<u>**Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project Narrative for MI-506**</u>

The Grand Rapids/Wyoming/Kent County Continuum of Care (CoC) wishes to participate in the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project. The community this CoC serves is a county with a population of more than 610,000 with just over half of the population living in the Greater Grand Rapids metropolitan area and the remainder in the rural outlying areas, according to 2014 US Census data. An estimated 131,578 youth between the ages of 10 and 24 reside in Kent County (2014 American Community Survey). The population of the county is growing at an estimated rate of 5.6% and the City of Grand Rapids has been growing at a rate of 3.7% with surrounding urban and suburban areas experiencing growth at rates between 4 and 5.5%

Although the county is nearly evenly urban and rural, the focus of this project would be on the urban core, with outreach efforts to outlying rural areas. Most homeless youth from the county migrate toward the urban core in order to access assistance. Therefore, most of the interventions would be targeted to the homeless youth found in and around the City of Grand Rapids.

The CoC and community it serves have been seeking improvements to serving homeless youth. While the community has benefited from a high performing runaway and homeless youth provider, cuts through sequestration reduced services that were already too limited to fully address the needs of youth in the community. In recent years, other providers and the faith community have come together to support new and innovative approaches to serving homeless youth and the CoC has sought to bring each of these efforts into a systemic approach to meet the goal of ending youth homelessness by 2020.

The following narrative will provide more details to this history and describe the need within the community. Too many youth remain homeless in this community, with solutions just out of

reach. Through this demonstration project, the community wishes to bring solutions to youth and learn how to best end youth homelessness for all youth in Kent County.

Rating Factors

Leadership Capacity

A1. The Kent County community has a proven track record of addressing systemic challenges related to homelessness—experience that will drive the community's collaborative work to end youth homelessness by 2020. One such systemic challenge is the community's work to end veteran homelessness in 2016. Collaborative, innovative and iterative efforts have coalesced to create an effective veteran response system in the community. Achieving this goal has required relying on HMIS data to identify homeless veterans in Kent County. At the time of initiating the plan to end veteran homelessness, an accurate count of homeless veterans was not readily available. Through careful coordination with the HMIS System Administrator and Veterans Administration (VA) a well-organized effort to verify data was established. This effort included the VA, Community Rebuilders, The Salvation Army, the Continuum of Care (CoC) staff and current outreach providers in Kent County to coalesce around systems change. Through this effort, the process to verify data was developed and an accurate count of homeless veterans through a "By-Name" list was established, while also strengthening the current infrastructure of the utilization of HMIS through community partnerships.

The work to end veteran homelessness was developed with the mindset that it could provide critical learnings about a process that could be duplicated by the CoC in its work toward ending chronic, family, and youth homelessness. Through the ending veteran homelessness initiative it was recognized that the community not only needs to house all currently homeless veterans but

must also have a system in place and capacity to quickly and effectively house newly identified homeless veterans. This same capacity will also be required to end youth homelessness. The ending veteran homelessness committee established community buy-in and support by presenting to a number of individual and group partners in the community. The lead agency was mindful that this process needed to be collaborative as well as organized. The committee has dedicated time, energy, and resources to ensure that the full CoC membership, the State of Michigan, the Mayor of Grand Rapids, local law enforcement, mental health providers and others are well informed of the goal to be achieved and the progress being made.

Through this process the group was surprised by the number of new veterans that continued to enter the homeless system monthly. Though challenging, the community has rallied resources and adequately expanded to house 259 veterans so far this year. With a By-Name list of an initial 292 homeless veterans, Kent County is now positioned to achieve the goal of ending veteran homelessness by December 2016. In order to achieve this goal, veterans must have quick access to permanent housing, which requires the system have sufficient capacity to house all those who encounter a housing crisis and be committed to providing Housing First services. These elements are also critical for ending youth homelessness.

A2. The proposed Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project (YHDP) lead agency is HQ, a drop-in center for youth ages 14-24 experiencing unsafe/unstable housing. HQ's ability to mobilize youth and their emphasis on equity, data, innovation and diverse partnerships, gives them a unique perspective and positions them well to lead a collaborative community effort. HQ's leadership team, which includes the Executive Director, Drop-In Director and Data and Quality Manager, will lead the YHDP with a minimum of 1 FTE equivalent. The lead agency will create an equitable and collaborative process for youth, community leaders, and local

organizations to work together in the development of the plan, along with project development and effective data collection. The lead agency staff will also manage relationships with the Collaborative Applicant, HUD Technical Assistance, youth, and organizations who wish to facilitate new projects.

HQ's vision and low-barrier model is specifically designed to prevent and end the cycle of homelessness by creating a safe and affirming space where youth can have their basic needs met, build connections to critical community networks onsite, and engage with innovative and youth-specific employment and education support. By empowering youth as the experts in their own lives, they are able to lead the process of setting and achieving their goals, engaging on their own terms and building trust authentically. The collaborative nature of HQ creates interdependence and innovation rather than duplication and competition.

See Attachment A: Proposed YHDP Team

A3. The existing structure of the CoC is well-suited to support HQ as the lead agency. This effort to end youth homelessness, with a designated lead agency, supported by the CoC staff, will strongly resemble the structure in place for the effort to end veteran homelessness. In the veteran effort, the CoC Coordinator works closely with the lead agency to ensure full community participation and collaboration in the work. Updates on progress toward the veteran goal are shared regularly at full CoC membership and leadership meetings. The youth effort will follow the same process, with CoC staff and/or the lead agency providing regular updates to the full CoC membership (consisting of more than 60 member entities). These groups will be invited to participate in various capacities in the youth coordinated community planning process. In addition, the CoC Coordinated Assessment (CA) Committee, consisting of 20 members, will be involved in the planning. This committee has already begun working to improve the CA process

for youth, looking at best practice screening methods for prioritization of youth. The work of the Data Analysis committee, which is approximately ten (10) members, will be engaged in the process of examining community data on youth homelessness and monitoring outcomes of projects, as it has been for other sub-populations in the community. Also, the CoC Steering Council, the 19 person governance body, will be engaged throughout the process, providing input, feedback and voting to adopt the coordinated community plan.

A4. The CoC has developed a Youth Advisory Board by recruiting youth members through the youth advisory boards of several participating organizations, to help provide a cross section of youth experiences in the planning process. The Youth Advisory Board will be an active participant in the development and implementation of the coordinated community plan. In the past, the CoC has received input from young people regarding youth homelessness through focus group information shared through the efforts of the youth drop-in center, HQ, and through a community human centered design process led by Arbor Circle, the local Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) grantee.

A5. The CoC has regularly sought out youth homelessness providers who were not active participants in the CoC. While most youth providers have been active participants in the CoC, some newer agencies that support young pregnant and parenting youth have been encouraged to join. These agencies have been invited to participate in youth provider meetings and other CoC committees and have been recruited for participation in the YHDP application and for the future coordinated community planning process.

A6. The CoC is committed to engaging with all entities that are essential to the development of a coordinated community approach to prevent and end youth homelessness. Thus far, the CoC has engaged with many of these entities in the development of the YHDP application, and will

continue this engagement throughout the planning and implementation process. Local data shows that many homeless youth have received services through mainstream homeless projects. For example, in our community's largest rapid re-housing program, 38% of the families served were those with a youth as head of household. Recent ties to entities in other systems that focus on discharge policies will serve to improve the conversation around preventing youth homelessness. Getting these other system entities committed to the community's already established goal of ending youth homelessness, with work commencing through the YHDP application process, has served as a great catalyst to bring new partners to the table.

Current Resource Capacity

B1. This community is rich in resources that work to address many needs beyond homelessness. The chart attached could not include every non-profit that provides food, utility, transportation, employment services or other assistance and therefore was contained to only the resources that can most directly address the housing needs of homeless youth. Due to the many services available, the county developed a framework to help ensure these resources are coordinated and working towards the same goals. This is accomplished through the Kent County Essential Needs Task Force, of which the CoC is a member. **See Attachment B: Crisis Response System Chart**

Community Need

C1. Prior to the submission of this application, a meta-analysis of needs assessments specific to youth was completed using both qualitative and quantitative data available from multiple sources.

C2. a. The needs assessment was a meta-analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data collected from various sources in our community. These studies used methodologies ranging

from Human Centered Design for qualitative data collection through standard assessments as well as innovative activities such as photo voice, ethnographic interviews and empathetic games that produced data artifacts to individual surveys that could be quantified. The range of these methodologies ensured that any youth would be able to participate, making the methods of data collection equitable and inclusive, giving the community a much more holistic picture of those being served in the community.

C2b. This data was collected from multiple sources including: Continuum of Care, Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data; Schools, Kent Intermediate School District; Runaway and Homeless Youth Provider, Arbor Circle; homeless youth drop in center, HQ; Coordinated Entry, The Salvation Army.

C2c. The scope of this needs assessment focused on assessing barriers youth were encountering in their attempts to secure safer and more stable housing. The geographic area of focus of the needs assessment was concentrated within the Grand Rapids metropolitan area, supplemented by countywide data sets from the school system and HMIS. The data collected via the providers focusing on the greater Grand Rapids area reflected youth who often do not engage with other main stream resources. The countywide data was able to include data from all types of homeless housing providers. While the geographic area covered in the assessment was broad, so too were the participating agencies. Agencies contributing data sets to the needs assessment ranged from direct care, assessment providers, schools, and grassroots community center organizations. Housing types that were included were: rapid re-housing (41 units), non-time limited supportive housing (11 units), transitional living program (4 units) and emergency shelter for youth (9 beds).

C2d. The needs assessment examined the information youth provided about the barriers they faced and used this data to inform the ways in which youth were characterized for these purposes. As many youth indicated that racism was a barrier they encountered frequently, the data was examined from a lens of race and ethnicity of those experiencing homelessness. Other youth disclosed that barriers related to homophobia were impacting their lives, and the CoC sought data on the prevalence of homelessness in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) community.

C2e. Key findings from this meta-analysis needs assessment show that issues related to race, sexual orientation and gender identity are critical to addressing youth homelessness in the community. Contextually, African Americans represent around 10% of the total county population and near 20% within the city of Grand Rapids, however in CoC data sets, African American youth and other persons of color are consistently over-represented. HMIS data for the CoC shows that 62% of youth using the homelessness system were African American. The HMIS data for Coordinated Entry puts this figure at 70% for unaccompanied youth, and a staggering 79% for households headed by youth. The drop-in center data can cross reference race and ethnicity data in ways that HMIS data cannot, this report shows that 70% of the youth served were persons of color. This disparity is important to note because the Grand Rapids community was noted to be the second worst city (of the largest 52) for opportunities for African Americans (Forbes, January 15, 2015). This is both reflected in the data and highlights the supports youth of color will need to overcome additional barriers.

Another significant finding was the youth identifying as LGBTQ and citing this as a precipitating factor to their homelessness. In the limited data sets collecting this information, LGBTQ youth were 18 and 23% of the total youth served population. With many of the community resources

for those needing shelter, food, or other basic needs being faith-based organizations, many youth in the qualitative studies indicated feeling unsafe to access resources. In this same study, prevention efforts that focused on the county's dominate Christian faith community were identified as a critical need. In many of these cases, support services to the youth and family may have prevented youth from becoming homeless. For homeless LGBTQ youth especially, safe housing resources were the top priority. Models such as host homes were indicated to help youth experience safe mentoring relationships. Currently, there are no housing resources available in the community specifically targeted to LGBTQ youth.

Perhaps the most telling finding of this analysis is that the need grossly outpaces the supply of housing resources for youth. The youth drop-in center recorded 650 unduplicated youth in a 20 month span and for the year of 2015, coordinated entry recorded 525 literally homeless youth and youth headed households, with another 469 youth and youth-headed households at imminent risk of homelessness. The available youth-specific housing resources in the community are less than 20% of the assessed need, and many of those resources have limited expectation of openings since they are non-time limited housing models. Based on this analysis, the community is in need of both prevention services and housing, and consumer choice should be available to youth within the housing offered. Knowing the great variety of needs and experiences within the total youth population, allowing youth to select the type of housing and level of support necessary is a key component to the continuum the community wishes to build.

C3a. Number of unaccompanied youth in the sheltered PIT Count 2016: 44

C3b. Number of parenting youth in the sheltered PIT Count 2016:16

For additional context of this population, it is worth noting that of the youth-dedicated Transitional Living Program at Arbor Circle annually 33% served were pregnant or parenting. With HMIS data from 2015, 46% of youth 18-24 that touched the system (through coordinated entry assessment or shelter stay) were pregnant or parenting.

C3c. Number of unaccompanied youth in the unsheltered PIT Count 2016: 8

C3d. Number of parenting youth in the unsheltered PIT Count 2016: 0

For both youth and those over 25 we know that the count is artificially low. Parents know that if found in uninhabitable places over night with children, they risk having the children removed by protective services. As a result, families are intentionally hidden on PIT Count and other nights.

C3e1. Yes, the CoC conducted youth specific activities within the implementation of the 2016 PIT Count. In the planning for the 2016 PIT count, the CoC reached out to the FYSB RHY provider and involved their outreach staff in the planning and implementation of the count. These youth outreach workers were invaluable in improving practices from the 2015 PIT Count. In the 2015 count, the CoC had put a call out community-wide for volunteers, resulting in many well-intentioned volunteers participating in the count. While the new volunteers received some training and were paired with experienced field workers, the youth outreach providers gave the feedback that these community volunteers were hindering the ability to accurately count youth, and the process was changed for the 2016 count. The youth outreach workers engaged with the youth they have built relationships with and had spent months before the count working to identify new areas where youth may have been staying outside of shelters.

C3e4. The counting methodology was not altered for youth from the regular counting methods. Youth-appropriate changes were to engage the outreach workers with whom trust had already

been established, allowing the outreach workers to get accurate information and get information regarding other areas where youth might be located.

In the morning following the count night, the youth outreach workers engaged youth at the drop-in center and identified additional youth that indicated they had slept unsheltered the previous night. Having a youth drop-in center from which youth may be engaged in a non-threatening environment has proven beneficial to the community in many ways, including bolstering PIT Count accuracy.

C3e5. No information was collected beyond what HUD requires. However, during a similar time frame many of the other needs assessments were taking place and those findings were discussed above.

C3f. In the 2015-2016 school year the number of unaccompanied youth reported by the local education agencies was 280. Approximately 30% of those students were in grade 12, with the percentages getting slightly smaller until about grade 6 where 5% of the students were experiencing homelessness.

C3g. Factors identified as contributing to youth homelessness in the community have been identified through the data collection efforts of the FYSB RHY provider in HMIS. This organization's outreach efforts have grown by securing additional funding, which will add more detail to this picture of causal factors in the future. From this data we know that approximately 94% of youth reported household dynamics/family conflict as a precipitating factor at intake. More than half had experienced abuse or neglect and 74% were having issues at school. 43% noted mental illness of their own was a factor and another 23% noted their own substance use as a precipitating factor. Through this data collection, 18% disclosed that sexual orientation may

have been a factor, however data gathered from the drop-in center reported this population at 23%. Because HMIS information is gathered near entry, it is possible that youth feel less comfortable disclosing this early in the relationship. This discrepancy was part of the impetus behind a more in depth study of LGBTQ youth homelessness in the community, as was discussed in greater detail above in answer C2.

Capacity for Innovation

D1. The CoC has focused on innovation and testing promising practices for more than a decade. One of the most significant of these innovations was the creation and adoption of Coordinated Entry in 2007. The development and implementation of Coordinated Entry within Kent County was monumental on a number of levels: (1) It created a significant shift in the approach to homeless service delivery; and, (2) it led the way in developing a response to homelessness from a systemic platform.

Historically, the homeless crisis response system required individuals and families to piece together their own support and housing plans by calling on multiple agencies and resources on their own. This approach lacked coordination and community strategy, resulting in people in crisis and in poverty paying for services with their time. There was no prioritization of need, leading to service on a first-come basis. Additionally, data was not managed or analyzed from a system perspective. There were consistent gaps in key data points, specifically as it relates to system outcome measurements. The community lacked the ability to identify the true level of need and an understanding of where to strategically apply resources. Beginning in 2007, the community made a conscious choice to move away from separate approaches to ending homelessness and focused instead on a single system-wide model informed by best practices and the Housing First philosophy, enabling greater success with permanent housing outcomes.

Over the next two years, the CoC worked with the community to develop the ten year plan, the Vision to End Homelessness. The path for this change was highlighted through 3 specific strategies:

1. Close the front door into homelessness

2. Open the back door of homelessness

3. Build the infrastructure to end homelessness

Coordinated Entry was specifically tied to the third strategy and came about through the reallocation of The Salvation Army's shelter spaces in order to provide for Coordinated Entry staff and resources. HMIS was identified and supported as the primary data source for any homeless service program, allowing for greater data quality, continuity, and analysis, as well as coordination amongst a variety of housing resources.

The preparation and efforts surrounding this change were extremely innovative and helped to inform practices later adopted by the State of Michigan to address homelessness in each community. Prior to this, no real framework existed to support and enable communities to create Coordinated Entry processes. While this work comes with many challenges, the success is measured through the community's ability to implement new housing strategies, to build out more services through Coordinated Entry, to leverage resources from multiple groups, and to better understand the gaps within the homeless system response.

The CoC will continue to evaluate Coordinated Entry in order to be responsive to the changing needs of the community.

D2. This community is rich in resources, however, youth experiencing a housing crisis often do not connect to these services, wait to seek help until other trauma has been experienced, and in some cases, actively avoid service providers altogether. This makes it difficult for the community to obtain complete and accurate data about youth homelessness in the community.

HQ, West-Michigan's first drop-in center for runaway and homeless youth is a culmination of years of conversations in the community around these needs and gaps. In 2011, a local mega church partnered with Arbor Circle, the primary runaway and homeless youth (RHY) service provider, and funded early research at a local, national and international level. The goal was to understand the scope of the issue, engage local youth in the planning, and capture the learnings and best practices from existing models. What was learned at drop-in centers across the country was adapted to fit the local landscape. A collaborative model was born, where the expertise and experience of housing providers, mental health supports, employment and education resources and basic needs were all available in a space where youth wanted to be because they experienced deep belonging, safety, and affirmation.

Since opening its doors in December of 2014, HQ has served over 700 youth, more than double what was expected. Learning the complex stories and experiences of this group, many of whom were not engaged in other community services, showed the effectiveness of HQ's model and demanded a faster pace of growth and adaptation than anticipated. HQ now offers multiple, low-barrier drop-in sessions and by-appointment support for youth five (5) days a week. HQ has also engaged over 100 youth and 35 community partners as part of the YOUTHfull Data Project; an initiative that uses technology and Human Centered Design to redefine data and how it is collected in order to better understand and end youth homeless in West Michigan.

This innovative, multi-pronged approach was exactly what the community needed to augment traditional methods to deliver services. HQ has built strong partnerships that have positioned them to be a focused and effective addition to the work of breaking the cycle of homelessness.

D3. Historically this community has served many youth aged 18-24. In 2007 a local housing provider repurposed two of their support services only grants and a transitional housing program to provide housing first rapid rehousing services to singles and families. Through these projects an average of 80 youth-headed households were served each year. These projects ended in 2014 and a new Rapid rehousing program was created to serve families. Through this program 38 youth-headed households are served annually. The CoC's first rapid rehousing program targeting youth was awarded in the FY 2015 HUD CoC Program Competition. This program will provide rapid rehousing for 41 youth head of households. The development of this program has relied on partnerships between agencies with expertise in RRH, Housing First, and Strength-Based service provision and those with expertise in youth services and the Positive Youth Development Model. The project begins its contract year in the coming days and will be able to begin housing youth in RRH services. The CoC also has permanent supportive housing options for youth that will be available in the near future. This project was developed between a youth services provider and a low income, non-profit housing developer, allowing the community to tap into Low Income Housing tax credit subsidies from the state to augment the housing options available to youth in the county.

D4. Of the interventions the CoC has desired to implement for youth in the community, the most essential are emergency prevention, host homes, master leasing, and a project specific to LGBTQ youth.

Emergency Prevention: Currently our CoC has little to no resources that can assist a family with a youth-headed household from entering the homeless system. An emergency prevention program that includes crisis counseling, family reunification services, short term rental assistance, landlord intervention and mediation services.

Host Homes: The host homes model continues to show efficacy across the country and the local CoC is deeply interested in growing one locally. In the past year, agency staff have reached out to model host home programs to learn more about this specific model for youth, with two agencies (HQ and 3:11 youth Housing) having visited Avenues for Youth in Minneapolis to learn about their host home program. A similar program type current operates within the community with a goal of preventing youth entering the formal foster care system when a temporary stay outside the family can be sufficient. Program components have been studied on how it may be similarly effective for runaway and homeless youth. The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) has identified host homes as an effective crisis response and longer-term housing solution for youth homelessness. The YHDP would give our community an opportunity to develop an effective host home program, furthering the community's dedication to ending youth homelessness by 2020. A barrier to implementing this project has been adequate funding to support the infrastructure to make such a program successful and maintain safety for all involved.

Master Leasing: The CoC is interesting in learning more about master leasing and how it may be implemented to end an episode of homelessness for a youth and their family quickly. This is an intervention that has been suggested as a promising model by the National Network for Youth (NN4Y). Exploring this model and how it can effectively incorporate Positive Youth

Development and Housing First philosophies could result in a project that both quickly and permanently ends homelessness for youth and their families.

LGBTQ Specific Services: Finally, the CoC has actively sought interventions that could better serve the LGBTQ youth population. Supported by local United Way funding, a community group was formed to explore root causes to LGBTQ youth running away from home or being pushed out. The group found that a solution to the problem would involve services and housing with specialized training. Efforts to reach out to the faith community to prevent family dissolution whenever possible were also needed, as much of the family strife was found to arise from difficulty reconciling religious views with the truth of the youth's life and being. Unfortunately, the local United Way had insufficient fund-raising that year and was unable to fund the project's implementation. The group has continued to seek alternate funding sources for this work.

D5. The community in which this CoC operates has a deep entrepreneurial spirit, and the non-profit and housing sectors are part of that culture, willing to test new models and explore new, promising practices. One example of this spirit can be found in 3:11 Youth Housing, a non-profit that develops housing for transition aged youth, ages 18-24. This agency has developed an innovative model of non-time limited supportive housing, with youth living in one side of a duplex home and adult role-models occupying the other half of the home. The model, built upon the foundations of Positive Youth Development, Housing First and Harm Reduction approaches, provides transition-aged youth developmentally appropriate space to grow, surrounded by stable, mentoring relationships. This model was funded outside of the CoC program competition in 2012 and has found community support to grow from one house to three over the past year.

Since its inception in 2012, 100% of 3:11 youth have created and followed individualized goal plans, obtained and maintained stable employment, established checking and savings accounts, and saved towards future apartments. Of the program graduates, 100% are in safe, affordable housing of their own, living independently or with family. 45% of youth residents have obtained their driver's licenses or permits, and 100% youth have shown measured progress on the Casey Life Skills Assessment, a nationally recognized assessment tool.

Within the CoC program competition, the CoC has found additional space to grow existing models. In the FY 2015 competition, two seasoned CoC Program funded agencies partnered with three youth provider agencies, for whom this will be the first time accessing HUD funding, to create a project named the "RRH Collaborative". Throughout this project, the group will be able to test best practice methodologies and how traditional RRH approaches are best applied to youth.

See Attachment C: Youth System Map

Collaboration

E1. The CoC adopted the goal of ending youth homelessness by 2020 through the 2015 community-led strategic planning process. This strategic plan serves as a community guide towards process and focus areas. System performance measures guide community-level improvement and key activities focus on system-level outcomes for specific populations, including youth. Each performance measure section includes a summary outlining which of the objectives impact each of the identified target sub-populations. Examples of some of the youth-specific objectives are: (1) to reduce homelessness for persons exiting foster care; and, (2) to ensure youth have access to safe, appropriate emergency shelter. Examples of strategies to

achieve these objectives are: (1) to increase coordination between foster care service providers and homelessness service providers; and, (2) to provide training on Housing Plan development to systems outside of homelessness, such as foster care, mental health and reentry. The Strategic Plan was led by CoC leadership with several work sessions open to the public. Thirty-two (32) individuals representing 20 organizations participated in the work sessions and the youth specific work session had feedback that included eight youth-serving organizations. The compiled document was edited by the Steering Council (elected governance body) and the final draft voted on by the full CoC membership.

E2. See Attachment D Stakeholder Chart

E3. The community's coordinated entry (CE) process is designed for all those seeking assistance in ending their homelessness. Factors used to prioritize youth for housing resources include the following: vulnerability to victimization, length of time homeless, unsheltered homelessness, lack of access to family and community support networks, and mental and physical health risk and safety. The CoC has sought to make all CoC Program funded and ESG funded resources available through the CE process. Just recently, one legacy permanent supportive project that had been maintaining its own waitlist was added in to the coordinated entry process, leaving no CoC or ESG project out from receiving referrals through the CE process. All of these projects are available to youth, subject to project specific eligibility criteria being met, such as chronic homelessness. All other providers in the community are aware of the CE process and can refer consumers to CE as needed to receive services. However, youth housing providers have historically been viewed as separate from HUD-funded attempts to end homelessness. Many of these efforts developed referral partnerships outside of the mainstream homelessness CE process or are not specific to serving homeless youth. In response, the community is working to prioritize

and refer youth even more effectively, engaging organizations that were not historically involved in the CE process. Since the CoC has added ending youth homelessness to the 2015 Strategic Plan, more youth service providers have become involved in the CoC work and have explored new ways to partner such as using CE and participating in HMIS. The CE process utilizes partnerships and close working relationships with the RHY provider and the Public Child Welfare Agency (PCWA) to ensure those seeking services are receiving referrals to services that can best meet their needs.

E4. At the system-level, foster care, mental and physical health, and juvenile and adult justice each have their own policies to avoid discharging to homelessness. For physical health, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) has been beneficial in promoting improved discharge planning where health providers seek to avoid re-admittance of discharged patients. In both physical health and mental health, there have been pockets of innovation coming out of the ACA and Medicaid Expansion efforts. The juvenile and adult justice system places the discharge efforts with probation and parole officers. These officers have strong ties to the social service systems including connecting to the housing service providers. The foster care system has permanency guidelines and individualized case management to secure housing for foster care youth prior to discharge. The CoC engages with each of these systems to strengthen relationships and ensure that housing is found upon discharge and can be maintained. The CoC is in the process of drafting internal discharge policy to better guide these systems-level collaborations.

E5. For youth under 18, the public child welfare agency (PCWA) will assign the case for investigation and work toward reunification or placing the youth with another family member. In cases where this is not possible, foster care or alternative placement options are sought. For youth aged 18-24, the PCWA will refer the youth to service providers with whom it contracts,

such as the RHY provider, Arbor Circle. Youth may also be referred to support services such as life skills training, individual development accounts, closed case funding, or the Michigan Youth Opportunity Initiative. Additionally, youth over 18 who are exiting out of foster care have the option to enroll in Young Adult Voluntary Foster Care until age 21 through their foster care agency.

Financial Resources

F1. To support the planning process the CoC will use the CoC Planning Grant funds contracted through HUD to Heart of West Michigan United Way, the Collaborative Applicant. Heart of West Michigan United Way (HWMUW) serves as fiduciary to the Grand Rapids/Wyoming/Kent County Continuum of Care (CoC) and is the community's Collaborative Applicant for the HUD CoC Program. HWMUW receives $160,553 in FY 2015 planning grant funding that supports the efforts of the CoC in ending homelessness. The efforts these funds support are aligned with the efforts of this work and are a natural support. These funds run from December 1, 2016-November 30, 2017 and must be spent in efforts directly related to coordination activities in ending homelessness according to federal restrictions.

F2. The proposed 6-month planning budget for the community will focus on creating inclusive dialog across the community in order to build a robust community plan to end youth homelessness in Kent County. The CoC, with facilitation by the lead agency, will focus on building consensus and coordinating the critical efforts to build out a youth-specific continuum of housing options and support. Planning funds will be sub-contracted to support the lead agency in building this plan, by empowering and strengthening the voices of youth and system innovators in our community. The lead agency will create an equitable and collaborative process for youth, community leaders, and local organizations to work together in the development of the

plan, along with project development and effective data collection. The lead agency staff will also manage relationships with the Collaborative Applicant, HUD Technical Assistance, youth, and organizations who wish to facilitate new projects.

G1. The CoC coverage rate for all types of homeless beds is 91.4%

G2. The coverage rate for youth beds in the CoC is 73%

G3. As the CoC becomes aware of any new provider wishing to serve homeless youth, the staff of the CoC engage the agency to discuss HMIS and what it entails for the provider, as well as the benefits to and responsibilities of all parties.

G4. When new providers wish to join HMIS, CoC Staff are available to provide technical assistance in the process. The HMIS User trainings are available on line free to the new provider. All HMIS licensing fees are covered through a grant the CoC has specifically dedicated to supporting HMIS infrastructure. On-going assistance is available to ensure all data quality standards are met.

G5. Yes, all reporting requirements were met, including the PIT and HIC.

G6. Yes, the CoC submitted AHAR tableshells to HUD and they were accepted.

G7. Youth providers such as the non-shelter drop-in center or the education system providers share information from the data they collect with the CoC. This data has not been stored in any systems of the CoC.

G8. The CoC has adopted the HUD System Performance measures as the core measures for all projects in the system as they interact with each other. Specifically for individual projects, the CoC measures all CoC and ESG funded projects on the following criteria:

- Percent of project leavers exiting to a known destination (Universe group: all project leavers)

- Percent of project leavers exiting to a permanent housing destination (Universe group: all project leavers)

- Percent of project leavers with increased income at exit (Universe group: all project leavers)

- Percent of project leavers with mainstream assistance at exit (Universe group: all project leavers)

- Percent of project leavers who remained in the project 6 months or longer (PSH only) (Universe group: all project leavers)

Projects are also monitored on their utilization rates, ensuring all project enterers came from eligible homeless situations, and adhering to Housing First and low barrier practices. The data is collected from projects in the form of local application forms and corresponding Annual Performance Reports (APRs). The monitoring had been annually in the past but is being increased to twice annually this year. Monitoring will also consist of a review to ensure projects are meeting HUD threshold requirements and are participating in coordinated entry. Areas of concern noted are communicated in writing to projects and CoC staff assistance is available to improve areas identified. Additional technical assistance can be sought if requested. This process is in place for all publicly funded projects, which includes one youth specific rapid re-housing project.

G9. The CoC has used data provided by the youth drop-in center, HQ, to examine and question previously collected youth data by the CoC. The data collected through this venue has shown that many more youth experience homelessness in the community than are seeking help through

traditional resources such as shelter or coordinated entry. The CoC has found that the youth less likely to seek assistance are unaccompanied youth, while parenting youth are more likely to come through the main homelessness system and utilize rapid re-housing or family shelter

G10. If selected as a YHDP grantee, our community would wish to use the collaborative community planning process to include all stakeholders in defining successful outcomes for the project. It is anticipated that outcome measures would in many ways reflect those of the existing housing project outcome measures, such as exiting to permanent housing, retaining housing, and increasing income. However, it is also anticipated that with youth, additional measures such as family reunification or educational achievement would also be relevant. Our community will use the YHDP funding to create a coordinated response to this wide-spread issue, developing new, innovative, and youth-driven solutions to this problem in our community. Kent County is ready and energized for coordinated community conversations and planning, with the goal to prevent and end youth homelessness by 2020.