



# Using Host Homes to House Queer and Trans Youth



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# YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN MINNESOTA

At least 6,000 youth and young adults are experiencing homelessness on any night in Minnesota. Youth homelessness is not just an urban problem; youth are homeless in urban, suburban and rural communities.

For those of you who like statistics and want to know more about numbers related to youth and homelessness in MN, go here: [Wilder Research Site](#)



# CAUSES AND UNDERLYING FACTORS



LGBTQ youth make up 20-40% of the homeless youth population nationwide, the majority of whom are youth of color.

*In order to end homelessness, we must have a commitment to racial and economic justice.*

# AVENUES FOR HOMELESS YOUTH

Shelter and Transitional Housing for 300+ youth per year in Twin Cities, MN.



## Six Programs:

- Shelter and TLP in North Minneapolis (21 beds)
- Shelter and TLP in Brooklyn Park (12 beds)
- Avenues for Young Families
- GLBT Host Home Program
- Minneapolis & Suburban Host Home Program
- ConneQT Host Home Program

# AVENUES HOST HOME PROGRAMS



## Suburban Host Home Program

- Created by community volunteers and youth-serving agencies in fall 2011
- Youth from Hennepin County suburbs



## Minneapolis Host Home Program

- Launched fall 2012
- Youth from Minneapolis

***These programs were combined in 2016.***

# AVENUES HOST HOME PROGRAMS



## GLBT Host Home Program

- Created in 1997 by GLBT community members in partnership with youth advocates/orgs
- Nationally-recognized model



## ConneQT Host Home Program

- A pilot of Point Source Youth
- ConneQT partnership of Avenues and RECLAIM

# WHY HOST HOMES

- Safer transition-like housing, rooted in community, non-institutional
- Cost-effective
- The Intangibles/Icing on the Cake:
  - Long-term/life-long relationships can be established
  - Changes lives – youth AND hosts
  - By extension, changes the community



# BASIC OPERATION

- Outside the system
- We recruit, screen, train and support community volunteers who then provide short-term, supportive housing and food for youth who are homeless or precariously housed
- Program manager supports hosts – regular contact, monthly meetings, support groups
- Youth referred by many partners – homeless youth agencies, school and county social workers, community advocates
- Youth receive ongoing case management

# KEY FEATURES

## Community Advisory or Action Council

- Reflects the community, activists
- Not just social service providers
- Key to host recruitment and program promotion
- Helps Program Manager maintain integrity and intent of the program – challenge and support



## Values and Understandings of our HHPs

- See attached document

# KEY FEATURES

## Host recruitment and screening

- Community organizing, relationship-building
- Application form, background checks, 2-3 interviews, reference letters

## Host training (16 hours)

- Videos to provide context to homelessness
- Training on positive youth development, trauma and resiliency, gender/transgender 101, anti-racism/white privilege
- Focus on host applicants: self-reflection exercises, power and privilege awareness
- Panels of past hosts and youth

# KEY FEATURES - HHP

## Careful youth referrals

- Case manager needs to work with youth at least one month prior to referral (typically much longer)
- Youth are voluntary participants...they are never “placed”
- When youth call who have no case manager/connection to advocate, our HHP Case Manager will work with them and assess program appropriateness – can still provide case management even if youth can’t or decides not to be in HHP

## Youth-driven matching process

## Consistent support of hosts and youth

# KEY FEATURES - HHP

## Ongoing host training and support by program manager

- Calls and meetings, as needed
- Monthly support groups (all HHPs together)
- Monthly meeting in the home
- 2-3 trainings per year
- Social events

## Ongoing youth support by our case manager

- Meets youth where they're at, both emotionally and physically
- Intensive, flexible

# “LEAP OF FAITH”

- It will be messy and possibly magical.
- Manage expectations. Guarantee there will be conflicts and really difficult times. Hosts can't expect youth to be “grateful.” And hosts will always wish they knew more about the youth.
- Help hosts set clear boundaries, recognize their issues and triggers, and do self-work.
- Consistently talk about assumptions, power and privilege, especially with white, middle-class hosts.

**Communicate, train, support, listen, challenge... repeat.**

# SPEAKING OF ASSUMPTIONS

What do you think is the main reason that brings potential hosts to the GLBT Host Home Program?

Or, in other words:

What is the most highlighted narrative for why LGBTQ youth homelessness exists?

# LESSONS LEARNED

- Must be created and owned by the community. Can't be another social service program.
- Bias against government funding – do not want program to become rules-based, institutional.
- Good case management is crucial. Our Suburban and Minneapolis HHPs rely on referring partners to continue providing case management to youth while they are in host homes. But referring partners often lack capacity to case manage consistently.
- **Must always question our role and commitment to social justice.**

# THANK YOU



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