

SCHOOL-BASED HOST HOMES GUIDEBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

THANK YOU

This School Based Host Home guidebook wouldn't be possible without the continued support and resources of our amazing and dedicated partners in Minnesota. **Thank you for sharing your knowledge, your resources and your support with us to provide this accessible resource to folks around the country.**

To bring an end to the youth homelessness crisis, it'll take all of us working together and supporting one another to create lasting change. We have to be in a constant state of flux — experimenting with new solutions, adapting programs to meet the needs and preferences of youth, assessing what's working and what's not, and learning from one another's successes and failures. This work is certainly not easy, but it is necessary to bettering our communities. We appreciate you, your work, and your commitment to ending youth homelessness.

Northfield Union of Youth

Community Action Center

Grand Rapids School Districts

Northfield School Districts

AEOA



WELCOME LETTER

If you are reading this, it's safe to assume that you are dedicated to ending youth homelessness in your community. Perhaps you are launching a host home program at your school. Maybe you have an existing program that you want to expand and refine. Or you could be at the early stages of exploring school based host homes as an intervention for your community.

The goal of this guidebook — and our mission at Point Source Youth — is to meet you where you are and help you along your host home journey.

Since our first day of the pilot program for school based host homes in Minnesota, a lot's changed. We've all been grieving and surviving through the COVID-19 global pandemic. Homeless service providers have been navigating monumental challenges during the pandemic, as they've worked to keep participants and staff safe, while simultaneously helping young people find and maintain housing. COVID-19's disproportionate impact on Black and Brown communities further exasperated existing inequities in our healthcare and housing systems nationwide. The continued state sanctioned violence that claimed the lives of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade and countless more sparked called the nation into accountability, abolition, and liberation, cementing the fact that anti-racism, and specifically anti-Black racism, needs to be at the forefront of every aspect of our work.

Even if you've already read the PSY Host Home Handbook, you'll still want to check this out. In this version we are expanding on topics we get asked about most when working with school-aged youth: How do I find host homes that will work with my program; What does host homes look like connected to school; What kind of services should

we offer young people so they can maintain their housing after our services end; What's a youth advisory council; How can our program help dismantle white supremacy?

The following resources are compiled from our partners in Northfield and Grand Rapids, MN and the best practices they've learned along their school based host homes journeys. Please use them, adapt them and share them — these resources are now yours, too! This guidebook is not comprehensive, rather it is meant as a guide for implementing, evaluating, and refining school based host home programs for youth. Through this guidebook, we hope to lift up and share the voices of host home providers so people doing the day-to-day work of ending youth homelessness through school based host homes can learn from one another.

Point Source Youth created this guidebook with the goal of you writing on it, adding to it, sharing it, or using it as a doorstop when you're helping a young person move into their host home. This is *your* tool! Enjoy the handbook and, of course, the journey!

Should you find yourself wanting to take a deeper dive into the material in this handbook, **reach out to us!** At Point Source Youth we have a dedicated team of Directors and Associate Directors who can help you along this journey. Through our Technical Assistance we provide individualized support, guidance, coaching, and training to help you with your host home program — whether you're building it from scratch or ready to make changes to reach your own school based host home program!

Thank you always,
The Point Source Youth Team and
our partners in Minnesota

OVERVIEW OF PROJECT

THE WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY, AND HOW OF SCHOOL BASED HOST HOMES

Youth Homelessness is a major problem in the United States. According to a recent study by Chapin Hall¹ approximately **3.5 million** young adults ages 18-25 experience a form of homelessness each year. This is a crisis that needs addressing.

School Based Host Homes (SBHH) is one of our favorite interventions for youth homelessness. Why? Because it helps end youth homelessness **quickly and it's cost-effective, youth-centered, and accessible**. Integrating community based housing interventions such as host homes into the community of a school creates relationships and access school-aged youth need, that otherwise may not exist in the community.

SBHH is not business as usual in the youth housing world. It asks for creativity, flexibility, and the ability to sit with the uncomfortable feelings of — is this working? Can I do this? Should we even be doing this? We ask youth for these things in housing programs, and SBHH asks it from providers and systems leaders as well.

Implementing a SBHH program can be many things: exciting, scary, frustrating, “two steps forward, one step back,” eye-opening, and transformative. The list goes on. This is huge! It's also hard. We at Point Source Youth are so excited to be on this journey together with you. To kick off this guidebook, we're answering the Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How of SBHH for youth.

Who is School-based Host Homes for?

- SBHH is for young adults experiencing housing instability while attending high school, or are currently **high school age** and looking to reconnect to school in some capacity.
- SBHH **does not** put any preconditions on young people seeking housing. This means that SBHH programs do not require young people to get a job, abstain from drugs or alcohol, receive mental health treatment, resolve court cases, or anything else in order to qualify for the intervention.

What is School-based Host Homes?

- Host Homes are an intervention that houses a young person in their own space with a

caring adult mentor in their community. By connecting host homes to school systems, we are able to create direct access to housing for youth in the school district, and connect youth who want to be reconnected to school and housing, a great solution and direct support.

- A solution to housing instability designed to help youth **quickly** end their experience of homelessness and return to permanent housing.
- A **low-barrier** intervention offered without preconditions, following the Housing First Model.
- SBHH offers many different **options** for services, support, and housing, so that each participant can receive the level of services they want and need.

¹ [voicesofyouthcount.org/brief/national-estimates-of-youth-homelessness](https://www.voicesofyouthcount.org/brief/national-estimates-of-youth-homelessness)

Where is School-based Host Homes being done with young adults?

- **All over** the country! Point Source Youth has partners in 50 towns and cities. We've seen SBHH work in rural communities, across Minnesota, Florida, North Carolina, as well as large urban metropolises, like Seattle.

When should I try School-based Host Homes?

- **Right now**, seriously. There's over 3.5 million young adults experiencing homelessness each year. SBHH programs are one of the fastest and most cost-effective ways to address youth homelessness. We know SBHH work.

Why should I try School-based Host Homes?

- It's what young people **want**.

- It is a **cost-effective** intervention that uses the strengths of your community to house youth.
- SBHH adopts a **Housing First** approach, which means it is youth-centered, low-barrier, and focuses on housing people as quickly as possible without pre-conditions
- SBHH doesn't just help individual young people. It also has positive impacts on your community's entire homelessness and school systems. By shortening the amount of time young people experience homelessness, SBHH programs help create "**flow-through**" in your crisis response system. This means that more youth who are unstably housed right now and need shelter can access it.

How do I actually do School-based Host Homes?

- Keep reading — that's what this Handbook is for!

A PHILOSOPHICAL SHIFT

As we've helped nonprofits and communities across the country launch SBHH programs for youth, we've heard one common sentiment, "woah this is...different". Starting a SBHH program requires us to experience a philosophical shift in the way we do things. Change is often scary and uncomfortable. **Do it anyway.**

Trust That School-based Host Homes Work

Through the COVID-19 pandemic, youth were in need of supportive services and housing. Many youth continued to be connected to schools as drop-ins and other services closed or went virtual. Through our school-based host home program, the communities were able to provide life-saving interventions through the school-based host home program.

Rural communities face unique challenges when it comes to youth experiencing homelessness. Oftentimes, homelessness is not as visible as it is in urban communities and there is a lack of youth-specific interventions. The good news?

SBHH works in rural communities extremely well! SBHH effectively serves youth in broader, spread out areas and utilizes resources that exist in communities to build access to housing that works for young people.

Youth are More Than Capable of Achieving Independence

SBHH approaches youth from a strength-based model. As service providers, it isn't our job to parent youth, teach them lessons, or protect them from making their own decisions. Rather, it is our job to **partner** with youth, recognize their inherent strengths, and help them to build on these strengths to achieve independence. With

the help of caring hosts, teachers, and providers, we are able to offer tons of support and guidance towards independence.

In SBHH programs, youth are in the driver's seat. As service providers we help give directions and sometimes say "look out for that pedestrian" but the young person is ultimately in control. Why? Because they are the experts in their own lives.

SBHH is a housing first intervention that empowers young people by placing them with a caring adult member in the community, and the corresponding responsibilities with that choice. Wraparound services and case management promote skill sets grounded in independence so that youth can have the agency and tools to maintain and secure stable housing on their own afterwards.

Housing is a Basic Human Right

Housing is a basic human right. It is not something to be earned. There are no strings attached. As host home providers, we help young people who want housing find housing. Simple as that.

Young people **do not need to prove themselves** before they are given the resources and supports to obtain housing. We have to inherently trust that young people will want to maintain their housing. And that they're capable of doing so. And that we're capable of helping them with whatever challenges pop up, should they want or need our help.

Flexibility is Key

SBHH are flexible and youth-driven. Youth are able to make decisions about school, housing, work, and their next steps with the support of mentors

in the community. This works because it is flexible and individualized. It also allows communities to provide the most assistance to youth who truly need it most.

How Staff Approach Young People Matters

As service providers, it is the staff's responsibility to interact in a way that meets the needs of young people. We need to focus on getting staff "school-based host homes for youth" ready instead of getting youth "housing ready". This requires staff to learn to think differently (with these philosophical shifts for example!). This is a continuous learning process that can be done through training, role plays, scripts, consistent feedback, coaching, and support. It's important to constantly remind ourselves that our job is to empower and support young people in making their own choices, because **they are the experts** in their own lives.

Change is Constant

SBHH requires programs to be flexible and **adaptable**, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on communities. While we know SBHH works, it is still a relatively new intervention. This means providers need to be in a constant cycle of planning, evaluating, and implementing.

What's the best way to do this? Ask young people how it's going. Plan listening sessions or feedback groups to hear directly from participants in your program. Open yourself up to scrutiny, and take young people's feedback seriously. Try implementing the changes they want to see. You might be surprised how it works out.

LESSONS LEARNED & PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

DIFFICULTIES AND SOLUTIONS

Difficulties during COVID-19

After creating all of the material for the school-based host home pilot in two rural communities in Minnesota, we found ourselves at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Creating responses in real time during an ever-changing crisis while building out the program created many lessons learned that we are happy to share with you.

Some of the barriers we ran into:

- The legalities of **confidentiality** between the agency and the school.
- **Finding hosts** that would open their homes to youth during a pandemic.
- The community was at a **stand still** as far as community engagement in 2020, and a new plan had to be made on how to recruit for host homes and how to reach youth that were attending school virtually.
- Establishing good communication and **buy-in** with the school and school staff initially.
- Role **clarity** between the role of the Host Home advocate inside the school and other support staff in the school.
- **Virtual** service provision while working to create a brand new program.
- Youth not always letting folks **know** about their housing instability. Youth are very resilient and are often very good at keeping their experiences to themselves, so their

housing instability isn't always obvious or spoken about.

Creating Solutions

In order to meet many of the issues, relationships and rapport needed to be built between the schools and the youth serving agencies. Once this was established, it was much easier to create MOU's, role clarity, and connections with students.

As the pandemic and program progressed, we were able to figure out better virtual services for youth, how to connect with youth who were not physically in school, and create outreach strategies to the community, which we outlined below. We made incredible strides in the program by pivoting to meet the needs of youth in the pandemic — which also meant moving from a community match model for host recruitment to a youth-identified model with very strong wrap around services such as connection to emergency housing, transportation, food, books, household items, school items, and other necessities.

Important Programmatic Supports:

- **MOU's** with the County and the schools
- Creating applications for Host Homes and Youth, Release of information form (ROI), Criminal Background Consent Form, an informational packet for Host Homes and one for youth.
- **Marketed** the community by sending out flyers to Schools, Churches, Agencies that work with youth, placed an ad in the newspaper, and added the program to our Agency Web-site.

- Created a **list of trainings** that Host home families could access on-line.
- **Flyers/advertising** prior to implementation.
- Regular **community meetings** between agencies and school districts — especially with school's homeless liaisons.
- Regular community **outreach** and education in physical and digital spaces.
- Creating more **relaxed rules** for host background checks in order to support youth-identified and kinship matches.
- Utilizing CARES and HUD **funding** for emergency hotel stays to minimize trauma and street homelessness.
- Utilizing **hotel stays** for quarantine time before host home placement, when agreed upon by both parties.
- Creating strong **emergency services** to address the needs of youth.

Benefits of the Program

The most important and long-lasting outcomes we have seen from school-based host homes is the strengthening of **relationships and connections** for youth. Through SBHH, agencies can provide wrap around services to youth directly in their schools. For a youth to be able to access RHY, HUD, state, local, and school-based resources through one program at a school they were already connected to was revolutionary.

It also provided awareness to school staff about what homelessness looks like and how it impacts youth in their schools. Many school staff were unaware and unsure how to speak to youth about

housing instability, or even how to identify the signs. Through SBHH, students had a clear path to support. Schools were able to identify and provide in-house services for housing and other basic needs to youth experiencing homelessness.

Bi-weekly meetings were set up with the Youth Counselor and the School Counselor to get a system for referrals down to what worked best with restrictions. This communication made it a comfortable transition into needed program support.

School staff and principals stated that because of the program, they are looked at things differently for the students in their school. Through the program, school staff saw the impact for the students and were able to have a more holistic approach to working with the students. The interaction with outside agency programs gave youth a resource for when they were in school and after they graduated from high school.

In addition to these wins, host homes are more cost effective than a hotel stay, which in a rural location is one of the only other options to provide shelter for youth experiencing homelessness. The SBHH process is much simpler and less expensive in comparison to foster homes or shelters. With host homes for youth under 18, it also eliminates rent barriers for youth who are old enough to live on their own but need to finish their High School Education.

Most importantly, there was **no wrong way to access support**. Youth had access to food support, transportation support, help with medical insurance, clothing, housing, and limited financial support. Staff in all agencies worked closely together to make sure the needs of the youth were met in the way that made the most sense. Having the same person in the school and the organizations providing support made a huge difference in how the community responded to youth homelessness.

HOST RECRUITMENT DURING COVID-19

Recruitment

Host homes have had a shift since the COVID-19 pandemic. Building strong relationships with the school and the community is absolutely necessary for a strong SBHH program. Host recruitment is the core piece that will allow your program to move young adults quickly from homelessness into permanent housing. It requires determination, smart marketing of your program, and a lot of creativity!

Although traditional community match hosts were less available — which are often recruited through churches, book clubs, colleges, PFLAG, PTA, and other social organizations, hosts were still in the community through different avenues. Utilizing **virtual** outreach and **youth-identified matches**, we were able to continue to serve youth through SBHH.

Youth-identified Matches

With it being difficult to bring community members together during the pandemic, the system had to meet youth where they were at — literally. Youth-identified host homes are just that. Instead of finding a community match for youth through host recruitment, we work with young people to identify supportive relationships in their life that could be a potential host home. This often looks like a family member, family friend, partner's parents, or other caring adult mentor. By utilizing youth-identified matches, we were able to serve youth with much needed support services. Meeting the youth where they were at and supporting their match helped build trust with the youth and give them more resources.

We found that many of these connections between the youth and the host homes were already established. Doubling up with someone they already knew and are familiar with was less traumatizing for the youth and empowered their housing choice.

Marketing

Marketing moved from community education and meetings to much different community organizing through shared and virtual spaces. Creating flyers is an important piece, allowing folks in grocery stores, restaurants, post offices, banks, gas stations, and other social service agencies to continue to learn about host homes in their community. We were able to let youth and potential hosts know about the program through printed flyers.

Another place to put ads was on social and traditional media. Through online news stories, many folks became interested in becoming hosts and learning more about the program. Another important piece was creating ads on social media platforms that specifically targeted service area codes and folks who would potentially be interested in becoming hosts. We were able to design print and social ads to create more imprints and allow for more contact information to be gathered for the program. You can see samples of these below.

Sample Trainings & Documents

[Student Application.pdf](#)

[Host Home Packet.pdf](#)

[Host Home Application.pdf](#)

[Doppa](#)

[AEOA Host Home Flyers.pdf](#)

[PSY Host Home Training.pptx](#)

HIRING AND TRAINING

Hiring and training is an important component of a school based host home program. It takes a unique person to work with young adults and to fully embrace the host home mindset. It's important to have someone who is connected to the school, to youth, and to your community.

When hiring staff, it is important to assess that candidates have a **youth-centered and strength based approach** to service delivery. The Point Source Youth team can work with you to create job descriptions, screen resumes, assess and edit interview questions, join the interview process, and provide feedback and advice towards the most qualified candidates. It is also important to include youth in the hiring process. Youth input will create equity in the process as well as inform your hiring decision in a way that works for young people you serve.

Ideally you should be looking for candidates with the following characteristics:

- Hire people with **lived experience**. Don't just expect young people to give back by volunteering - actually give them full-time jobs and hire them for integral roles in your program.
- Hire people who look like the people you serve. It is important youth are able to connect with **their own communities** through your work.
- Hire people who believe in **Housing First**. Ask them about it during the interview process.
- Hire people who value **autonomy**. It is very hard to "unlearn" core beliefs and relearn new values. Look for people who want to empower young adults, not fix or parent them.
- Hire people who are **connected** to your community and are **excited** about host recruitment. This is a pivotal piece to your program and it is important to hire someone

who is excited about community organizing, events, public speaking, and connecting with your community.

Once you've hired your team, it's time to train and support them. In general we suggest doing this through interactive trainings and roleplays. It is important that all policies, trainings, and forms are aligned. You should use person-centered language that is based in autonomy, strength, and empowerment.

PSY consultants will work closely with the case management team to apply best practices, trainings and techniques known to strengthen case management service provision. We will help you change the conversation from "how can we change the people we serve so that they will succeed in school based host homes" to "how can we change host homes so that it can work for the people we serve".

At a minimum, we suggest all staff are trained on the following evidence based practices. Our team can provide these trainings directly or help you find a local trainer in your community. Contact us for more information!

Positive Youth Development

Positive Youth Development works to enhance young people's strengths by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and treating youth as active participants. It is focused on youth choice and empowerment, and it is a radically different approach than when providers treat youth as service recipients.

Housing First

Housing First offers housing quickly and immediately to young people without preconditions. Participants are then offered wrap-around services to support them in maintaining their tenancy.

Motivational Interviewing

Motivational Interviewing as a collaborative, goal-oriented style of communication that works to strengthen an individual's motivation for change. Staff learn specific skills like open-ended questions, affirmations, and reflections

to help participants make progress towards their own goals.

Harm Reduction

Harm reduction works to reduce the risks and harmful effects of substance use, sex work, and homelessness.

SUPPORTING SBHH STAFF

SBHH programs should work to support their staff through training, supervision, and burnout prevention.

Training and supervision should work to support staff in their professional development. We recommend regularly meeting with your team for individual and group supervision. This helps to build camaraderie and the support needed to stay in this field.

Case conferences can be a valuable learning opportunity for your team. During case conferences, you can take a multidisciplinary approach to supporting individual participants. It allows staff to learn from and give feedback to each other, which can sometimes be more valuable than feedback from leadership.

The management team should also work to support staff during **difficult conversations**, like mediations between roommates or the landlord and tenant.

Self Care and Burnout

Burnout is very real in this field. Burnout should be discussed regularly and the team should know signs to look out for.

Signs of burnout:

- Withdrawal
- Aggression
- Difficulty sleeping
- Cynicism or a negative attitude
- Difficulty managing boundaries

SBHH programs can help support their team in developing coping skills to manage stress, promoting time off, offering mental health services through an Employee Assistance Program, and providing ongoing training and supervision.

SCHOOL-BASED HOUSING AND RELATIONSHIPS

Through SBHH, the communication between the providers and the schools greatly improved in the communities that implemented the program. Not only did the schools learn more about the Host Home project and the agencies in the community, it also allowed the program staff to better understand how things were done at the high school. Being able to do this work inside a school setting allowed providers to be a part of support team meetings, which in turn led to stronger relationships with school staff. As the program progresses, relationships between school and agency staff tends

to grow stronger, and the need for this type of position inside the school becomes even more obvious.

Consider allowing providers **space** within the school, and have ways for the school to **directly connect** and communicate with the agencies. This could be through physical office space, regular meetings, and virtual access. It is also important to think about information sharing between school and agency staff and to work through the best ways to communicate to create the support youth need.

WRAP AROUND SERVICES

As you know by now, services in SBHH are entirely **voluntary**. SBHH programs are required to offer case management services at least monthly. But participants in SBHH programs are not required to accept these services.

You want to make your services enticing, relevant, and useful to your participants. The best way to learn how to do this is to talk to young people in your programs. Find out what would help them stay in housing. **Ask them** what they like about your program. And most importantly, ask them how you can do better.

Developing and offering services that youth see as valuable and actually want to receive is a key component of a successful program. Supportive services help set young adults up for success by providing them with the skills and resources they need.

You should not offer all young adults all of the services we are going to describe below. We recommend starting with just case management, and then offering others as needed. Talk with each participant and ask them what they need, as an individual. Then provide them with that service or help them get connected with a long-term provider.

Let the young adult take the driver's seat.

Case Management

Case Management is a collaborative approach to service delivery involving assessment, planning, coordination, and linkages to community services. As school-based host homes are a short- to medium-term intervention, the majority of case management services are actually connecting participants with long-term community providers.

Case management should also focus on each young adult's strengths. It can be helpful to work on building natural supports with friends, family, hosts, and romantic partners as well.

One of the best things about SBHH is that services are largely home-based. This gives providers a unique opportunity to see young adults in the host environment, which can help with identifying service needs. **Service needs should be assessed collaboratively with youth.** Ask them what they think they need to succeed — if there's something they're not considering, open up a conversation about it and see if they agree that they'd like to work on it. Case Managers should identify goals and develop an individualized housing and service plan.

The majority of direct service delivery with a SBHH Case Manager should focus on housing and school retention. A major component of this is helping youth understand the host home agreement and what is needed for school. A case manager can help break down the case plan in a way that's accessible and easy to grasp.

Life skills

Life skills are one of the more flexible components of SBHH programs. These are services that help assist participants to function **independently** in the community. Some examples given by HUD include budgeting of resources and money management, household management, conflict management, shopping for food and needed items, nutrition, use of public transportation, and parent training.

We've seen providers get creative with implementing life skills — taking a group of young adults shopping to teach them how to buy nutritious food at an affordable price, doing a cooking class over Zoom, offering financial coaching services, or practicing a commute to a new job together.

Jobs, Education, and Benefits

With a school-based program, our most important goal with youth is housing and reaching their **education goals**. We encourage providers to support young adults with identifying education goals, preparing

assignments, and assisting with staying on top of deadlines. Youth may also want to apply for college, so assisting with FAFSA and college applications can be life changing for youth. It is also important to help young adults maintain schooling through conflict resolution, time management, and other relevant skills.

Some young people are interested in employment as well. It can be an important piece of enrolling youth in more permanent housing like rapid re-housing, or providing housing for themselves once they have exited the host home. Case managers can work with youth on resumes, mock interviews, and how to apply for jobs.

If a young adult is unable to work due to a qualifying disability, SBHH programs should help them **obtain SSI**. [SOAR training](#) is a great option for providers. SAMSHA has found that “decisions on SOAR-assisted initial applications were received in an average of 115 days in 2020. The national SOAR allowance rate for 2020 was 65 percent. This compares to the initial allowance rate of about 30 percent for all persons aged 18–64 who applied for SSI or SSDI in FY2019”.²

Of course **other benefits** like SNAP, TANF, and any local rental assistance will also help young adults have more room in their budget for housing expenses.

Food

SBHH providers are able to use **HUD funds to provide groceries or food** to participants.³ Our pilot programs of SBHH were also able to provide food to youth. Providers should also focus on long-term access to food, by helping young adults identify places to shop, local food pantries, and other community resources. Providers should also connect with [local Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\) offices](#) to ensure young adults who are eligible, receive funds to purchase food.

² soarworks.samhsa.gov/article/starting-your-soar-initiative

³ [law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/24/578.53](https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/24/578.53)

⁴ [law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/24/578.53](https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/24/578.53)

Transportation⁴

SBHH programs are able to use **HUD or other funding source dollars** to provide access to public transportation for other eligible service needs in this section. There are also other unique ways to help young adults access transportation if public transportation is not readily accessible in your area. You can learn more [here](#).

Budgeting - Existing

Budgeting is an important life skill for all adults, but especially for young adults. It’s important to recognize this as you work to determine what additional supports and resources can help each household succeed in maintaining stable housing.

In order to help your clients remain stably housed, you’ll need to work together to build budgeting skills. The more honest, transparent and comprehensive your approach to budgeting is, the more support you’ll be able to provide in setting them up for success and empowering them with long-term tools to understand their monthly income and expenses.

OrgCode Consulting Inc.’s [Honest Monthly Budget](#) from their Excellence in Housing Training Series is a great resource to help clients approach budgeting by accounting for the diverse ways they may be both earning money and spending it.

Peer Support and Building Community

A Peer Navigator is a young person with lived experience. Peer Navigators are great for providing additional support, teaching life skills, and providing linkages to community services. Peer Navigators often assist young adults by going with them when making linkages to new community resources. This helps to build rapport and ensure participants get the services they need.

If your organization does not have peer navigators, it is important to have community for youth in other ways. Consider creating a drop-in center, therapy groups, or even outings for youth who are in host homes. It's important for youth to feel supported and that they are not alone in their experiences or feelings.

Mental and Physical Health⁵

SBHH programs can utilize funding to help participants obtain mental and physical health care or substance abuse treatment. This can be through the direct provision of services by a licensed professional. It's important to keep in mind that because SBHH is a short-term intervention, it will also be important for Case Managers to provide **linkages to long-term providers**.

5 law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/24/578.53

Host and Youth Mediation

SBHH staff can add a lot of value by mediating between the youth and host home when conflict arises. By listening to both parties, validating concerns, and problem solving, SBHH staff are able to help **de-escalate** and resolve conflicts.

PSY utilizes several tools, such as the host and youth matching process, host and youth mediation forms, and host and youth guest contract, which you can find in our free [Host Home Handbook](#). If you'd like to learn more about how to train your team to mediate conflicts, reach out to our team of consultants. We'll introduce you to best practices and tools used for conflict resolution. If you want more in-depth assistance, we can also provide one-on-one consultation, problem solving, and connection to resources.

A Note on Natural Consequences

It is important that providers or hosts don't take a disciplinary approach with youth in their program. Sometimes youth will make choices that will have negative impacts on them. It is not the program's responsibility to shield youth from these consequences — nor is it their responsibility to create a punishment for their choices to “teach them a lesson.”

The actions of youth can impact important relationships with their friends, neighbors, or their hosts which can create problematic consequences for them. Make it clear to the youth you serve that the consequences are **natural consequences not based on program rules**. If there is an issue, case managers should consider asking the youth “what do you think you can do to repair your relationship with your host?” instead of telling them to do something because it's a program rule.

Natural consequences can be an important **learning opportunity** for youth. Continue to support youth as they experience these natural consequences.

BEST PRACTICES

Flexibility and Creativity

One of the great things about host homes is that it's a super flexible program model that allows for a lot of creativity and innovation. Because it's person-centered and individualized, providers have a lot of freedom to experiment and try new things.

Positive Youth Development

Positive Youth Development (PYD) should be at the forefront of all programs that work with young adults. It is a philosophical and programmatic approach, based on self-determination and empowerment, that helps young people reach their full potential by building on the 5 C's: competence, confidence, connection, compassion, and character.

According to Cornell University,⁶ Positive Youth Development transforms how service providers work with young people.

- We move from fixing problems to building on **strengths**.
- Instead of reacting to problem behavior, we are **pro-active**, building positive outcomes.
- Instead of targeting “troubled” youth we **engage all** youth.
- We move from looking at youth as recipients of services to youth as **resources and active participants**.
- Traditionally we focus on programs and interventions, now we focus on **relationships**.
- Through this emphasis on the importance of relationships, young people become not just the business of professionals, but of everyone in the **community**.

Youth-Centered Services

If you're operating a program for youth, that program should be youth-centered.

We've heard from young adults and providers across the country — young people experiencing homelessness want housing, and they want it now. They want providers to listen to them and ask for their input. They want help with their school and housing decisions. And they want to be treated like adults and given the opportunity and **freedom to make their own decisions**.

Providers have to trust that young people want to find and maintain housing. When we truly believe that and put the wants and needs of youth at the forefront of our work, things start to shift.

Youth Advisory Council (YAC)

A Youth Advisory Council is a key component of organizations that serve youth, especially in school-based host home programs. A YAC is a formal body of young people who provide **counsel, support, and feedback** to the organization. Members should be **paid** for their labor and participation, as their feedback, time, and experience is valuable.

Forming a YAC is a perfect way to put positive youth development into action. Forming a YAC is not just for the good of the organization, but for youth development and leadership. By engaging YAC members in the creation and implementation of programs and services that affect other youth, your organization is establishing a framework of sustainable leadership that draws from and gives back to the community.

6 cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/blogs.cornell.edu/dist/2/6676/files/2015/11/pyd_pyd101curriculum-1ukhw8c.pdf

Focus on Dismantling White Supremacy

We cannot talk about ending youth homelessness without naming and examining the systems that inform and maintain the crisis. Dismantling white supremacy and creating systems of liberation is a vital part of this work. It is a responsibility of all homeless service providers that can and should not be ignored.

We can not end youth homelessness without dismantling institutional racism. We cannot end youth homelessness without working across movements. We cannot end youth homelessness if our advocacy isn't centered on ending

homelessness of Black and Indigenous youth, trans youth, and youth of color. We cannot end youth homelessness without dismantling the criminal injustice system which disappears these young people from their communities into jails and prisons across the country.

We encourage you to reflect on the ways your organization participates in dismantling oppressive systems, and the work needed to **expand and deepen this commitment**. Our team can help by connecting you with experts in the field, as well as facilitating trainings on topics such as LGBTQ+ equity, anti-racism, youth empowerment work and more.

STARTING YOUR OWN HOST HOME PROGRAM

I hope that this guidebook inspired you to start your own School-based Host Home program! We were able to implement this pilot in two rural communities in Minnesota with thanks to our sponsor, Minnesota Department of Human Services. Although this pilot was unique, this is a replicable and important intervention to add to your youth-serving systems. We have more information about host homes on our website at pointsourceyouth.org. If you are interested in receiving more information or individualized technical support, please reach out to Point Source Youth at programs@pointsourceyouth.org.