



Legislation Text

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DATE: August 28, 2018

TO: Members of the Housing & Redevelopment Authority

FROM: Janine Atchison, Housing Coordinator

Northfield Union of Youth Safe Homes Program

SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUESTED:

The Housing & Redevelopment Authority (HRA) to receive an updated report for the Northfield Union of Youth (NUY) Homeless Prevention Program from Director Scott Wopata.

BACKGROUND:

Youth homelessness is extremely complex and blends a host of mental, systemic, chemical, physical, familial, and social-emotional issues. NUY has developed NUY Safe Homes by engaging and appointing youth to leadership positions who have personally experienced homelessness in Northfield. These young people have lived and are living with these challenges. They can uniquely inform the creation of a trauma-informed, safe, and accessible system that would provide meaningful solutions.

NUY Safe Homes is a multi-tiered approach, meeting youth in their current circumstances:

- 1) **Formal host family model.** NUY will recruit, train, and support host-families to provide a safe and caring home for homeless youth. NUY's licensed social worker will provide formal case management and supportive services to youth matched with a host family.
- 2) **Informal hosting support.** NUY will provide formal support for youth and informal host families when hosting is already happening. This includes identifying youth staying with friends/family and providing support and best practiced guidance on the complexities of informally hosting/staying with friends or family.
- 3) **Youth-centric supportive services.** NUY provides supportive services through mentoring, tutoring, enrichment activities, and employment services to youth aging out of foster care or without a home due to the lack of affordable housing. NUY staff help empower youth ages 18-24 to navigate this difficult time of life in a difficult housing landscape.

Alternatives: This multi-tiered model is an extremely cost-effective model that utilizes the existing strengths of the Northfield community, without adding additional capital infrastructure. Traditional solutions to homelessness often include dedicated homeless shelters. While there is a time and place for these traditional approaches, it is both cost and resource prohibitive. Where would it be built, who would staff it, and is it an appropriate response to the complexities of youth homelessness? Figures for this traditional approach quickly escalate to the hundreds of thousands PLUS initial infrastructure and construction.

NUY was awarded a substantial grant from the MN State Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) to make the program viable. The funding source is the Homeless Youth Act Grant (HYA). It is awarded on a biennium basis. NUY was awarded \$37,500/year for 2 years (\$70,000 total), leaving an annual budget shortfall of \$25,639.00.

The HRA provided \$25,639 to the NUY in December 2017 to meet the program's first year budgetary needs. At the July 24, 2018 regular meeting, the HRA provided an additional \$9,000 to the NUY for the second year of the program.