

# Assessing Youth Homelessness and System Response in Bernalillo County, New Mexico

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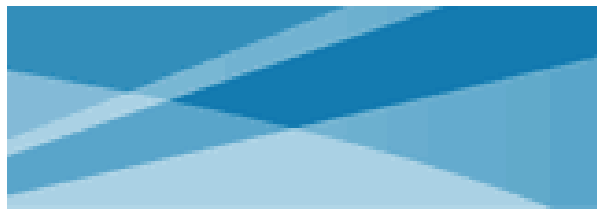
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Briefing prepared for  
Youth Housing Continuum  
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 PIRE

The logo for PIRE (Public Interest Research Group) features a stylized blue icon of four interlocking puzzle pieces forming a square, followed by the word "PIRE" in a blue serif font.

# Goals of the Needs Assessment

Generate	Generate an estimate for the number of young people aged 15-25 experiencing housing instability and homelessness in Bernalillo County.
Enhance	Enhance understanding of housing instability and homelessness based on the perspectives of young people with lived experience.
Examine	Examine strengths and limitations of the current service system for the population of interest, including capacity issues affecting community-based-organizations (CBOs) and their workforce.
Develop	Develop recommendations for creating a coordinated and comprehensive community response to enhance services and supports for young people impacted by housing instability and homelessness in Bernalillo County.

# Structure of Mixed-Method Needs Assessment

New Mexico Youth Count & Housing Survey

Youth Experiences & Perspectives on Housing Instability & Homelessness

Organizational Assessment Survey

Qualitative System & Organizational Assessment

Organizational Workforce Assessment

# Key Youth Count & Survey Findings

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- Count procedures conservatively estimate that between 1,088 to 2,314 young persons are experiencing housing instability
- Could not saturate all possible sites
  - Pandemic conditions
  - Other factors (e.g., safety considerations, hidden population)

**Come and be  
COUNTED  
PARTY  
IN THE  
PARK!**

**Friday  
September 17, 2021  
4-7pm  
Roosevelt Park, ABQ  
(Coal & Spruce SE)**

**FREE EVENT  
OPEN TO ALL**

*Featuring*  
**DJ MITCH  
SNACKS!  
DRINKS!  
MUSIC!**

We are conducting a Youth Count and Housing Survey to better understand the housing needs and experiences of young people, ages 15-25, in our community.

Receive a \$10 gift card for your participation in the survey!

Enter a raffle to win other prizes!

There is no obligation to participate in the survey.

Event sponsored by the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation.

# Key Youth Count & Housing Survey Findings

Demographic Characteristics (selected)	All Respondents (N=365)	Unstably Housed / Homeless (N=270)	Stably Housed (N=91)
<b>Average Age</b>	20.2	20.6	18.9
<b>Race and Ethnicity</b>			
Hispanic	68.6%	68.3%	69.3%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	15.4%	<b>17.8%</b>	9.1%
Black/African American	13.8%	14.4%	10.2%
Non-Hispanic White	17.5%	17.5%	18.2%
<b>Gender Identity</b>			
Girl/Woman	34.0%	35.6%	27.5%
Boy/Man	52.1%	49.2%	61.5%
Transgender/Nonbinary/Genderfluid/Two Spirit	10.6%	12.1%	6.6%

# Key Youth Count & Housing Survey Findings

		All Respondents (N=365)	
<b>Where Respondents Spent Most of the Past 30 Days (Top Three)</b>			
Own home (not temporary)	32.6%		
Outside in a car, park, campground, or other public place	17.3%		
Couch surfing	12.1%		
<b>Life Experiences of Respondents Overall and By Housing Status</b>		<b>Unstably Housed / Homeless (N=270)</b>	<b>Stably Housed (N=91)</b>
Currently under 18 and has left home for good (n=85)	31.8%	<b>53.1%</b>	2.9%
Currently or ever in foster care	27.1%	<b>34.1%</b>	7.0%
Ever been involved in juvenile justice	33.7%	<b>40.1%</b>	16.9%
Ever stayed overnight or longer in an adult jail or prison	39.2%	<b>49.2%</b>	11.9%
Parent or pregnant or both	23.9%	<b>29.0%</b>	10.1%

# Key Youth Count & Housing Survey Findings

Self-reported physical and mental health	Unstably Housed or Homeless (N=270)		Stably Housed (N=91)	
	#	% or Mean	#	% or Mean
<b>General Health</b> (Mean (Poor=1; Excellent=5))		3.2		3.6
% Very Good or Excellent	101	38%	45	45.9%
% Poor or Fair	75	<b>28.2%</b>	8	8.8%
<b>Number of Times Visited Emergency Room in Past Year</b>				
% One or More Times	170	64.4%	50	55.6%
% Three or More Times	64	<b>24.2%</b>	11	12.2%
<b>% Has a Physical Disability or Long-Term Health Condition</b>	92	<b>38.3%</b>	16	19.8%
<b>How Often Mental Health Was NOT GOOD in Past 30 Days</b>				
Mean (Never=1; Always=5)		3.1		2.6
% Most of the Time or Always	100	<b>38.3%</b>	20	22.2%
% Never or Rarely	81	31.0%	42	<b>46.7%</b>



# Reasons for Youth Homelessness

Loss of family home

Addiction

Seeking safety from abuse

Becoming a parent

Crowding

Coming of age

Breakup

Bad roommate situation

Money problems

Civil record of eviction

Criminalized background





We don't as a community talk enough about it [youth homelessness]. I think...if we really showed the ugly truth to the community at large, maybe people would get upset, and it would affect them.

– Frontline provider

# Who are the Young People Experiencing Homelessness in Bernalillo County?

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Invisible and diverse

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Impacted by structural inequality and its harms

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Affected by complicated family dynamics

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Lacking positive social support

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Struggling with mental health and substance use issues

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More likely system-involved

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Emerging adults with life skill, education, and employment needs

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Put at risk for victimization, crime, and human trafficking

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Vulnerable to being homeless as adults

# Forced Compromises

- Dealing and stealing to make money
- Engaging in sexual activity for a place to sleep – “business transaction”
- Getting arrested to secure a place to eat and sleep
- Forgoing public aid due to the risk of arrest or deportation
- Keeping away from adult shelters for safety reasons
- Risking a probation or parole violation to live with loved ones
- Remaining on the streets to stay with a beloved pet

# What Makes It Hard for Young People to Get Help?

## Individual challenges

- Not knowing about resources in the community
- Wanting to be self-reliant
- Fear of being judged
- Behavioral health struggles
- Distrust of available services

## Legal, bureaucratic, and structural barriers

- Parental or guardian consent requirements
- Paperwork and technological challenges
- Not having documentation
- Insufficient navigation support
- Lack of key housing and behavioral health services
- Discrimination based on race, gender, sexuality, and felon status

# Ideal Living Situation

## Formal Support

- Life skills
- Case management
- Behavioral health services

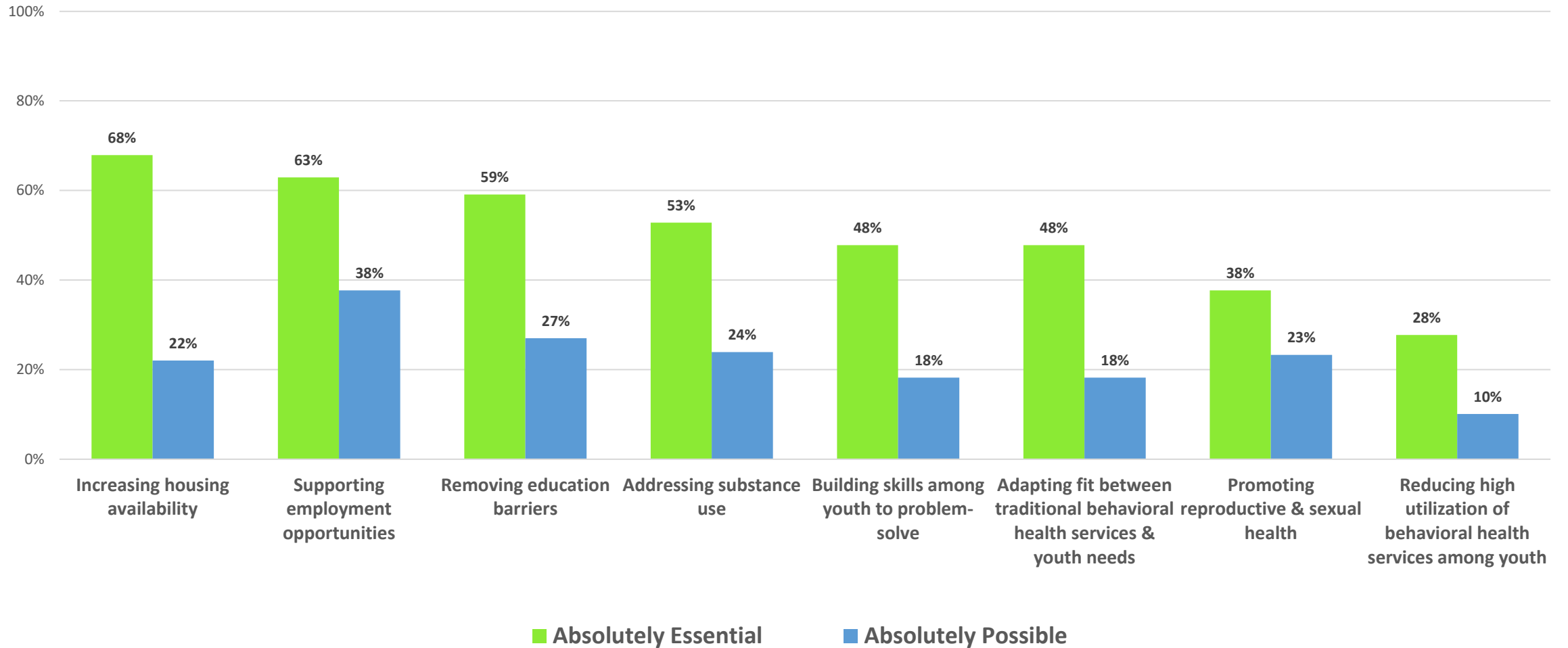
## Safe and Private

- Not on streets
- Less drug use, theft, and violence

## Independence

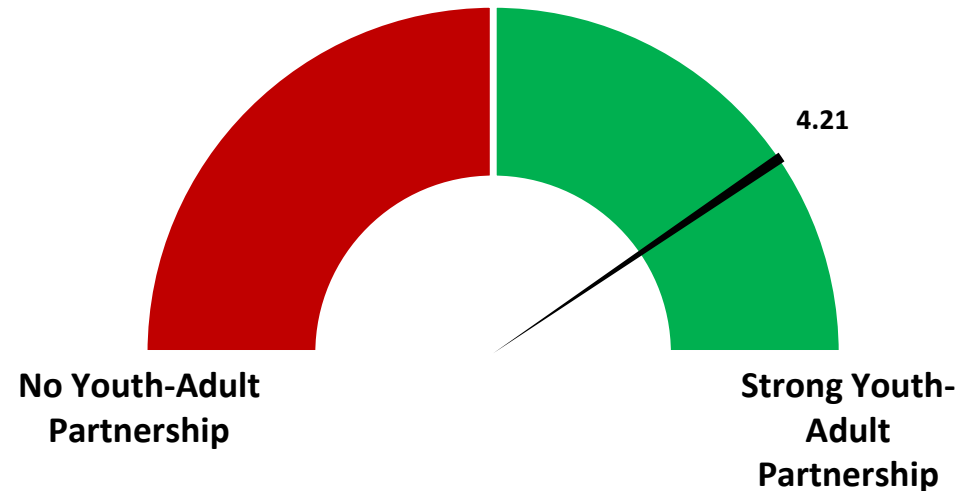
- Sobriety
- Reliable transportation
- Job to pay rent and expenses

# Priorities v. Realities



# Youth-Adult Partnerships

- What young people want from providers:
  - Compassion
  - Empathy
  - No judgement
  - No discrimination
  - Navigation assistance
  - Lived experience



Provider Perspectives



# What is the State of the Service System in Bernalillo County?

- Missing youth voice
- Multilevel leadership
- Communication, coordination, and collaboration
- Long wait lists for housing and behavioral health services
- Funding and contracting constraints
- Variable evidence-based practice provision
- Fragmented data collection, reporting, and evaluation
- Workforce burnout and stress
- Recruitment and retention issues



**Selected  
Recommendations to  
Advance  
Comprehensive  
Community Response**



## Collaboration & Partnership

- Prioritize/support youth voice
- Leadership alignment across public sectors, systems, and CBOs
- Structures for cross-sector collaboration, transparent decision-making, and communication with feedback loops.

## Prevention & Coordinated Entry

- Public awareness and knowledge of local services and supports
- Early engagement and intervention services
- Coordinated entry and assessment system
- Priority subpopulations (especially among adult-serving CBOs)
- Data management processes and systems

## Enhanced Continuum of Services & Supports

- Multiple housing options (e.g., rapid rehousing, transitional, permanent supportive)
- Maximize Medicaid coverage, its utilization, and potential to pay for housing-related services
- Trauma-informed and developmentally appropriate approaches
- Behavioral health, education, and employment service and supports
- Address legal, bureaucratic, and structural barriers
- Implement guaranteed income pilot program for young people with lived experience

## Improved Capacity to Deliver Services

- Longer-term funding and reduced administrative burdens to grow youth-serving CBOs
- Address recruitment and retention challenges (e.g., increase salaries, cultivate training and career advancement opportunities)
- Inter-organizational relationships for aligned leadership, network collaboration, service coordination, and quality of services
- Enhance expertise in youth homelessness, particularly in adult-serving CBOs

# What Can the City of Albuquerque Do Now?

- Establish shelter dedicated to young adults, ages 18-25
  - Expense Option 1: \$800,000
    - 24-hour shelter with comprehensive services and transitional support
  - Expense Option 2: \$500,000
    - 12-hour shelter with basic services
- Initiate development of youth-oriented continuum of care
  - Fund facilitation and coordination
  - Create roadmap to address gaps and advance the system
  - Use data from needs assessment for planning

# Thanks to Everyone Who Took Time to Take Part in this Needs Assessment, Plus:

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**Leadership Team:** *Standing:* Doug Chaplin, Quinn Donnay, Art Kaufman, Diana Lopez, Jennifer Scacco, Brooke Tafoya, Assata Zerai, CYFD Team, PIRE Team, and UCSD Team. *Associate:* Jeff Beg, Venice Ceballos, and Bill Wagner

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**UCSD Team:** Amanda Farr, Danielle Fettes, Jennifer Perrott, and David Sommerfeld

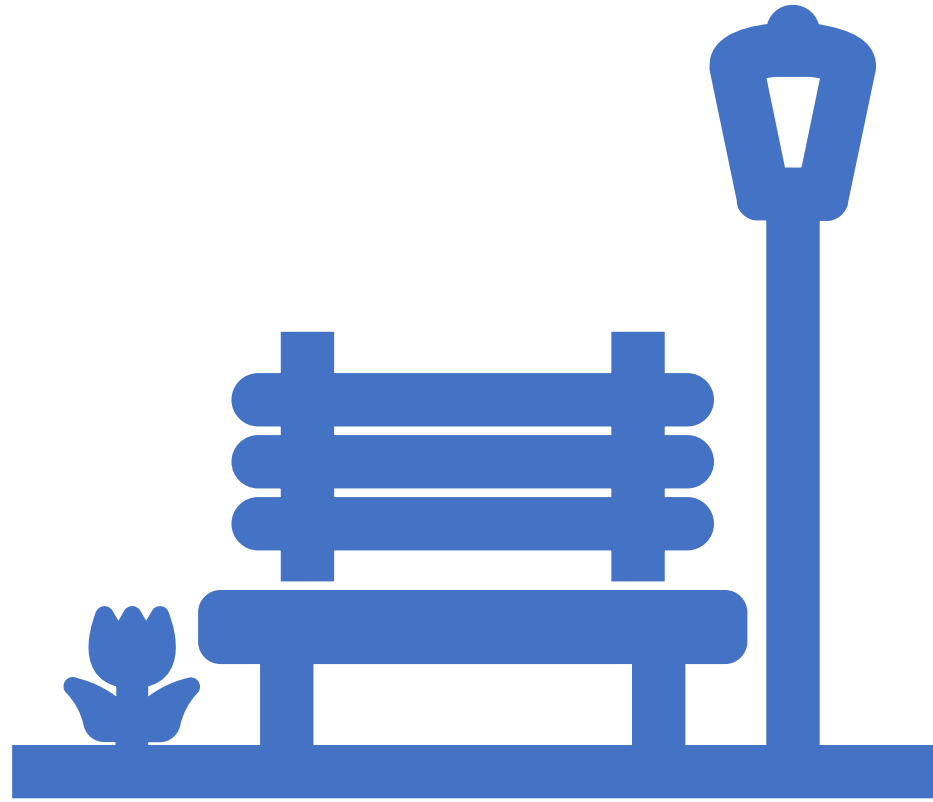
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