



Toni N. Harp | Mayor, City of New Haven
CITY OF NEW HAVEN | YOUTH SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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March 1, 2016

TOMI VEALE
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Dear Co-Chairs Rep. Butler and Sen. Winfield and members of Housing Committee:

**GWENDOLYN BUSCH
WILLIAMS**
Program Manager | Youth@Work
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Bill:

To broaden the definition of "child care facility" to include persons under twenty-five years of age who are currently homeless.

EARLE LOBO
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Purpose:

To create a place for at risk and vulnerable young people under the age of twenty five who are identified as homeless to have the opportunity to receive care, connection to services and healthcare-both physical and mental, that is currently unavailable in the present modality.

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How:

The Escape Teen Center of New Haven is poised to serve youth ages 13-24, with intentional programming, culturally competent mental health services and access to educational assistance in efforts to meet the needs of youth and their families with the support of local entities including the Board of Education, Yale University, the aldermanic board and Community Based Organizations. Housed within The Escape, is The Situation Shelter for Homeless Youth which intends to fill in the gap of services. In a report last year, The Board of Education "identified" over 400 New Haven youth who are as homeless. While that number is startling, by all counts there are between 800-1000 youth in New Haven who are homeless under the age of 25. About 1/3 of that number are housed in adult shelters.

Why is the opportunity unique? The Shelter service model that currently exists in New Haven and throughout the state are:

- Free standing shelters. Any resources they are able to offer have to come from outside the agency. The Situation Shelter would have access to all of the resources under one roof. Also strong relationship building will help to continue to create a network of services designed for this population.
- Shelters in New Heaven that house youth 18-24, do just that. Their primary goal is to get clients off the streets and into a better living situation. The better living situation usually means a shelter bed. However, because these youth would not be classified as "chronically homeless" it would be difficult to show immediate need of housing over an older individual who has verifiable periods of homelessness over many years.

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- An 18 year old in a shelter is seen the same as a 42 year old. Shelter services are not designed to care for the needs of young people. Services like financial planning geared toward youth, family reconciliation, education assistance with and among peers, or opportunities for mentoring are all things youth need in order to help change their "situation".

Why 16-24?

Youth.gov which represents 18 federally funded programs and services for youth in the US identify youth as ages 16-24. More specifically for youth in transition, youth.gov says "youth in this age group experience a number of challenges on their path to a successful adulthood." As 16-24 is the nationally recognized age of youth, programs designed for this population should model the nationally accepted definition.

In terms of housing this population at The Situation, These youth would have been a part of professional programming at The Escape that will be offered on a continual basis. Separating them during the sleeping hours to fulfill another set of rules, will not help to meet the objectives for the youth who will reside at The Situation. Amending this definition for this population is imperative to their access to services. Also, have this age range with help us to identify those who are at risk of becoming homeless through their relationship with The Escape. We may be able to divert some and for other we will provide a safety net while they are figuring out next steps.

There are limited places where youth can still be youth and not forced into making adult choices. At area shelters, youth under 25 are forced to make life long choices that may not be in their interest. The Situation Shelter for Homeless Youth, with the support of The Escape, will be equipped with the resources to allow youth time to make choices and will see them through the appropriate lens. A one size fits all paradigm is clearly ineffective, as daily the size of the homeless youth population increases and many are too hidden to count.

Sincerely,



Jason W. Bartlett