of Northfield Union of Youth's (NUY) proposed use of CDBG Community-Based Youth Programs funds in collaboration with the Northfield HRA. NUY serves all Northfield youth with targeted services provided to the most at-risk youth in the Northfield area. Specifically, NUY's Host-Home Program (NUY Safe Homes) serves and supports youth experiencing or at-risk of experiencing homelessness in the Northfield area.

Summary: NUY serves more than 700 youth every year in various programs and supportive services. Most publicly, NUY runs "The Key" youth center as a drop-in center for youth to connect with peers, caring adults, and the Northfield community. The Key exists as a blend of relationship-driven enrichment activities for youth and a supportive services hub for youth reaching out for help.

NUY's 'core group' of youth includes about 100 of the most at-risk youth in Northfield. This includes 75% who have a serious mental/chemical health issue, 68% who are living in poverty, and 22% who are currently homeless. Northfield's homeless youth are either staying with friends, other family, couch surfing, sleeping outside, or in cars. A majority of them come from homes where parents or relatives are abusing substances or have a serious mental health diagnosis. NUY has witnessed the downward spiral of youth in these circumstances. Too often, youth homelessness leads to chemical addiction, truancy, and crime.

NUY's relational approach of building relationships with youth through enrichment and engagement activities has proven successful at connecting the most at-risk youth with crucial caring adult connections that can be used in times of crisis. Whereas traditional models force-place youth with a social worker immediately after a crisis, NUY works proactively to build trusting relationships with youth most likely to experience crisis, so that a developmental relationship is already in place once crisis hits.

Definitions: Homeless Youth: means a person 24 years of age or younger who is unaccompanied by a parent or guardian and is without shelter where appropriate care and supervision are available, whose parent or legal guardian is unable or unwilling to provide shelter and care, or who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. The following are not fixed, regular, or adequate nighttime residences:

- (1) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations;
- (2) an institution or a publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations;
- (3) transitional housing;
- (4) a temporary placement with a peer, friend, or family member that has not offered permanent residence, a residential lease, or temporary lodging for more than 30 days; or
- (5) a public or private place not designed for, nor ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.



Youth at risk of homelessness: means a person 24 years of age or younger whose status or circumstances indicate a significant danger of experiencing homelessness in the near future. Status or circumstances that indicate a significant danger may include: (1) youth exiting out-of-home placements; (2) youth who previously were homeless; (3) youth whose parents or primary caregivers are or were previously homeless; (4) youth who are exposed to abuse and neglect in their homes; (5) youth who experience conflict with parents due to chemical or alcohol dependency, mental health disabilities, or other disabilities; and (6) runaways.

(e) "Runaway" means an unmarried child under the age of 18 years who is absent from the home of a parent or guardian or other lawful placement without the consent of the parent, guardian, or lawful custodian.

Funding: NUY has received partial funding from the state of MN to hire a licensed social worker to both build a host-home system for homeless youth in the Northfield area and to manage this same system as a youth advocate. NUY is seeking additional funding from Northfield HRA through the CDBG Community Based Youth Programs Block Grant program to help round out this partial funding to enable NUY to retain a full time licensed social worker to work on behalf of all Northfield youth regarding issues and needs beyond homelessness.

CDBG funding will go toward "Public Services" activities as defined within the CDBG definitions for youth programs. This would support a wide range of services provided by NUY including mentoring, tutoring, enrichment activities, employment services, and support for youth aging out of foster care. NUY is poised to provide these services better than anyone else. NUY has deep, trusting, and meaningful relationships with the youth that need these supportive services the most. Funding a full-time social worker would empower NUY to provide more formal and robust supportive services to prevent and eliminate the effects of poverty on Northfield's most at-risk youth.

NUY has historically depended on AmeriCorps members and good-hearted volunteers and staff to do their best to provide informal supportive services. With partial funding for a social worker in place, CDBG funding would empower NUY to round out this position to provide on-going formal supportive services for youth already demanding these services. These services align well with CDBG's funding criteria of "mentoring, tutoring, enrichment activities, employment services, and support for youth aging out of foster care."

Collaborating institutions have shown their support and excitement about NUY bringing on a full-time social worker. Northfield High School, Northfield ALC, Arcadia Charter School, Northfield HCI, Community Action Center of Northfield, Rice County Social Services, and other youth serving organizations have all expressed support and appreciation for NUY's work to bring on this formal support system for youth. Funding from CDBG through the Northfield HRA would be critical to NUY finding success with this position and to help secure additional funding in the future. Community support and a growing awareness of the needs of our youth will help empower NUY to step into the void for the sake of every youth.