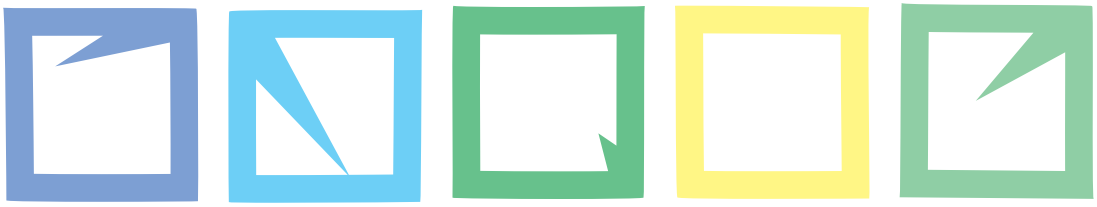
CHICAGO YOUTH STORAGE INITIATIVE:

NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Lara Brooks with **Ka'Riel Gaiter, Gregory Slater,** & **Daphnie Williams**



CHICAGO YOUTH STORAGE INITIATIVE:

NEEDS ASSESSMENT & RECOMMENDATIONS

Lara Brooks with
Ka'Riel Gaiter,
Gregory Slater, &
Daphnie Williams

For more information about the Chicago Youth Storage Initiative, please contact Lara Brooks at chicagoyouthstorage@gmail.com.

FUNDING SUPPORT FOR THE CHICAGO YOUTH STORAGE INITIATIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY:

CHICAGO YOUTH STORAGE INITIATIVE

KNIGHT FAMILY FOUNDATION

WINDY CITY TIMES
THE VOICE OF CHICAGO'S GAY, LESBIAN, BI, TRANS AND QUEER COMMUNITY SINCE 1985

Pierce Family Foundation

POLK BROS FOUNDATION
a foundation for chicago families

GRAPHIC DESIGN BY:
JENNI KOTTING
JKOTTING.COM

HEADSHOT PHOTOGRAPHY BY:
PIDGEON PAGONIS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, we are grateful to young people experiencing homelessness and housing instability whose expertise continues to guide us in the development of this work. During focus groups, we witnessed your profound love of family and community. We promise to carry the belief that new ways of living and sharing resources are possible. To all of the powerful young leaders and visionaries, thank you for sharing your experiences and solutions with us.

We are also grateful to Tracy Baim. Her vision and tenacity led to an important and rare summit in Chicago in May 2014 for young people, service providers, advocates, policymakers, artists, and organizers to dream big and boldly about solutions to youth homelessness. From there, Tracy convened advocates and funders in late 2014 to discuss one of the summit's recurring themes: personal storage needs and solutions. A group of young people, service providers, and funders was formed, now the Chicago Youth Storage Initiative (CYSI). We are so grateful for Tracy's "let's get it done" way of living and working.

We are also thankful to organizations and places that have supported this project from the very beginning and opened their doors to us for focus groups and interviews with young people. These include: Broadway United Methodist Church, Broadway Youth Center/Howard Brown Health Center, Chicago House, Heartland Health Alliance/Neon Street, La Casa Norte, The Night Ministry, Teen Living Programs, Unity Parenting & Counseling, and Youth Empowerment Performance Project.

Along the way, we met many more people and organizations. You are too many to name here, but we are grateful for your experiences and commitment to ending youth homelessness. We believe that working to transform the conditions that currently exist involves many things: big shifts, everyday actions, federal and

local policies, witnessing seemingly small moments, and holding complex and intersecting identities. Thank you for holding the legacy and future of our work with integrity and openness.

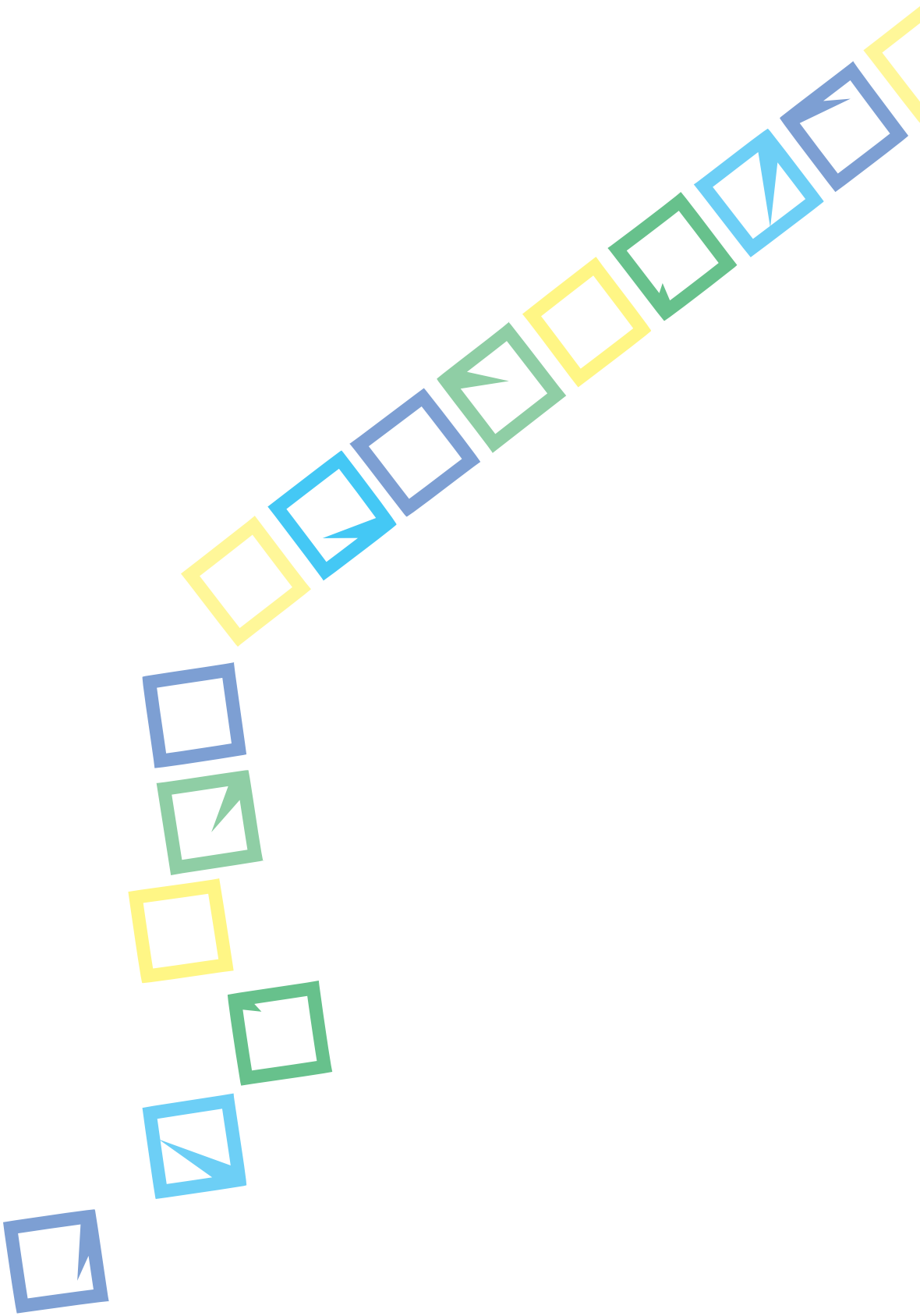
We would also like to give special thanks to the Steering Committee that supported and guided us throughout our research efforts. These individuals include Tracy Baim of Windy City Times, Marianne Philbin and Heather Parish of Pierce Family Foundation, Debbie Reznick of Polk Bros. Foundation, community volunteer Michael Mock of Lincoln Financial Advisors, and Flora Koppel of Unity Parenting & Counseling, Inc. Evette Cardona of Polk Bros. Foundation also provided invaluable insights and thoughtful feedback.

Lastly, we are especially grateful to Becky and Lester Knight of the Knight Family Foundation for their terrific instincts, vision, and willingness to take action with resources to support our first storage pilot initiative.

With much thanks and hope for the future of the Chicago Youth Storage Initiative,

DAPHNIE WILLIAMS **KA'RIEL GAITER** **LARA BROOKS** **GREGORY SLATER**

Chicago Youth Storage Initiative Research Team. From left to right: Daphnie Williams, Ka'Riel Gaiter, Lara Brooks, and Gregory Slater. Photo by Pidgeon Pagonis.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2014, the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (CCH) estimated that a staggering 12,186[1] Chicago youth between the ages of 14 and 21 were homeless and living on their own, without support from a guardian or family member. Chicago Public Schools (CPS) identified a record 22,144 students experiencing homelessness or housing instability in the 2013-14 school year and counted 2,647 unaccompanied[2] students. In that same year, 98.2% of these students were children or young people of color. In a 2013 national survey of young people experiencing homelessness between the ages of 14 and 21, respondents—including those from Chicago—had been homeless for a total lifetime of 23.4 months and reported first becoming homeless at age 15.[3] Despite the exorbitant rate and length of youth homelessness, only 374 youth shelter beds exist for unaccompanied young people in Chicago.[4]

CHICAGO YOUTH STORAGE INITIATIVE

The Chicago Youth Storage Initiative (CYSI), a group of service providers, funders, advocates, and young people committed to creatively addressing storage issues for young people experiencing homelessness and housing instability, emerged in response to the Windy City Times Chicago Summit on LGBT Homelessness. It is estimated that 20-40% of young people experiencing homelessness are LGBT despite representing only 3-5% of the total youth population.[5] The Summit, which convened young people, housing advocates, service providers, and community leaders in May 2014, discussed approaches to ending LGBT homelessness and existing gaps in resources. A shared concern and need for storage of personal belongings emerged again and again in strategy sessions about housing, policy, healthcare, legal issues, and access to basic needs—and it is a concern that all youth share regardless of identity. Across Chicago, secure space for personal belongings is limited to fewer than 40 storage lockers and cabinets, typically large enough for only one small bag.[6]

FAR FROM BEING A TRIVIAL ISSUE, YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS HAVE IDENTIFIED SOLVING THE STORAGE PROBLEM AS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT WAYS TO ALLEVIATE DAY-TO-DAY SUFFERING, IMPROVE THE IMMEDIATE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR INDIVIDUALS IN UNPREDICTABLE AND TEMPORARY LIVING SITUATIONS, AND SUPPORT SHORT- AND LONG-TERM GOAL SETTING TOWARDS STABLE HOUSING.

1. Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. 2014. "FAQ/Studies." *http://www.chicagohomeless.org/faq-studies/*

2. Unaccompanied youth are students of any age who are homeless and not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

3. Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB), Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). 2014. "Street Outreach Program Data Collection Project Executive Summary." *http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/resource/sop-executive-summary*

4. Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. 2014. "FAQ/Studies." *http://www.chicagohomeless.org/faq-studies/*

5. Ray, N. (2006). *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth: An Epidemic of Homelessness.* National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute and the National Coalition for the Homeless.

6. This figure does not include storage options provided to youth currently living in a transitional or interim housing program. In these settings, storage typically includes access to small trunks, bins, a closet, and/or dresser space. Often, these storage options are not secured with either a lock or locking door. With few or no secure options, youth participants must risk theft and/or attempt to locate more secure storage options outside of the housing program, thus increasing vulnerability to property loss, damage, and theft.

EXISTING STORAGE PROGRAMS

Currently, storage access for individuals and families experiencing homelessness is extremely limited in Chicago. In the U.S., no models of community-coordinated or citywide efforts exist to support young people around storage of personal belongings. Looking to adult storage models in Vancouver, San Diego, Los Angeles, Seattle, Salt Lake City, and New York, many models were explored for feasibility.

Chicago would be the first U.S. city to coordinate such an effort for young people.

CHICAGO'S *PLAN 2.0*

In 2011, the Chicago Planning Council on Homelessness—in partnership with the City of Chicago and All Chicago—launched a process to redevelop Chicago's Plan to End Homelessness. *Plan 2.0: A Home for Everyone*, a seven-year action plan, emerged from that process—which engaged more than 500 stakeholders, including 150 people who had experienced homelessness themselves. One of *Plan 2.0*'s priorities, youth homelessness, seeks to create a "comprehensive, developmentally appropriate menu of services for youth who experience homelessness."[7] The recommendations include development and expansion of youth housing and drop-in centers across all regions of Chicago; improving crisis intervention and family mediation services; working with systems such as the Illinois Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS), Comprehensive Community Based Youth Services (CCBYS), Chicago Public Schools, and City Colleges of Chicago; conducting annual counts of youth experiencing homelessness; and implementing positive youth development, harm reduction, and trauma-informed service models. The Chicago Youth Storage Initiative aims to enhance *Plan 2.0*'s goal of creating a diverse range of programs that strengthens Chicago's continuum of services for young people experiencing homelessness. Finally, storage of personal belongings connects to the success of other *Plan 2.0* strategic priorities—such as access to stable and affordable housing and employment—while also supporting collaboration with and between many of the systems that touch young people experiencing homelessness.

SUPPORTERS & PARTNERS

Launched as a result of founding support from the Pierce Family Foundation, Polk Bros. Foundation, and Knight Family Foundation, the Chicago Youth Storage Initiative (CYSI) took shape and commenced a needs assessment in early 2015. CYSI began to identify partners with existing capacity to undertake or expand small-scale storage programs. In addition to expanding overall storage capacity across Chicago through small-scale efforts, CYSI began to conceptualize large-scale, mobile, satellite, and web-based solutions. Some of these solutions present an entirely new strategy to engage young people least likely to engage in social services or shelters—thus presenting opportunities to build relationships with and link young people unfamiliar with existing resources to services and support.

7. Full report: *https://www.cityofchicago.org/content/dam/city/depts/fss/supp_info/Homeless/Plan20/ChicagoPlan20FullVersion.pdf*

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on a comprehensive research process, the implementation of several different, concurrently operating storage strategies is recommended—across all regions of Chicago—to help young people with a spectrum of storage needs that may change over time.

Recommended actions include:

- A satellite storage program in close proximity to a youth drop-in center.
- The launch or expansion of small-scale storage programs within existing youth-serving organizations
- A storage program within or in close proximity to a high school or several high schools with large numbers of unaccompanied students experiencing homelessness.
- A web-based documentation project, possibly through a partnership with Google, piloted within an organization with existing case management services and experience engaging young people experiencing homelessness.
- A dedicated storage program located or in close proximity to Chicago's Loop with clearly defined, capacity-informed service offerings.
- A program similar to the Commuter Student Resource Center (CSRC) at the University of Illinois-Chicago in other post-secondary institutions, such as City Colleges of Chicago.

Once operational, it is our intent that CYSI will continue to evaluate and learn from providers and youth participants about future areas of storage focus and scalability.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research team analyzed data from interviews and focus groups with nearly a hundred individuals and more than 25 organizations and projects. The findings indicate a clear need and informed various aspects of program design.

KEY FINDINGS

- Familial support sometimes extends to storage of belongings but not housing.
- Many young people trust at least one youth worker with their belongings and documents.
- Violence prevention and preventing the loss or theft of personal belongings are connected.
- Storage programs youth can trust is of upmost importance.
- It can be unsafe for young people to carry their belongings with them.
- Constant worry impacts mental health, productivity, and goal completion.
- Lack of storage means taking steps back, even when you are trying to move forward.
- Loss of belongings is a setback with ripple effects.
- Emerging, "mini" youth networks[8] exist geographically across Chicago and present new opportunities for service coordination.

COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION

The Chicago Youth Storage Initiative supports a phased implementation approach which will first organize service providers and funders to create storage access points at organizations currently engaging young people experiencing homelessness while continuing to identity additional partners across Chicago. The second phase involves continued storage installation for small-scale storage initiatives, expanding a cloud-based document storage effort, and further exploring and defining the first stand-alone storage initiative. CYSI's 2016-2017 goals include continuing to learn from different storage pilots, thereby strengthening the entire network through assessment and system refinement. Finally, CYSI also hopes to provide technical assistance and capacity-building support to communities, organizations, and schools interested in addressing storage issues.

8. Youth networks, for this report, are defined as areas where low-threshold youth services exist—e.g. youth drop-in centers, street outreach programs, and overnight/emergency shelters.

TIMELINE & DELIVERABLES

The Chicago Youth Storage Initiative proposes the following phases to identify storage solutions for young people experiencing homelessness:

Phase One - 2015. Define & Launch

- Identify and engage contractual staffing to undertake the work
- Conduct a needs assessment through research, focus groups, and interviews with key stakeholders and young people experiencing homelessness
- Cultivate additional funding partners, beginning with the report and recommendations presentation in May 2015
- Pilot the first locker initiative at a Southside overnight youth shelter, Ujima Village/Unity Parenting & Counseling, our first "test site" for the storage initiative
- Install lockers at two additional sites, possibly a North and West Side location, adding 25 more units by the end of 2015
- Use media platforms and public education to inform social service and housing providers, funders, community members, advocates, and policymakers on the short- and long-term impact of storage access for young people experiencing homelessness and its benefit to *Plan 2.0*

ESTIMATED COST: $100,000

Phase Two - 2016. Pilot Additional Small-Scale and Cloud-Based Storage Efforts

- Hire a project manager to continue coordinating, assessing, evaluating, and fundraising for expanding initiative
- Continue to support, assess, and evaluate the impact and success of Phase One sites
- Expand storage at three additional sites, possibly a high school with large numbers of students experiencing homelessness, a second Northside location, and a far Southside location
- Through a possible partnership with Google, pilot a cloud-based document storage initiative at an organization or school currently engaging young people experiencing homelessness
- Further explore and define stand-alone storage concepts, including mobile, day-use storage models

ESTIMATED COST: $175,000

Phase Three - 2017 & Beyond. Pilot Stand-Alone Storage and Expand Cloud-Based Storage

- Identify an organizational home for the Chicago Youth Storage Initiative
- Develop partnerships and seed the first stand-alone storage initiative, such as a freestanding storage/laundry center and/or mobile storage initiative for daily storage needs
- Expand the cloud-based document storage initiative through partnerships with youth drop-in centers and housing programs across the North, West, South, and Far South Sides of Chicago
- Project manager continues as 'storage ombudsperson' to provide technical assistance and ongoing organizing and support to new and existing partners

ESTIMATED COST: TBD

Phases One through Three - 2015 & Beyond. Combined Impact of Citywide Network

Through physical and/or virtual storage access points, the Chicago Youth Storage Initiative's (CYSI) citywide network will serve as an access point to engage and support more than 2,000 unique youth experiencing homelessness and housing instability between 2015-2018, including:

- Five (5) homeless youth programs providing combined access to 250 storage units, assisting 750 young people annually, across the North, West, South, Southwest, and Far South sides of Chicago
- A stand-alone storage/laundry center, which may work in partnership with a mobile storage initiative for daily storage needs, providing access to 200 storage units and assisting 600-800 young people annually
- 1,000 youth storing important documentation on a secure, web based cloud platform and/or physically onsite at an organization/agency with a mail and document storage program, thus saving thousands of hours in time dedicated to identification replacement and reducing critical barriers to housing due to insufficient identification
- Employ dedicated staff for coordination, assessment, fundraising, and evaluation
- Share findings and expertise to a broader community, as this is the only initiative of its kind in the U.S.

WHY IS STORAGE A CRITICAL ISSUE?

For young people experiencing homelessness and housing instability, access to safe and secure storage options for personal belongings—such as clothing, school books, keepsakes, and legal documents—is a daily, often hourly, stressor. In the absence of stable housing, these possessions—including those necessary for housing, employment, and educational opportunities—are in constant danger of being lost, stolen, discarded, or damaged. Left with unreliable or infrequent options, young people hide their personal belongings in alleys, dumpsters, yards, under porches, in abandoned buildings, and bushes. As one young person reported, "When you put them in the garbage or somebody's yard [to hide], it always gets scattered or thrown away or all over the place [sic] or missing." The loss of certain items, which inevitably result from this type of high-risk storage, come with long-term, enduring consequences.

The traumas of homelessness are exacerbated by the lack of safe, secure, and accessible storage options. For example, the loss of legal documentation—such as state identification or a social security card—can delay admission to housing programs, extend wait times to healthcare benefit enrollment, impact timely access to food stamps, preclude enrollment in education programs, and thwart new employment opportunities. Unable to provide required documentation, young people must often wait for months on end—sometimes as long as six months—to replace documents needed for increased housing stability, access to health care, and other goals.

Top Right Image: Storage bins in the First United Church Community Ministry Society in Vancouver. (Courtesy First United Church Community Ministry Society) *http://www.citylab.com/cityfixer/2014/08/cities-can-ease-homelessness-with-storage-units/379073/*

In the meantime, young people experiencing homelessness and suffering from the loss of personal belongings find themselves that much further delayed in obtaining and securing resources. The lack of accessible storage space means that young people are more likely to:

- **EXPERIENCE LOSS OR THEFT OF LEGAL DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED FOR PUBLIC BENEFITS (E.G. CASH, SNAP, AND MEDICAL ASSISTANCE), COMMUNITY RESOURCES, EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES—THEREBY DELAYING ACCESS TO EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE OR EARNED INCOME THROUGH EMPLOYMENT.** These delays leave unstably housed young people more vulnerable to homelessness and may serve to increase the length of homelessness and its associated traumas.

- **LACK WEATHER-APPROPRIATE CLOTHING, FOOTWEAR, AND CLEAN SOCKS AND UNDERWEAR.** Inadequate footwear and clothing may be connected to serious medical conditions in extreme weather. Access to clean socks and underwear prevents a myriad of often overlooked health issues.

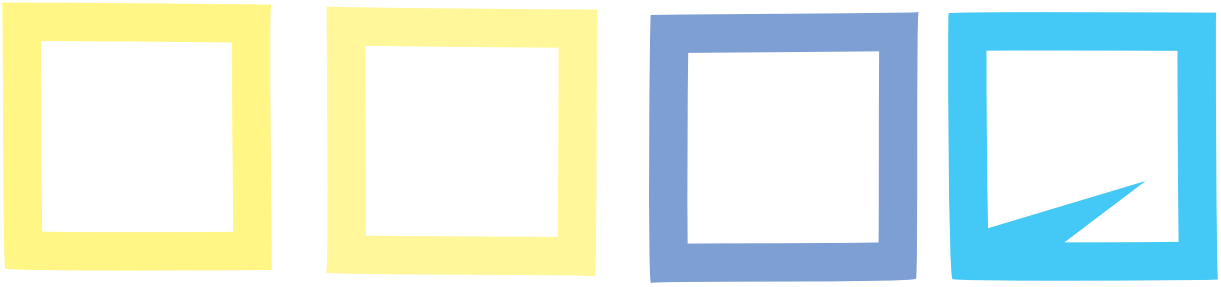
- **LACK PROFESSIONAL CLOTHING NEEDED FOR EMPLOYMENT OR EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES.** Unable to access or maintain professional clothing, youth may forgo an interview for employment altogether.

- **EXPERIENCE LOSS OR THEFT OF FAMILY GIFTS OR PHOTOS THAT ARE COMPLETELY IRREPLACEABLE.** Physical reminders of family members and major life events (such as the birth of a baby or death of a family member) are important sources of hope, reflection, and grounding for young people.

- **EXPERIENCE LOSS OR THEFT OF EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES AND TOOLS (E.G. BOOKS, STUDY MATERIALS, LAPTOPS).** This may further hinder academic preparedness and student perseverance during periods of homelessness and housing instability.

- **MISPLACE MEDICATIONS NEEDED FOR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH-RELATED NEEDS AND/OR ADHERENCE.**

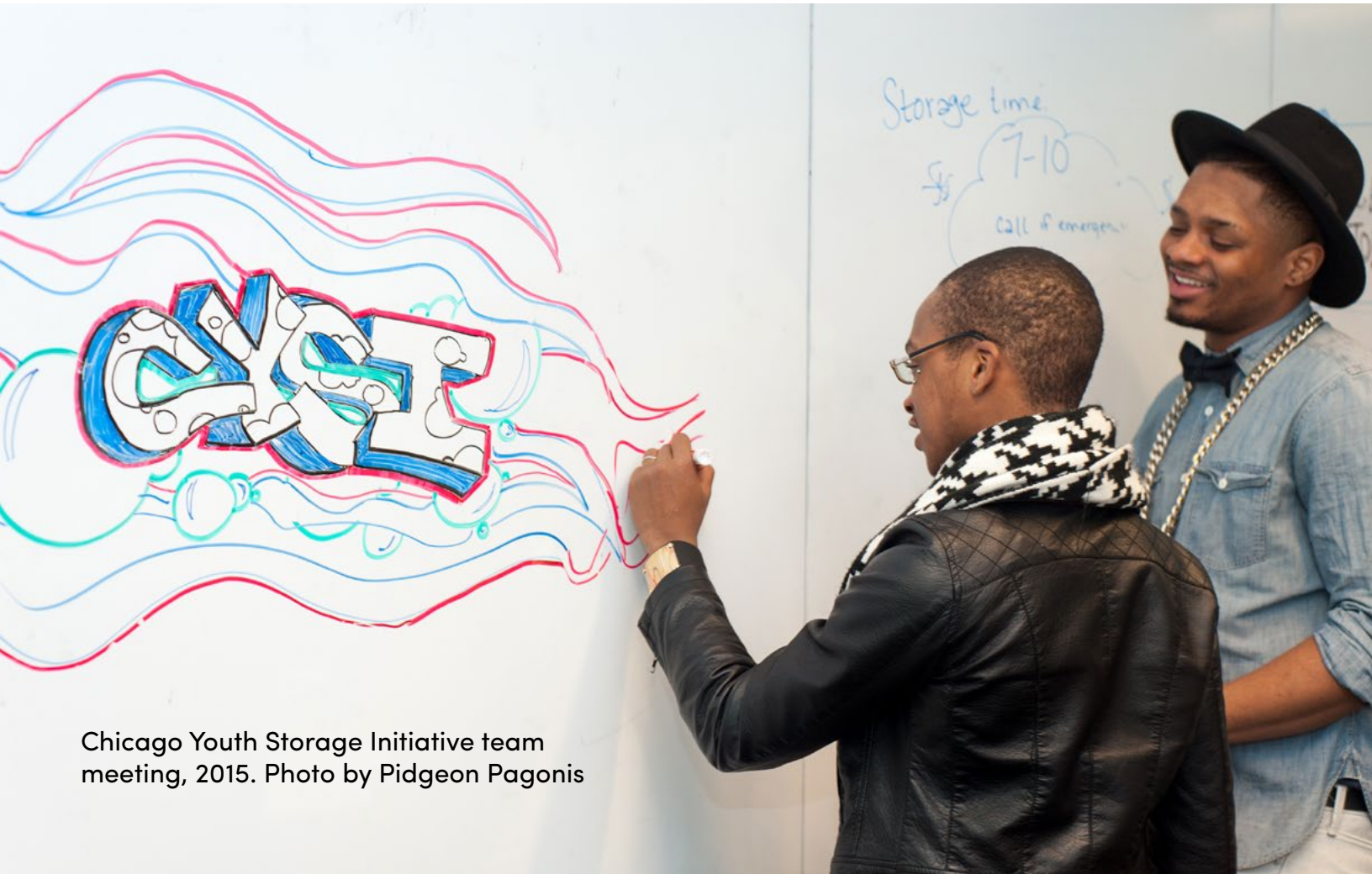
Young people experiencing homelessness agree that storage solutions are a critical and necessary strategy to alleviating the impacts of trauma and stigma, increasing feelings of safety and security, and



supporting short- and long-term goal setting towards stable housing. The internalized stigma of homelessness is profound. As one focus group participant stated in response to questions about where she stores her belongings during the day, "Mines [sic] go in bushes. I can't carry that. It's too embarrassing." The visibility of carrying bags and suitcases also presents stressful safety issues for young people to mitigate. Additionally, carrying ones belongings is often incredibly labor-intensive. As one young transwoman stated,

"I'm tired of carrying all of these bags. I'm known as the bag lady [in Lakeview] and it's kind of ridiculous."

There is a profound and often understated connection between storage access and the myriad of stepping stones on the path to more stable housing. Without much effort, we can often connect missed opportunities, traumatic delays, costly setbacks, and challenges obtaining resources—sometimes directly or once removed—to theft, destruction, or loss of belongings and documentation; the time and resources spent securing or replacing belongings and documentation; and the frustration, fear, and chronic anxiety that results from insufficient access to secure storage.



Chicago Youth Storage Initiative team meeting, 2015. Photo by Pidgeon Pagonis

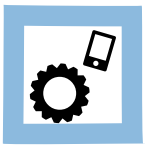
WHAT STORAGE SOLUTIONS EXIST?

Cities, neighborhoods, and communities across the U.S. and Canada are responding to the storage issues faced by individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Many of these strategies are creative, humanizing, and approach different types of storage needs.

EXISTING STORAGE PROGRAM MODELS INCLUDE:

SATELLITE STORAGE FACILITY IN PROXIMITY TO BASIC NEEDS
Example: First United Church Community Ministry Society (Vancouver, CA)

STAND-ALONE STORAGE FACILITY: WAREHOUSES & PARKING LOTS
Example: Transitional Storage Center (San Diego, CA)



MOBILE & DAILY STORAGE
Example: H.O.P.E. Lockers (Salt Lake City, UT)

COLLECTIVE MODEL
Example: SHARE and WHEEL (Seattle, WA)

PRIVATE STORAGE PARTNERSHIP
Example: Homeless Locker Storage Program (Berkeley, CA)

STORAGE PROGRAMS INTEGRATED INTO EXISTING BASIC NEEDS SERVICES
Example: JOIN (Portland, OR)

WEB-BASED, 'CLOUD' STORAGE
Example: Springwire/Feeding America (Seattle, WA)

POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTION
Example: UIC Commuter Student Resource Center (Chicago, IL)

HIGH SCHOOL
Example: Hetrick-Martin Institute (New York, NY)

DOCUMENT & MAIL STORAGE
Example: Broadway Youth Center (Chicago, IL)

STORAGE PROGRAM MODELS

SATELLITE STORAGE FACILITY IN PROXIMITY TO SERVICES & BASIC NEEDS

First United Church Community Ministry Society,[9] a community ministry located in Downtown Eastside Vancouver, operates a unique 6-day a week storage program in addition to other services such as meals, legal advocacy, and emergency housing. According to First United Church staff,

> *"This is a place where up to 200 people can store their belongings so they can take advantage of the basic necessities that most of us take for granted. It's difficult for people who lead stable home lives to imagine what it's like not to be able to go to the doctor, to use a washroom, have a shower, go for a job interview, or wash your clothes because you can't leave your belongings for even half a minute."*

Their model is effective because it utilizes long-term relationship building between staff, volunteers, and program participants to build trust and connect storage users to other services and programs: "It's extremely important to have a live person serving people. Not only because it adds to the security of peoples' belongings, but also because it provides a critical human contact that can build relationships, dignity, and a sense of belonging." Lastly, the program is cost effective and subsidized through the support of diverse funds, including support from the City of Vancouver, foundations, in-kind support, and individual giving.

9. For more information about First United Church Community Ministry Society, visit their website at *http://firstunited.ca*.

Top Right Image: The entrance to the storage facility at First United Church Community Ministry Society in Vancouver. (Courtesy First United Church Community Ministry Society) *http://www.citylab.com/cityfixer/2014/08/cities-can-ease-homelessness-with-storage-units/379073/*

Haven for Hope, a faith-based organization in San Antonio, Texas, operates a storage program within a unique "campus" model setting. More than 85 organizations partner with Haven for Hope, with more than half of them centrally located on its multi-acre campus, to provide comprehensive services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Services include housing, healthcare, case management, job training, behavioral health, substance use treatment, and a storage program. A total of 580, 27-gallon bins are shelved, organized, and managed by staff and volunteers.

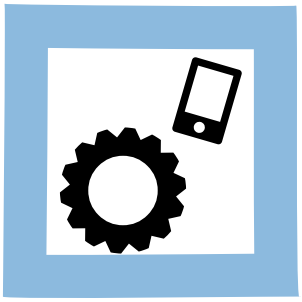
10. According to the organization's website, "Chrysalis is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a pathway to self-sufficiency for homeless and low-income individuals by providing the resources and support needed to find and retain employment." To learn more, visit their website at *http://www.changelives.org*.

STAND ALONE STORAGE FACILITY: WAREHOUSES & PARKING LOTS

In the U.S., storage programs such as the Central City East Association (CEA) Check In Center in Los Angeles, California, provide access to 1,400 storage bins in a 25,000 square foot facility. The program was recently transitioned from the Business Improvement District (BID) to a local nonprofit, Chrysalis.[10] Participants store belongings in large plastic bins similar to a curbside, 96-gallon recycling bin on wheels. Bins are numbered and pulled from the warehouse when a participant arrives to retrieve certain belongings or store additional ones. The Transitional Storage Center in San Diego, California, adopted a similar model when it opened in 2011 as a part of a legal settlement that required the City of San Diego to provide a storage center for individuals experiencing homelessness to safely store their belongings. Since its opening, the Transitional Storage Center—a program of Girls Think Tank[11]—has operated at several different locations and currently provides 353 bins to participants at an outdoor lot. Massive programs such as these are relatively rare and do not seem to exist in colder climates—more specifically in the Midwest.

11. Girls Think Tank formulates community-based solutions to issues impacting San Diego. In recent years, the focus has been on storage, water, and restroom access. To learn more, visit their website at *http://girlsthinktank.org*.

MOBILE & DAILY STORAGE



In smaller communities, such as Salt Lake City, groups such as The Legacy Initiative[12] and Revolution United[13] began fundraising for a new storage prototype they are calling H.O.P.E. (Helping Other People Evolve) Lockers. H.O.P.E. Lockers are the first phase of a sustainable, self-governing village of tiny homes for individuals experiencing homelessness in Salt Lake City. The lockers, a portable day-use facility of safe and secure lockers, were conceived during a collective brainstorming session called an "Idea Silo." This program will offer daytime storage for individuals who need several hours to unload their belongings for medical appointments, job interviews, and errands. According to the organizers,

"These lockers provide not only a place to store things throughout the day, but the peace of mind that comes with knowing your worldly belongings, your resources, and your identity are protected."

12. Founded in 2012, The Legacy Initiative is a grassroots non-profit "comprised of diverse people who are dedicated to creating a positive change in our communities across the Wasatch Front." *http://www.legacy-initiative.com/*

13. Revolution United is a "human progress organization that functions as a catalyst for social revolution through collective power." To learn more, visit *http://www.revolutionunited.org*.

H.O.P.E. Lockers logo. (Courtesy: The Legacy Initiative)

Drawing of proposed H.O.P.E. Lockers, a day-use storage systems of safe and secure lockers in Salt La City, 2014. (Courtesy: The Legacy Initiative)

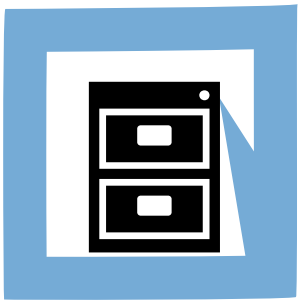
Another daily storage initiative previously existed in Portland, Oregon. The program housed 40 lockers made from recycled shopping carts and operated similarly to a coat check system. Located in the Grove Hotel, a 70-unit Single Room Occupancy (SRO), the program operated for about $38,000 annually.

Secured cell phone charging stations are popping up at events, concerts, and in various shared work areas. While it is unknown if charging stations are being used in drop-in centers or emergency housing programs, cell phone charging lockers present an interesting solution to the lack of secure and safe charging options that currently exist. Secured, daily charging options are needed to keep youth connected to resources, friends and family, service providers, email, employment opportunities, and schedules—without fear of theft or loss.

COLLECTIVE MODEL

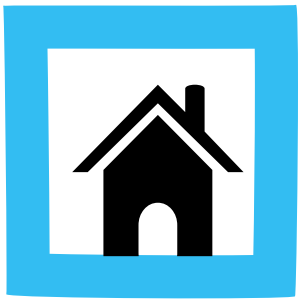
Seattle boasts a unique storage program through Seattle Housing and Resource Effort (SHARE) and Women's Housing, Equality and Enhancement League (WHEEL). SHARE and WHEEL are "self-organized, democratic, grassroots organizations of homeless and formerly homeless individuals." Each night, up to 450 people find shelter in 14 self-managed shelters and two Tent Cities. The SHARE Storage Lockers program, which converted 150 Greyhound Bus Station lockers, is open 365 days a year and all participants are required to work one, two-hour shift per month. Additionally, the City of Seattle funds one full-time staff person and the space is donated to keep the cost of the program extremely low.

PRIVATE STORAGE PARTNERSHIP



In the 1990s, The City of Berkeley, California operated the Homeless Storage Locker Program at a private storage company. One of few examples like this, the program operated for more than a decade and offered free or reduced-cost storage lockers to individuals experiencing homelessness. More than a dozen years later, one can locate no existing public-private partnerships of this kind. However, it is not uncommon for individuals and families experiencing homelessness to rent a storage unit at a private storage company at-cost. This option allows them to retain their belongings and furniture in a safe and secure setting until a future housing option emerges. During the course of the CYSI needs assessment, both young people and families disclosed sleeping in storage units for periods of days to several months. Typically, the overnight stays ended when they were discovered and exited by the storage company. Individuals also described the impact of losing personal belongings altogether when monthly payments fell behind.

STORAGE PROGRAMS INTEGRATED INTO EXISTING BASIC NEEDS SERVICES



When physical space allows, several organizations across the U.S. include storage programs within their basic needs programs and services. For example, many drop-in centers—spaces typically designed with open hours for individuals experiencing homelessness to share a meal, take a shower and obtain hygiene supplies, access computers or phones, work with a case manager, receive mail, and engage in health services—provide small-scale storage programs. Examples include organizations like David's Place Day Shelter/Carpenter's Shelter and A-SPAN (Arlington Street People's Assistance Network). Located in Arlington, Virginia, these agencies provide housing, supportive services, shelter, and street outreach. Storage facilities can also be utilized at "The House," a Basic Services Center at JOIN in Portland, Oregon. Typically, programs like these have only the space and capacity to provide access to 10-50 storage bins or lockers to existing clients. Always at capacity, these programs often have an unmet need that is 10-50 times greater. As a result, it is not uncommon for youth, adults, and families to store suitcases and bags in case management and staff offices for a few days at a time and discreetly stow belongings within these same settings. Case managers may also offer to retain important documents, such as legal identification, medical cards and records, and other applications and forms.

WEB-BASED, "CLOUD" STORAGE:

The loss or theft of legal documents, photographs, school transcripts, diplomas, and medical records produces profound barriers to individuals experiencing homelessness. In many cases, original documentation is required for certain programs and services—especially in the case of legal document replacement (e.g. birth certificate, state identification, social security card). However, copies of these documents can often bring individuals one step closer to document replacement or to housing programs that require proof of identity. Springwire,[14] an initiative of Feeding America, "connects people in crisis with the social services and support networks that surround them—expanding a community's capacity to care" by providing technological solutions and free access to communication tools, including the Digital Documents pilot project. As a part of this two-year pilot, participants learned to scan and store important documents and photos in an accessible, secure format using scanners that could be used in settings such as social service agencies and libraries.

POST-SECONDARY:

The University of Illinois at Chicago has operated a storage program since 2009 through the Commuter Student Resource Center (CSRC). This resource provides any student who lives off-campus (about 85% of the student body) with services and programs necessary for academic achievement and personal development. A converted gym and fitness center, the CSRC provides many amenities—including showers, lockers, a kitchen, free coffee, lounge space, computers, study space, and more. Open five days a week, students are eligible to access and store belongings free of charge in 600 dedicated, secured lockers. While the program is designed for all commuters, it also supports students with additional needs related to housing and basic needs. Dedicated Center staff meet with students about housing, community resources, and other needs. The UIC Wellness Center, an adjacent program, also provides monthly pop-up food pantries. Jacob Schulz, Student Supervisor, shared that more than 4,000 students access the Center each year, although it is unknown how many of these students are currently experiencing homelessness or housing instability. This program is an effective model for post-secondary institutions seeking to support increasing numbers of students experiencing homelessness.

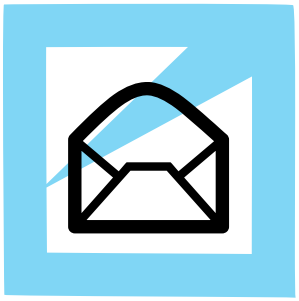
14. Springwire began as Community Voicemail in Seattle in 1991 and continues to incorporate technological solutions into strategies that alleviate poverty.

Bottom Right Image: Lockers at the Commuter Student Resource Center, 2015. Photo by Lara Brooks

HIGH SCHOOL:

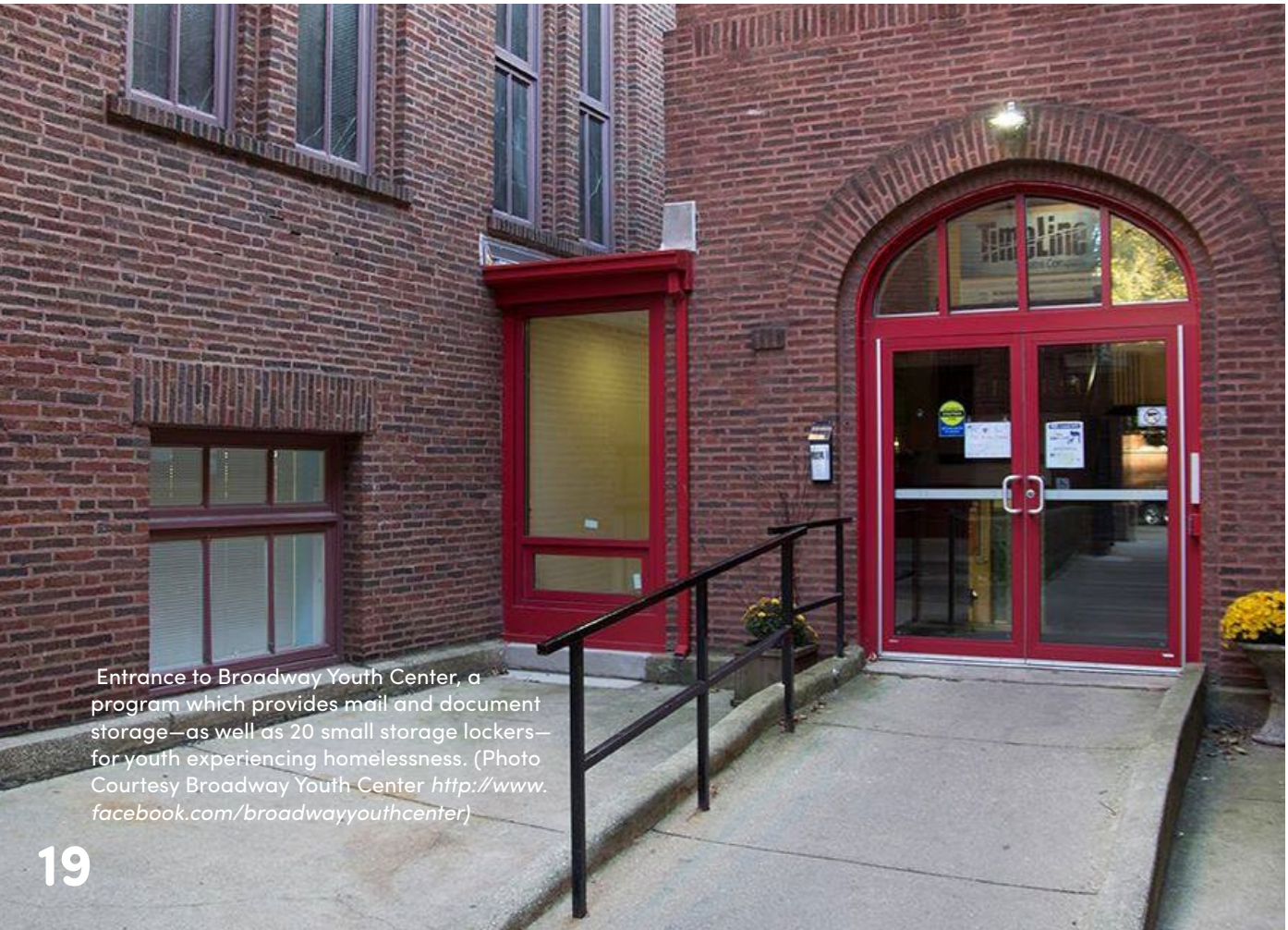
Hetrick-Martin Institute (HMI), a New York-based organization that provides a comprehensive array of services, opened its doors to LGBT young people in 1979. More than two decades ago, in partnership with the New York City Department of Education, HMI founded the Harvey Milk High School, a four-year, fully accredited public high school. Today, HMI manages the school facility—which had 70 students enrolled in the 2014 academic year—and provides after-school programs and support services. HMI provides a broad range of services for LGBT youth between the ages of 13 and 24, including daily hot meals, clothing, showers, laundry, an onsite food pantry, access to lockers, case management, counseling, academic enrichment, and job readiness.

DOCUMENT & MAIL STORAGE:



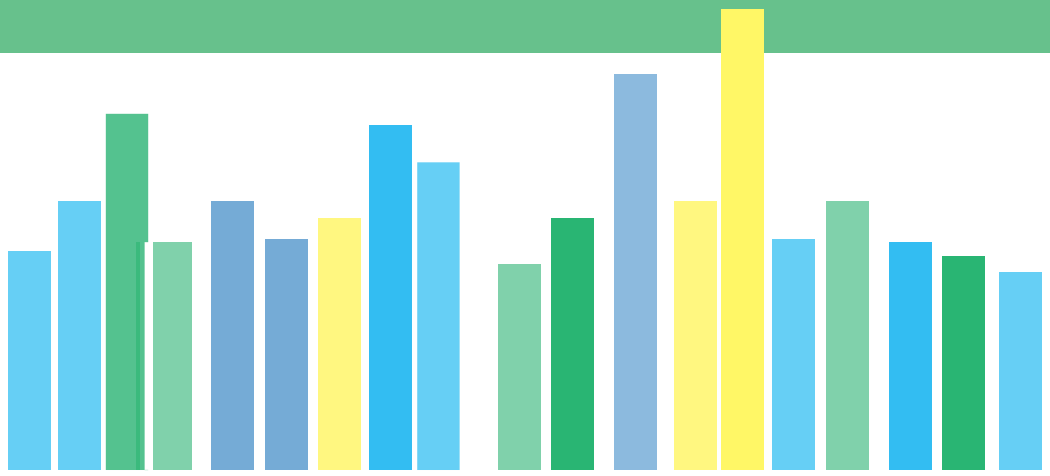
Several youth programs across Chicago receive, sort, and distribute youth participant mail for hundreds of individuals without a reliable or consistent mailing address. Program staff and case managers organize mail and store unclaimed mail for varying periods of time, typically for periods of six months or less. Additionally, case managers and program staff will safeguard important documents and identification per the youth participant's request.

For more information about these program models, read Appendix D,



Entrance to Broadway Youth Center, a program which provides mail and document storage—as well as 20 small storage lockers—for youth experiencing homelessness. (Photo Courtesy Broadway Youth Center *http://www.facebook.com/broadwayyouthcenter*)

WHAT STORAGE PROGRAMS EXIST IN CHICAGO?



Almost no storage options exist for the thousands of young people experiencing homelessness in Chicago each year. No organization or entity in Chicago operates a free, stand-alone storage program for individuals experiencing homelessness like the ones in San Diego, Los Angeles, or Vancouver.

When physical space allows, a few youth-serving organizations across Chicago include storage programs within their basic needs programs and services. For example, the Broadway Youth Center, a program of Howard Brown Health Center and its community partners, provides a small-scale storage program for approximately 20 young people at any given time. Currently, storage users are able to store belongings in a secured locker about the size of one cubic foot. Always at capacity, this program has a much greater unmet need. As a result, it is not uncommon for young people to store suitcases and bags in staff offices for a pre-determined length of time. Youth workers also offer to store important documents, such as legal identification, medical cards and records, and other applications and forms. This informal practice, of storing items for young people when space exists in a staff office for a few days, is a frequent and common practice across most organizations serving individuals experiencing homelessness. As one youth service provider described it, "storage access is one of the single most unmet needs across our entire agency."

Storage is, however, available for all young people living in transitional or interim housing programs, such as The Night Ministry's Open Door Shelter, Teen Living Programs, El Rescate, Heartland's Neon Street, New Moms, Inc., and La Casa Norte's Solid Ground. In total, these Chicago programs provide short[15] to long-term housing[16] to hundreds of young people each year, in addition to storage for young people living in these programs. However, when young people leave or exit these programs without transitioning into another stable housing option, they also become vulnerable to loss and theft of personal belongings and documents.

15. Short-term, interim housing provides housing up to 120 days and, unlike the overnight youth shelters, allows the young person to keep their belonging there during the day and for as long as they are living in the program.

16. Long-term, interim or transitional housing typically does not exceed 2 years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the need assessment findings, the Chicago Youth Storage Initiative (CYSI) recommends an array of concurrently operating storage options to address different types of storage needs. The storage needs of young people are unique and may change over time. Both providers and young people require multiple strategies to address barriers to storage access.

CYSI recommends the following:

The development and launch of a pilot satellite storage program in close proximity to a youth drop-in center with a demonstrated commitment to meeting the needs of young people experiencing homelessness and housing instability. Access to basic needs located within or in close proximity to the storage program was important to all youth. Additionally, for a satellite storage program to be effective, we recommend that all youth drop-in centers develop strategies to provide laundry and shower access. Currently, very few youth drop-in centers provide access to onsite showers and laundry facilities. This is, in part, due to either lack of current permanent program space or building limitations. Close proximity to laundry, bathroom, and shower access is a critical feature of an effective satellite storage effort. Finally, a satellite storage solution presents an entirely new strategy to engage young people least likely to engage in social services or shelters—thus presenting opportunities to build relationships with and link new young people to resources, services, and support.

The development and launch of a pilot storage program within or in close proximity to a high school or several high schools with large numbers of unaccompanied students experiencing homelessness. These neighborhoods include Englewood, Garfield Park, Austin, Roseland, Bronzeville, Bridgeport, Woodlawn, North Lawndale, and Humboldt Park. High school students have unique needs and often less frequent access to existing homeless services. Program possibilities are outlined in the section "Considerations for High School-Aged Youth Experiencing Homelessness." Additionally, a map of high schools with more than a 100 self-reported students experiencing homelessness is available in Appendix A.

The launch or expansion of small-scale storage programs within existing youth-serving organizations. Several youth-serving organizations have space for 10-50 storage bins or lockers. This option is cost-effective, highly relationship based, and more likely to be sustained over time as it becomes embedded in the program's menu of services. These access points also ensure that storage is accessible across every region of the city, a need identified by most young people.

Initiating programs similar to the Commuter Student Resource Center (CSRC) at the University of Illinois-Chicago in other colleges and universities throughout Chicago, such as City Colleges of Chicago. College students experiencing homelessness are highly invisible but exist in greater numbers than ever before. Students require safe, reliable, and secure storage access to perform academically.

The creation of a stand-alone storage program located or in close proximity to Chicago's Loop with clearly defined, capacity-informed service offerings. Young people recommended storage access in close proximity to an abundance of employment and academic opportunities. The preferred location was downtown and/or a combination of multiple locations across Chicago with a main location downtown. A Southside-based youth respondent reflected a shared sentiment when he said,
"I've seen everyone in this room down in the Loop. It's convenient for everybody."

The launch of a pilot web-based, cloud option for storage of documents, identification, medical records, bills, school transcripts and records, photos, rental/lease agreements, housing applications, resumes and cover letters, and other important papers. Educating providers and young people about the benefits of secure, web-based storage fosters increased organization, can minimize the need to carry original documentation, and may support document retention and replacement efforts. This recommendation requires designing and testing a workflow with provider and youth participant feedback, selecting a pilot organization or project, and obtaining tablets for the pilot organization. A partnership with Google is being explored to initiate this project recommendation.

WHAT WE LEARNED

Addressing storage needs for young people experiencing homelessness or housing instability in Chicago—in a way that is humanizing and accessible—is surprisingly complex. The cost of transportation, the size of Chicago, and the lack of storage programs available when young people wait for, transition from, leave, or age out of a housing program further complicates storage remedies.

As Chicago's continuum of services expands for young people experiencing homelessness and housing instability, it is important to consider and explore storage solutions—and the way storage solutions connect to existing resources and programs.

Research findings can be separated into the following, interconnected themes:

TRUST

- **Familial trust sometimes extends to storage of belongings but not housing.**

  Many young people report having a family member who they trust to store their belongings. However, for many reasons (e.g. resource limitations, family histories, safety, etc.), these are not places where they are invited to live, even temporarily. This means that young people must coordinate with family members' schedules to access their belongings. Young people also described hesitations around this option due to the concern that family members may also "see something they want and end up taking it." Other young people shared times when documents or important records were lost or went missing in their family member's care.

- **Many young people trust at least one youth worker with their belongings and documents.**

  Systems-connected young people, by and large, shared that they trusted at least one staff person/youth worker. This trust is conducive to onsite storage programs at existing youth programs/organizations where trusting relationships exist. Several young people stated, "I'd rather a case manager watch my stuff [than anyone else]." However, there is a concern about the accessibility of these programs due to program hours and location.

VIOLENCE PREVENTION

- **Violence prevention and preventing the loss or theft of belongings are interconnected and mutually reinforcing.**

  Reducing theft by increasing access to storage programs is one powerful strategy to prevent physical and verbal violence. Some young people and many youth workers report that theft, misplacement, or loss of personal belongings is the number one reason for violence between youth participants/clients. One youth worker reported, "Despite all of our reminders, we have a few young people who consistently leave their phone or backpack unattended [in the drop-in space] and return to find it taken. In the past, this led to huge blow ups and it really impacted the whole space, with youth workers trying to de-escalate the person who no longer had a phone or wallet, calm down the person who was inevitably being accused, and make an effort to search the space, like in trash cans and bathrooms, for the missing item. It was really important violence prevention for our space to have a system for storing participants' belonging for the duration of the drop-in…

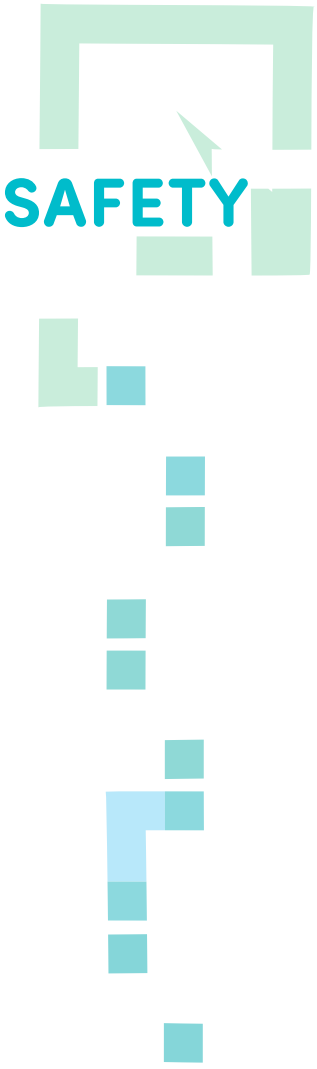
  If we had more storage options, I'm sure theft wouldn't take the program down as much. It would mean fewer incidents, increased sense of safety and productivity, and overall less anxiety."

- **Storage programs youth can trust is of upmost importance.**

  The safety of personal belongings is a huge priority among young people. This trust is not just about a storage program with equipment that safeguards against loss or theft—it is about trusting the program and staff who administer it. Young people repeatedly expressed profound safety concerns. Youth respondents all agreed that storage programs must value safety and protection of both "personhood" and belongings equally. Safety and protection of "personhood" includes (1) safety considerations related to theft, assault, and/or muggings to/from a storage program/facility; (2) promoting spaces free of violence (e.g. sexual harassment, verbal violence, and physical violence) for young people as well as staff; and (3) fears related to law enforcement-related violence, harassment, targeting, etc. Lastly, young people conveyed concerns related to being targeted as a "storage participant" by other youth participants, staff (of the future storage program), and strangers.

- **It can be unsafe for young people to carry their belongings with them.**

  Carrying belongings (beyond a purse or backpack) is considered high-risk and increases targeting by predators as well as law enforcement. To prioritize their physical safety, young people must make quick, often impossible, decisions about the fate of their belongings. It is not uncommon for young people to "start with nothing" multiple times in a twelve month period.



- **Constant worry impacts mental health, productivity, and goal completion.**

  Young people experience tremendous anxiety and concern related to their personal belongings—especially when it is left with a group of friends for safekeeping or hidden outside. These concerns are so pervasive and produce so much anxiety that they prevent young people from being emotionally present for other activities, such as school, work, or counseling.

- **Lack of storage means taking steps back, even when you are trying to move forward.**

  Simply, youth cannot accomplish many important goals without access to safe storage. One focus group participant stated it this way: *"When it comes down to us having to handle business for ourselves, carrying our clothes and all of our belongings—everything that we own with us—it really interferes with getting things done throughout the day. You can't apply for a job with a duffle bag on your arm or a suitcase coming behind you."*

YOUTH-DRIVEN STORAGE STRATEGIES:

YOUNG PEOPLE SHARED CREATIVE STRATEGIES TO PROTECT AND SAFEGUARD THEIR BELONGINGS. THE MOST CREATIVE STRATEGIES RELY ON PEER NETWORKS AND CHOSEN FAMILIES, NOT BIOLOGICAL FAMILY TIES OR CONNECTIONS. AS DESCRIBED BY ONE FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT, "WE HAVE A DESIGNATED SPOT WHERE EVERYBODY BE [SIC]. AND SOMEBODY STAY IN THAT SPOT AND EVERYBODY LEAVE THEIR BAGS WHEN WE GO SOMEWHERE. AND WHOEVER IN THAT SPOT, WATCHES THAT BAG. OR EITHER WE ROTATE AND DO WHAT WE GOT TO DO AND SOMEONE ELSE WATCHES THAT BAG." TYPICALLY, THE "DESIGNATED SPOT" INCLUDES FAST FOOD RESTAURANTS, LIBRARIES, OR PARKS.

- **Loss of belongings is a setback with ripple effects.**

  Many young people shared instances of losing their belongings, having their belongings destroyed or stolen, or a trusted friend losing their belongings. As one young person lamented in a focus group,

  "My birth certificate, my social security card, my ID, my school card, my debit card. All of that stuff is gone because somebody else put it in an alley."

- **Emerging, "mini" youth networks[17] exist geographically across Chicago and present new opportunities for service coordination.**

  Due to an increase in services across Chicago for young people experiencing homelessness in the past 3+ years and the rising costs of public transportation, there appears to be a trend in young people utilizing continuums of care within a given region and traveling less across the city for services and programs. "Mini" youth networks (specifically on the North Side and South/Southwest Sides) have emerged for a number of reasons. Low-income young people are isolated and trapped in certain neighborhoods for days at a time (sometime even longer) due to transit costs and weather conditions. However, the research team noted that LGBTQ youth may travel between and across these "mini" youth networks more so than their straight peers experiencing homelessness.

17. Youth networks are defined as areas where low-threshold youth services exist. For example, youth drop-in centers, street outreach programs, and overnight/emergency shelters.

WHERE YOUTH & SERVICE PROVIDERS AGREED

The individuals who participated in the focus groups and interviews generally agreed on the following key program features:

- Access to storage programs must exist across every region—on both the North, South, West, Southwest, and Far South sides of Chicago.
- Any storage program created or expanded must be connected to caring, trustworthy individuals, basic needs, and referrals to services or programs.
- Storage programs must and should exist within social service, housing, and basic needs programs currently engaging young people experiencing homelessness and housing instability. Most providers and young people agreed that storage programs located within and/or in close proximity to youth drop-in centers are the most convenient and practical.
- Improved systems must exist for mail and youth participant document retention and replacement efforts.
- Location is important. Many young people shared concerns about neighborhood relations and being targeted for loitering.[18] Storage participants need a place to stand that is away from sidewalk and pedestrian congestion. Youth also shared safety concerns for youth who are transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC).
- Access to transportation (logistically and financially) and transportation of personal belongings is an issue that must be considered as it relates to the success of any storage program option.
- Storage programs should be made available at no cost to the storage participant.

18. Youth, particularly youth of color respondents, perceive issues of policing and surveillance in the Loop (downtown Chicago) to be different in positive ways. For example, they believe themselves to be less visible, even when walking in groups of 3 or 4.

TENSIONS IN THE DATA: DIFFERENT STORAGE PRIORITIES AND NEEDS

The nearly one hundred individuals who participated in the focus groups and interviews agreed that storage is an important issue to address. The results also indicate that solutions must incorporate multiple approaches to meet the different, and often changing, needs of young people experiencing homelessness and housing instability.

Young people and service providers did not always agree on program design or priorities as outlined below:

YOUNG PEOPLE	SERVICE PROVIDERS
Storage size varies. Young people had many different ideas and struggled to determine a practical storage size that would produce the most impact. Many focus group respondents brainstormed complex storage systems with different storage size possibilities per person—with potential to increase or decrease each month depending on need, etc. The size ranged from 2' x 2' x 6' to individual storage units the size of a small bedroom (8' x 8' x 10'). One thing was certainly consistent among young people: **Small lockers are wholly inadequate.** The smallest lockers should, at the very least, be able to hold several duffle bags and small suitcases. Otherwise, "it's not worth it."	**Uniform storage size.** Service providers generally agreed that all youth participants should have access to storage lockers or containers of the same, uniform size.
Preferred locations lack feasibility. Youth favored locations for storage programs that did not possess the physical space and/or permanent space for a storage program. Young people gave preference to several youth-serving organizations that currently do not possess significant hours of operation (e.g. open once a week for three hours in a shared space used for other programs). Additionally, many of the spaces that young people prefer present other accessibility challenges (e.g. eligibility requirements, higher threshold participation requirements, etc.).	**Program needs cannot prioritize storage space for young people.** Many of the organizations currently providing services to young people experiencing homelessness do not have the space to prioritize a storage program. If space were to become available onsite, it would be prioritized for other needs, such as increased space for individual meetings (e.g. case management and counseling), a computer lab, showers, laundry, dedicated space for resting, group rooms, etc. Many of these programs do not even have enough storage space for their own program materials and supplies. However, many service providers agree that a storage program operating as a "satellite" in close proximity to a drop-in program would enhance existing program offerings.
Eligibility inclusive of those between the ages of 25 and 29. Many focus group participants indicated a storage need for older young adults between the ages of 25 and 29. They argued that this subset of young adults, especially those who are transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC), lack critical access to resources and housing and experience disproportionate targeting and violence.	**Age eligibility requirements are inflexible due to capacity, resources, etc.** Due to program and eligibility requirements, youth programs do not have the capacity to extend storage services to those between the ages of 25 and 29. However, many agreed that a "stand alone" storage facility or program would be an important resource for those aging out of services.
Use of existing private storage companies for a storage program was recommended by young people. Youth requested large storage spaces—similar to what is available at a storage facility (8 feet x 10 feet). These facilities possess many of the safety/security issues important to young people (e.g. locking storage spaces, climate control, lighting, and 24-hour access).	**Service providers and youth workers did not recommend collaborating with private storage companies.** They cited concerns that these facilities may not be friendly to LGBTQ young people and/or young people experiencing homelessness. There was a fear that young people would have negative experiences with staff and other storage patrons, thus impacting their own relationships with youth participants. Lastly, many organizations do not have the resources to transport furniture or personal belongings to and from a large storage locker. Without this resource, there was concern about coordinating and maintaining a storage program involving larger items.

Legal & Procedural Considerations

Several legal issues are important to consider when launching or expanding a storage program.

IMPLICATIONS OF STORING BELONGINGS ON PUBLIC VERSUS PRIVATE PROPERTY. The storage of personal property on private property—which includes nonprofit organizations and religious settings—does not warrant the same considerations as personal belongings discarded or thrown away by city cleaning crews as a part of what Chicago calls "off-street cleanings." Complainants organized by the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless described the devastating impact of city sweeps long used to eradicate homeless encampments. A recent 2015 agreement reached between the City of Chicago and the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless requires city workers to provide additional notice before street cleaning commences and sets parameters for discarding personal items. This includes tagging unattended belongings and returning a week later instead of tossing them in the trash immediately.[19] Additionally, updated policies and procedures require city crews to withhold from discarding items such as identification, legal papers, and personal photographs. Per the recent agreement, the Department of Family & Support Services now oversees cleaning operations involving individuals experiencing homelessness—not Streets and Sanitation or the Chicago Police Department.

CREATION OF STORAGE PROGRAM GUIDELINES. The creation of storage program guidelines and a written agreement between the agency/program and the participant outlining expectations of use are necessary for any storage program.

Issues that should be addressed in the storage program policies and guidelines include:

- Program Values & Mission
- Program Enrollment
- Behind-the-Scenes: Staffing & Systems Organization
- Participant Rights & Responsibilities
- Storage Program Rights & Responsibilities
- Security & Participant Access
- Process for Managing a Waitlist
- Process for "Abandoned" Storage Items
- Grievance & Complaint Process
- Pest & Rodent Control
- Program Evaluation & Feedback

19. Brown, Mark. "City Agrees to Be More Respectful of Homeless Belongings." *Chicago Sun Times.* N.p., 11 Feb. 2015. Web. *http://chicago.suntimes.com/news-chicago/7/71/362639/city-agrees-respectful-homeless-belongings*

LOCKERS VERSUS BINS:

LOCKERS ARE A GREAT "SELF-SERVE" STORAGE OPTION WITHIN A GROUP OR COMMUNITY SPACE, SUCH AS A DROP-IN PROGRAM OR IN AN AREA WITH AN EXISTING STAFF PRESENCE.

BINS ARE A MORE SPACE EFFICIENT STORAGE OPTION FOR PROGRAMS WITH LIMITED SPACE THAT OPERATE WITH A DESIGNATED WORKER WHO RETRIEVES BINS BY REQUEST. THIS ALLOWS FOR PERSONAL BELONGINGS TO BE STORED IN A SECURE AREA WITHOUT PARTICIPANT ACCESS, THUS MINIMIZING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEFT.

Storage program administrators, including staff or volunteers, must agree to consistently and fairly administer the program in accordance with the storage program policies and guidelines.

Ideally, a written storage program agreement will be signed by both the participant and agency/program upon enrollment into the program. This agreement should outline the following:

- **Storage user guidelines.** For example, almost all programs require program participants to "check-in" with the storage program on a regular basis, typically at least once every seven days, to remain "active" in the program. Additional expectations may also include presenting a membership card created by the program to access the member's assigned bin or locker.

- **Disposal of personal belongings.** If a participant stops using the program, most programs will hold belongings for a period of up to 90 days—typically in a designated area—and make the locker or bin available to another individual. Documents and mail should never be thrown away and should be kept in a locked area.

- **Appropriate use of storage bins or lockers.** For example, lockers should not be used for anything perishable or illegal.

- **Hours of operation and contact information.** It is important for participants to be able to contact the program via email and phone—especially if the program receives participant mail.

- **Storage user expectations.** For example, participants should expect to be treated with dignity and respect at all times. Participants also have the right to confidentiality—meaning that program staff will not disclose their participation in the program without consent. Guidelines also include a clearly articulated complaint and grievance process. For storage programs located within or in collaboration with other programs, such as a drop-in program, it is likely an expectation that those participating in the storage program agree to program expectations for other programs and services being offered concurrently.

Unfortunately, programs cannot be responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged items and participants may choose to utilize the program despite these risks. However, every effort must be made to prevent loss, theft, and property damage for the program to be both successful and trusted by its current and future participants.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

It is vital for storage programs to strategize about and formalize policies designed to prevent and resolve issues related to safety and cleanliness. These include:

- **Theft and Loss.** The program should be able to answer the following questions:
  - Who has access to the bins and lockers?
  - How are bins and lockers secured during off-hours?
  - How are belongings secured? Is there a way to change the combination locks when necessary or requested, if applicable?

- **Perishables.** It is important to educate and remind those accessing the storage program about the negative impact of storing perishables. Creating signage throughout the program's youth-facing area will support compliance.

- **Fire, Floods, and Natural Disasters.** In most cases, plastic bins prevent water damage and fires can be prevented with appropriate equipment and planning, such as fire extinguishers, emergency exit signage, building emergency preparedness planning, and staff trainings.

- **Space for organizing and sorting.** No matter your storage program model, it is important for participants to have a clean space, ideally a table, to organize and sort belongings. It is important to have enough room for multiple individuals to organize and sort their belongings simultaneously.

- **Pests & Rodents.** It is important for any storage program to have a process for pest and rodent control. This includes ongoing maintenance and pest prevention.

MEMBERSHIP CARDS

To promote safety and security, the San Diego-based Transitional Storage Center creates a member identification card when individuals enroll in the program. The participant presents a membership card when requesting access to their bin or locker. The same identification card, which includes a photo of the member, is attached to the bin or locker as well. This ensures that members can still access their belongings, even if they lose their membership card and other forms of identification. It also ensures that legal documentation is not a program requirement, a frequent barrier for individuals experiencing homelessness from accessing services and programs. Membership cards also provide an opportunity for members to use their preferred names.

- **Disorganization & Human Error.** It is critical to create replicable systems and structures to ensure that the program is being operated consistently and that participants can trust the program to keep their belongings safe and secure. For obvious reasons, giving the wrong bin to the wrong person can have a profoundly negative impact.

- **Violence.** No matter the program or service, it is critical for programs to have a plan to prevent and intervene when violence is occurring in the storage program or between participants and/or staff. It is important to think through and respond to the following questions:
    - What might cause violence in the storage program?
    - What strategies will prevent this violence from happening?
    - What resources are needed to prevent this violence from happening?
    - What strategies can be used to intervene during a violent situation?
    - What resources are need to effectively intervene?
    - Do these strategies promote and support positive youth development and trauma-informed values?

- **Emergencies & Crisis.** Many programs or organizations have policies in place that respond to medical emergencies and/or crises. It is important to be prepared for these types of situations and to practice delegation of roles and responsibilities when emergencies occur.

- **Presence of firearms, weapons, or other illegal items.** The prohibition of firearms, weapons, or other illegal items should be communicated clearly in the participant agreement and enrollment process. Most agencies and programs also have a policies about the presence of weapons and illegal drugs.

Best Practice Design

Throughout this process, we identified some best practices that support CYSI's overall recommendations and key findings:

- **Organized systems.** Efficient, friendly, and excellent customer service build trust and confidence.

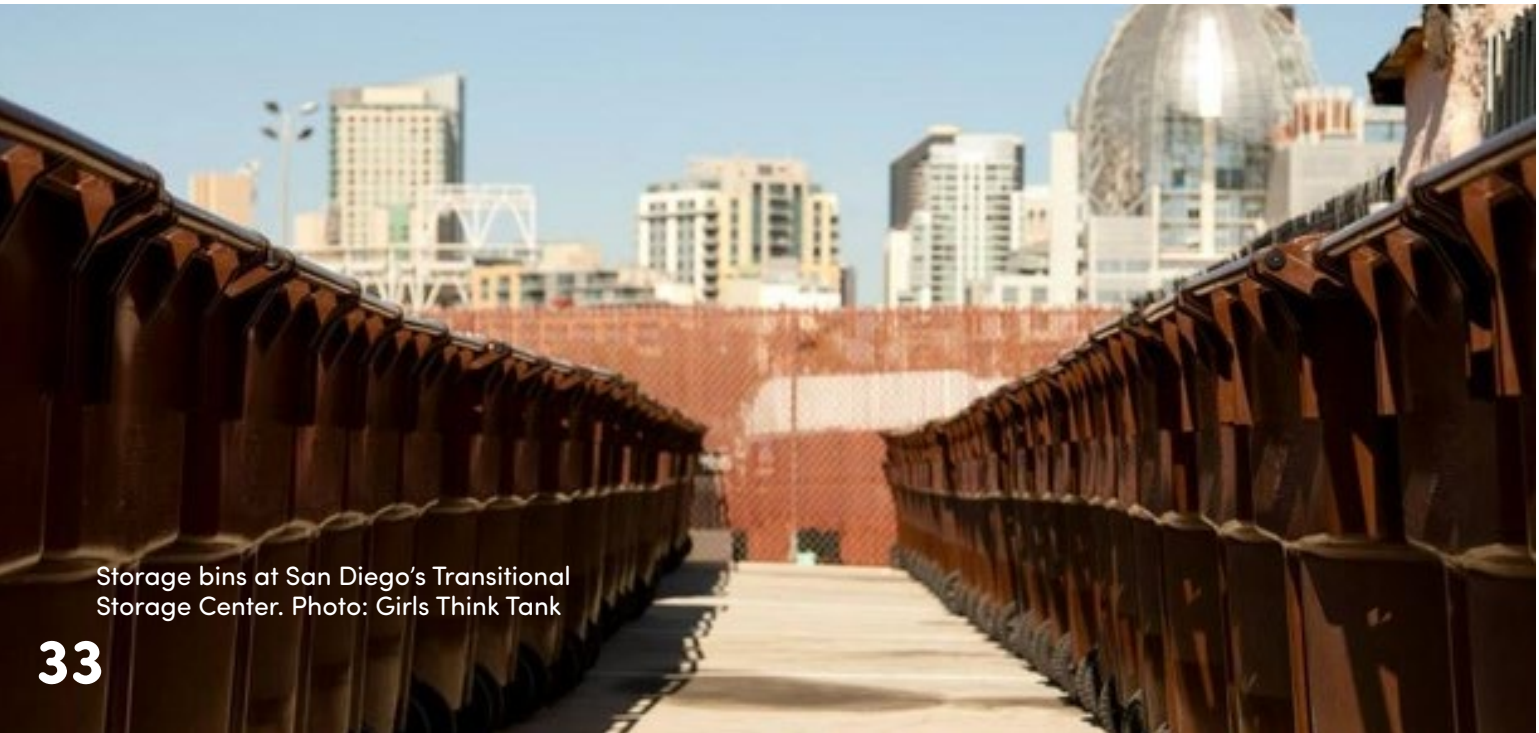
- **Capacity-informed design.** It is critical to define the capacity of storage programs. Many young people described their ideal storage program as something that includes community space, computers, bathrooms, showers, laundry facilities, phone access, mail, and clothing. Strategic and capacity-informed design understands the resources, cost, and staffing needed to support these various program elements. As much as these spaces are needed in every Chicago neighborhood, it must be clear that a stand-alone storage initiative is not and does not have the capacity to operate similarly to a basic needs drop-in center.

- **Collaborative efforts maximize impact and share costs and expertise**. Strategic partnerships, especially those working within "mini" youth networks may benefit from collectivizing resources to operate a storage program.

- **Destigmatizing design.** The stigmas of homelessness can be a profound barrier to young people accessing services and programs. Programs such as the UIC Commuter Student Resource Center provide support to students experiencing housing instability as a part of their mission to meet the needs of commuters, which represent a range of experiences and needs. Eligibility for young people requesting storage should not be limited to only those who self-identify as homeless—as this is often not the language young people use to describe their living situation or housing status.

- **Youth employment opportunities.** Across every focus group, young people indicated a strong desire to support these initiatives by working at storage locations through paid and volunteer opportunities.

- **Emergency intervention to save belongings.** Many young people discussed the window of time following their first episode of homelessness. Some young people were pushed out with few belongings, without time to pack or find temporary storage for belongings. Other young people leave with several suitcases or garbage bags of clothing and bedding. Young people discussed the need for emergency storage during this brief window—before it becomes physically impossible to continue transporting items from place to place and most items must be abandoned or thrown away.



Storage bins at San Diego's Transitional Storage Center. Photo: Girls Think Tank

Considerations for High School-Aged Youth Experiencing Homelessness

It is important to consider the distinctly different needs of young people under the age of 18, including those who may or may not identify themselves to Chicago Public Schools as "unaccompanied." In contrast to older young adults between the ages of 18 and 24, those under the age of 18 have even fewer employment and housing opportunities. Minors cannot replace their own legal identification without the consent and assistance of a parent or legal guardian. Young people under the age of 18 must also mitigate issues related to child welfare interventions due to their homeless status.

When considering storage options for high school-aged young people, it is important to provide both access points within or in close proximity to their high schools for the following reasons:

WITHIN HIGH SCHOOL	IN PROXIMITY TO HIGH SCHOOL
+ Onsite storage access may support and stabilize student attendance.	+ Access extends beyond traditional school hours.
+ Depending on the program design, storage options could be both self-serving (lockers) and staff-administered (bins).	+ Accessible even when student is unable to attend school.
+ Works best in tandem with onsite resources, such as dedicated staff who can assist students experiencing homelessness with resources and basic needs.	+ May be less stigmatizing, and therefore more accessible, for students if located off-site.
− Stored items are privy to random searches in accordance with Chicago Public Schools policies. This may become a barrier for young people accessing the program at all.	+ Can serve the needs of multiple high schools, not just one.
− May make students experiencing homelessness more visible in stigmatizing ways.	− May not be effective without amenities provided through a drop-in program, such as mail, shower access, hygiene supplies, meals, clothing, and case management.
− Less accessible for students who are struggling to regularly attend and need additional supports outside of school to increase attendance or meet other basic needs.	− Rquires additional staffing and space to operate a "satellite" location.

EVALUATION OF IMPACT

Evaluating the impact of storage programs poses challenges similar to those faced by low-threshold youth programs. By design, "low-threshold" models open access points for the young people least likely to engage in social services, healthcare, and housing programs. This program model is defined by its ability to engage, in long-term and meaningful ways, without gathering invasive information or requiring state identification to participate. Because information gathering about program participants is often a long-term process, low-threshold programs can be difficult to quantifiably and qualitatively evaluate. For example, the enrollment process in a low-threshold program only gathers basic information, very little to none of it is ever verified.

Evaluation strategies will vary for different storage options. Perhaps the most difficult to evaluate will be the virtual, cloud-based document storage initiative. Depending on the platform and user "flow" created in collaboration with service providers and young people, a system will need to be created to track usage.

Recommended Evaluation Strategy for Physical Storage Programs

- **Data gathered at program entry.** Program participants will complete a brief registration form and sign a user agreement. The registration form gathers basic demographics to assess and plan for future need.
- **Exit Interviews/Assessments.** Conducted when participants cease accessing services and/or no longer require storage services. Gathers outcomes information such as changes in employment, housing, healthcare access, identification retention and replacement, and education. The option to self-define successful outcomes should be included in the exit assessment as well. According to several programs surveyed across the U.S., the average participant uses the storage program for approximately six months. This timeline provides ample data for assessment of individual outcomes and satisfaction with the program.
- **Ongoing User Feedback.** Conducted intermittently to assess different facets of the program, such as user satisfaction with hours of operation, the overall storage experience, and individual outcomes achieved. A standardized complaint and grievance process will also provide critical user feedback for future changes and improvements.
- **Ongoing Program Feedback.** Conducted regularly to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the storage program from the perspective of workers and administrators operationalizing the program. Feedback gathered will assess facets of the program

from start to finish. For example, the assessment tool will assess for operational and organizational performance as well as user compliance with storage program guidelines. Feedback will inform future worker trainings and changes to program policies and procedures.

The success of the storage program must also include a strategy to measure use across the growing storage continuum. CYSI recommends the creation of a secure website (or app) with dual functions for both storage programs and its participants. For programs with limited computer access, it is equally important to ensure that the website (or app) is compatible with smartphone technology.

Storage programs will use the website/app for:

- Entering storage user information, such as basic demographics, contact information, emergency contact information, entry/exit date(s), passwords, etc.
- Running reports, such as number of youth who accessed their storage locker this week, number of available lockers, number of youth engaged in the storage program at any one given time, etc.
- Responding to user questions, concerns, and feedback

Program participants will use the website/app for:

- Learning about different types and locations of available storage programs
- Checking in and/or communicating with the storage provider
- Asking questions, expressing concerns, and providing feedback
- Assessing and evaluating the effectiveness of the program

The secure website/app will possess the ability to run reports by location/program for the following administrative, operational, and evaluation needs:

- Unduplicated number of users
- Length of time storage program is used per participant
- Total number of times each participant accesses the storage bin or locker
- Basic demographics, such as age, race/ethnicity, gender, and sexual identity
- Self-described housing situation
- Reason for discontinuing or ending use of storage program

Additional data can also be gathering by including storage sites/ programs in the annual DFSS Citywide Point-In-Time YOUth Count, which gathers considerable information about individuals and families.

CONCLUSION

The Chicago Youth Storage Initiative (CYSI) presents an exciting opportunity to collaboratively address a complex issue with practical solutions and system-wide coordination. In partnership with organizations, funders, entrepreneurs, policymakers, students, volunteers, and young people impacted by homelessness, the Chicago Youth Storage Initiative seeks to create an integrated and comprehensive storage system for young Chicagoans experiencing homelessness.

Our findings indicate that building a successful storage continuum must include a range of models for young people experiencing homelessness and housing instability. CYSI recommends multiple storage options for young people to choose from, knowing that as they and their circumstances change, their needs and priorities may also change. These options range from piloting small-scale storage initiatives within existing organizations to introducing a stand-alone, satellite storage facility in close proximity to basic needs services such as laundry, showers, and case management. Other options include systematizing and strengthening mail and document storage programs and piloting an online, cloud-based document storage effort.

Over the next several years, CYSI's proposed storage safety net will collectively safeguard resources and prevent loss, destruction, and damage of belongings. It will increase secure storage access points for precious belongings, important documents, work uniforms, family keepsakes, and educational books and equipment. This storage safety net means possibility. It means more time for young people to get important things done. It means more opportunities to plan and not just react. Practical solutions, driven by the unique realities of different spaces and community needs, aim to build a flexible storage infrastructure with far-reaching impact.

A. HOW MANY YOUTH IN CHICAGO ARE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS?

For many reasons, it is difficult to obtain an annual count or approximation of young people experiencing homelessness in Chicago. In 2013, a committee from The Chicago Task Force on Homeless Youth formed to launch YOUth Count Chicago, an initiative created to develop new strategies for measuring youth homelessness. As a part of this inaugural count, a total of 400 youth across Chicago were counted as unstably housed. A majority of these respondents were surveyed at facilities for young people experiencing homelessness, including overnight shelters and drop-in centers. Street canvassing efforts and other methods of counting young people experiencing housing instability who do not seek services were not included in the 2013 methodology. As a result, "the survey findings do not provide a conclusive number of homeless or unstably housed youth in Chicago."[20]

In that same year, The City of Chicago dedicated an additional $2 million to launch three new drop-in centers and 74 new year-round overnight shelters beds to serve an additional 1,400 youth annually. Since the advent of these programs and increased, integrated data collection efforts through Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), youth drop-in centers and overnight youth shelters are getting closer to an accurate count of young people accessing services across this low-threshold youth continuum.[21] It is estimated that this number exceeded 1,200 different young people in 2014. By and large, these numbers represent young people between the ages of 18 and 24 accessing services.

On January 22, 2014, the Chicago Point-In-Time (PIT) Count administered surveys and conducted counts of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in shelters and living outside. As a part of the PIT methodology, it is important to note that individuals living doubled-up in homes are not included in this count. At the time of the 2014 PIT count, 1,644 individuals experiencing homelessness were under the age of 18—approximately one-third of Chicago's sheltered population—and the vast majority of these youth and children were accompanied by one or more family members. About 560 individuals, 10.5% of all individuals who stayed in a shelter that night, were between the ages of 18 and 24. Another 80 individuals between the ages of 18 and 24 were counted outside, comprising 8.3% of those unsheltered during the count.[22] In summary, about 640 individuals between the ages of 18 and 24 were counted in shelters and outside that evening.

Later that year, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (CCH), an organization dedicated to organizing and advocating to prevent and end homelessness in Illinois, found that 138,575 Chicagoans were homeless during the course of the 2013-2014 school year, an almost 20% increase from the previous year.[23] The rise, they explained, "is based, in part, on the rising enrollment of homeless students in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) – 22,144 in FY14. Eighty-eight percent of homeless students lived doubled-up, usually in overcrowded conditions in the homes of others due to hardship." The Chicago Public School numbers also revealed 2,647 unaccompanied youth.[24]

Students in Temporary Living Situations (STLS), a program made available by the Board of Education of the City of Chicago, serves children and young people experiencing homelessness who are enrolled in Chicago Public Schools. Program benefits include immediate school enrollment, transportation assistance, school fee waivers, tutoring, and other services. Each year, STLS tracks the number of students experiencing homelessness, including those who are unaccompanied, doubled up, or staying in a shelter.

20. 2013 Survey of Unstably Housed Youth in Chicago: Summary of Findings. July 2014, 9. *http://www.cityofchicago.org/content/dam/city/depts/fss/supp_info/Policy/2013HomelessYouthSurvey.pdf*

21. Low-threshold youth continuum is defined as overnight shelters for young people and youth drop-in centers funded by the Department of Family & Support Services. In total, this includes four youth drop-in centers and six overnight shelters.

22. City of Chicago Department of Family and Support Services, 2014 Homeless Point-In-Time Count & Survey Report, 5. *http://www.cityofchicago.org/content/dam/city/depts/fss/supp_info/Homeless/2014PITReport.pdf*

23. Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. 2014. "FAQ/Studies." *http://www.chicagohomeless.org/faq-studies*

24. Young people who were homeless and living without a parent or guardian.

In the 2014-2015 school year, the greatest frequency of unaccompanied students attended schools in the following zip codes:

TOP SCHOOLS ATTENDED BY UNACCOMPANIED STUDENTS BY ZIP CODE

60612 EAST GARFIELD PARK
60621 ENGLEWOOD
60624 WEST GARFIELD PARK
60616 NEAR SOUTH SIDE, BRIDGEPORT, BRONZEVILLE
60651 AUSTIN, HUMBOLDT PARK
60608 PILSEN, BRIDGEPORT
60622 WEST TOWN, HUMBOLDT PARK, UKRAINIAN VILLAGE
60643 BEVERLY, WASHINGTON PARK, MORGAN PARK, WEST PULLMAN
60609 NEW CITY
60617 CALUMET HEIGHTS, SOUTH SHORE

Students living without a parent or guardian also report a home address upon enrollment. By zip code, the highest frequency of unaccompanied students, come from the following Chicago neighborhoods:

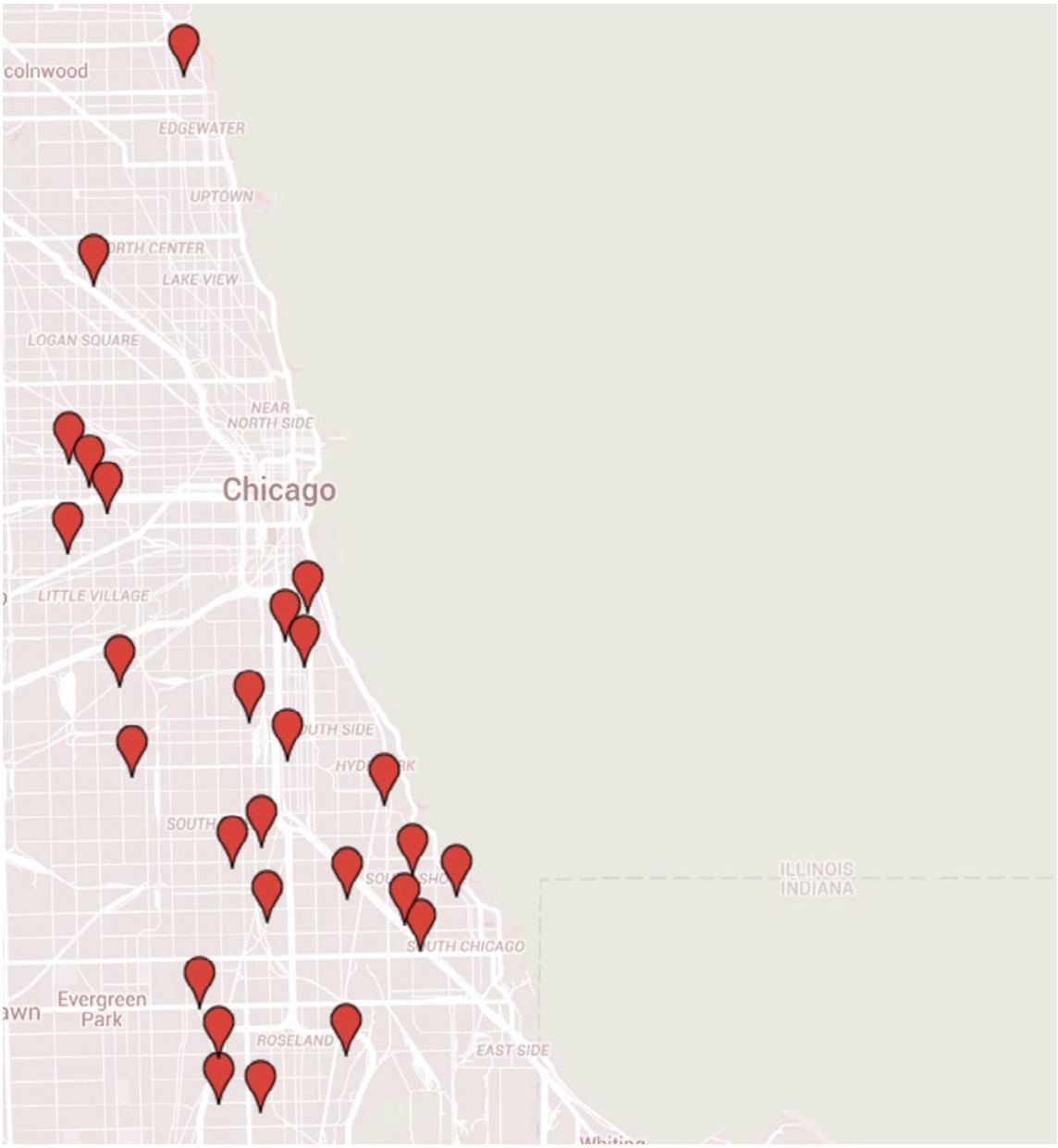
TOP NEIGHBORHOODS OF UNACCOMPANIED STUDENTS BY ZIP CODE

60624 WEST GARFIELD PARK
60621 ENGLEWOOD
60628 ROSELAND
60620 GRESHAM
60637 WOODLAWN
60651 AUSTIN, HUMBOLDT PARK
60644 GARFIELD PARK, NORTH LAWNDALE
60623 NORTH LAWNDALE, DOUGLAS PARK
60636 WEST ENGLEWOOD
60629 CHICAGO LAWN, WEST LAWN (NEAR MIDWAY)

In conclusion, Chicago does not possess a definitive, or even approximate, number of young people experiencing homelessness. The Chicago Point-In-Time Count, YOUth Count, HMIS, and Chicago Public Schools point towards vastly differing numbers. However, we do know this: **The number of young people under the age of 24 experiencing homelessness and housing instability is large and far exceeds the number of available beds on any given night in Chicago.** Additional barriers exist for young people under the age of 18 who, in many ways, have almost no self-determined housing options due to their status as minors.

CHICAGO HIGH SCHOOLS WITH MORE THAN A 100 STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

In the 2013–2014 school year, 31 Chicago high schools each counted more than a 100 students enrolled in STLS services. These schools are predominately located on the West, South, Southwest, and Far South sides of Chicago.



B. METHODOLOGY FOR NEEDS ASSESSMENT

CYSI hired a lead consultant to conduct a needs assessment to inform recommendations for the implementation of CYSI efforts. The lead consultant hired three additional consultants to assist with the development and facilitation of the focus groups and to assist with data analysis.

The needs assessment consisted of five phases of work. All activities were conducted between November and May 2015.

I. **National & Local Field Scan:** Research included a local and national search of storage programs for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

II. **Key Informant Interviews:** Interviews were conducted with service providers, program directors, administrators of storage programs, educators, and leaders of faith-based settings in informal conversations about existing storage resources, youth needs, program design, evaluation of the program, etc.

III. **Focus Groups:** Four (4) focus groups with 58 youth experiencing homelessness and housing instability were conducted. Participants received stipends and transit assistance for their participation in the focus groups. Focus groups were conducted at Broadway Youth Center, La Casa Norte-Casa Corazon-South, and Teen Living Programs.

IV. **Data Analysis & Hypothesis Testing:** Data was analyzed by the consultants and a small advisory board that supported the project.

Report Creation

The data generated included:

- 37 key informant interviews at 22 different Chicago organizations, faith-based settings, schools, and institutions
- 5 key informant interviews at 5 different agencies or storage programs across the U.S. and Canada
- 4 focus groups conducted with 58 young people with current or former experience with housing instability and/or homelessness

Both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered to assess needs and inform the overall recommendations. In total, 99 individuals participated in one or more of the data gathering methods. We also used data gathered through a Service Provider Survey conducted by organizers of the LGBT Homeless Youth Summit. In total, 27 organizations participated in the survey.

THE PARTICIPATING CHICAGO ORGANIZATIONS AND ACTIVITIES ARE LISTED ALPHABETICALLY IN THE CHART BELOW:

ORGANIZATION/COMPANY	INTERVIEW	FOCUS GROUP
Broadway United Methodist Church	■	
Center on Halsted	■	
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless	■	
Chicago House	■	
Chicago Public Schools/Students Living In Temporary Living Situations (STLS)	■	
Donors Forum	■	
El Rescate	■	
Google	■	
Howard Brown Health Center/Broadway Youth Center	■	■
Heartland Human Care Services/Neon Street	■	
Illinois Safe Schools Alliance	■	■
La Casa Norte	■	
Old St. Pat's	■	
People's Institute for Housing Justice	■	
Second Presbyterian	■	
Taskforce	■	
Teen Living Programs	■	■
The NIght Ministry	■	
Unity Parenting & Counseling/Ujima Village	■	
Universal Family Connection	■	
University of Illinois at Chicago-Commuter Student Resource Center	■	
Wellington Avenue United Church of Christ	■	
Youth Empowerment Performance Project	■	

WE ALSO INTERVIEWED AND/OR RESEARCHED THE FOLLOWING U.S. & CANADIAN GROUPS

ORGANIZATION	CITY, STATE
Arlington Street People's Assistance Network	Arlington, Virginia
Check In Center	Los Angeles, California
David's Place Day Shelter/Carpenter's Shelter	Arlington, Virginia
First United Church	Vancouver, BC
Haven for Hope	San Antonio, Texas
The Legacy Initiative	Salt Lake City, Utah
Seattle Housing & Resource Effort (SHARE)	Seattle, Washington
Springwire	Seattle, Washington
Transitional Storage Center	San Diego, California

DEMOGRAPHICS OF FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

All 58 focus group participants had an opportunity to self-describe their gender, race and ethnicity, and age. The gender of participants represents a range of young adults (Figure 1). Individuals who identified as Transgender, Transwoman, or Transman were categorized together in the "Transgender" category. The race and ethnicity of student participants is overwhelmingly young people of color (93%) and 26% Latino/a (Figure 2 and Figure 3). Youth participants were asked to describe their racial and ethnic identity, which included identifying as Latino/a or non-Latino/a (Figure 3). The age of participants varies from 17 to 24 (Figure 3). Participants also represented a range of Chicago neighborhoods, with a majority originating from the South, West, and Southwest sides of Chicago.

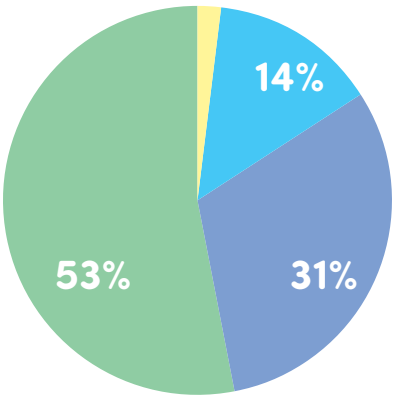


FIGURE 1. GENDER OF PARTICIPANTS (N=58)

- TRANSGENDER
- GENDER NON-CONFORMING
- MALE
- FEMALE

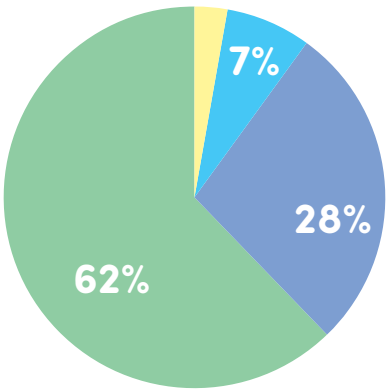


FIGURE 2. RACE/ETHNICITY OF PARTICIPANTS (N=58)

- MULTI-RACIAL
- BLACK/AFRICAN-AMERICAN
- WHITE
- NATIVE AMERICAN/INDIGENOUS

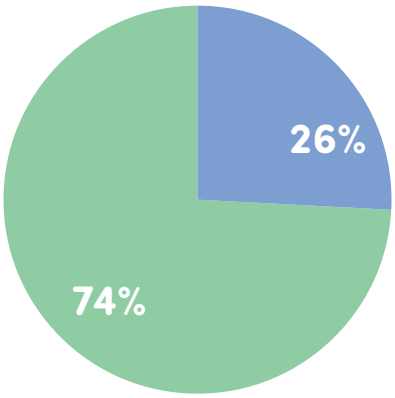
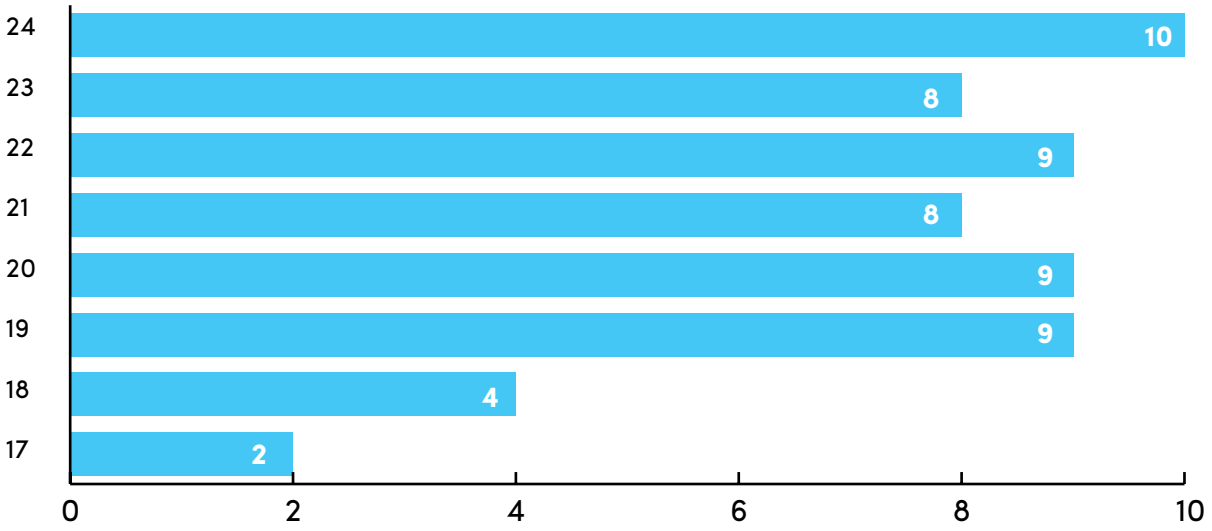


FIGURE 3. REPRESENTATION OF LATINO/A RESPONDENTS (N=58)

- LATINO/A
- NON-LATINO/A

FIGURE 4. AGE OF FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS (N=58)



C. STORAGE FACILITIES PROFILE BY BINS AND ANNUAL COST

PROGRAM/LOCATION	SIZE/FEATURES OF PROGRAM	COST/STAFFING
Check-In Center Los Angeles, California Launch: 2002	Capacity: 1,400 bins Hours: Operates 6 days per week/8 hours per day	Cost: $500,000 Staffing: 3 FTE and 5 staff who are a part of the Chrysalis transitional employment program
Transitional Storage Center San Diego, California Launch: 2011	Capacity: 353 bins Hours: Operates 6 days per week/8 hours per day	Cost: $100,000 Staffing: 1 FTE and 2 PTE
First United Church Community Ministry Society Vancouver, BC Launch: 2009	Capacity: 200 bins Hours: Operates 6 days per week	Cost: $75,000 annually Staffing: 2 FTE
H.O.P.E Lockers Salt Lake City, Utah Launch: 2015	Capacity: 28 lockers	Cost: $10,000 Staffing: Unknown
Haven for Hope San Antonio, Texas Launch: 2010	Capacity: 580 bins	Cost: Unknown Staffing: Unkown
Seattle Housing and Resource Effort (SHARE) Seattle, Washington Launch: Unknown	Capacity: 150 lockers Hours: Operates 7 days per week	Cost: Unknown Staffing: 1 FTE and participant
University of Illinois at Chicago Commuter Student Resource Center Chicago, Illinois Launch: 2009	Capacity: 600 lockers for any student, regardless of housing status Hours: Operates 5 days per week	Cost: Unknown Staffing: Multiple FTE and student staff positions

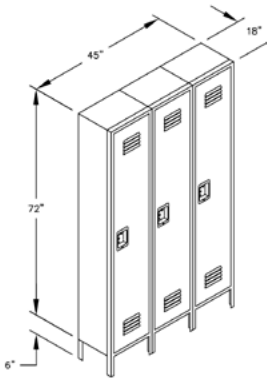
D. BENEFITS AND CONSIDERATIONS BY TYPE OF STORAGE PROGRAMS

Types of Storage Programs

Storage Programs Integrated into Existing Basic Needs Services & Programs 	**Benefits:** ■ Suited for a one-stop-shop program delivery model ■ Model promotes ongoing engagement with staff and other programs ■ Ability to evaluate effectiveness or impact ■ Cost effective (e.g. utilize existing personnel) ■ Ability to implement at a small-scale across many programs, thus sharing resources across geography **Considerations:** ■ Spaces typically lack enough physical space for storage due to the concurrent operation of several programs and services simultaneously ■ Resources required for additional hours of storage access *Example: JOIN (Portland, OR)*
Private Storage Facility Lockers 	**Benefits:** ■ Storage amenities (climate controlled, 24-hour access, protection from water damage, pest control plan in place) **Considerations:** ■ NIMBY ■ Proximity to other services ■ Additional staffing may be required to engage participants and mitigate issues, thus driving up costs in other ways *Example: Homeless Locker Storage Program (Berkeley, CA)*
Satellite Storage Facility in Close Physical Proximity to Other Services and Basic Needs 	**Benefits:** ■ This has all of the benefits of Storage Programs Integrated into Existing Basic Needs Services & Programs. **Considerations:** ■ Cost of additional space and staffing ■ Requires, at a minimum, two staff at all times to operate ■ Ensure satellite is located in proximity to a drop-in center with a long-term lease and/or permanent location. *Example: First United Church Community Ministry Society (Vancouver, BC)*
Stand Alone Storage Facility-Warehouse, Parking Lot 	**Benefits:** ■ Can accommodate many people if located in a centralized location **Considerations:** ■ Cost of additional space and staffing ■ Requires, at a minimum, two staff at all times to operate ■ Weather conditions ■ Relationship building limitations when size of program exceeds >200 individuals and interactions are relatively brief *Example: Check In Center (Los Angeles, CA)*

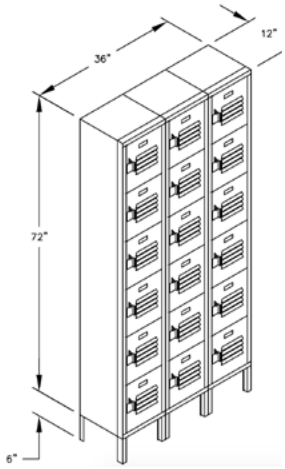
Post-Secondary Setting 	**Benefits:** ■ Services and supports are centered around commuter needs but include basic needs and supports that benefit students experiencing homelessness (e.g. food pantry, kitchen, storage, shower, and computer access) ■ Located in close proximity to students activities, work, and classes **Considerations:** ■ Availability and access *Example: UIC Commuter Center (Chicago, IL)*
High School Setting 	**Benefits:** ■ Engages youth under the age of 18 in storage access options ■ May support and stabilize student attendance **Considerations:** ■ Legal considerations for locker searches ■ Works best in tandem with onsite resources, such as dedicated staff who can assist students experiencing homelessness with resources and basic needs. ■ Located within school or in close proximity *Example: Hetrick-Martin Institute (New York, NY)*
Mobile Daily Storage 	**Benefits:** ■ Provides an entirely different, low-threshold access point to temporary storage needs ■ Cost effective ■ Alternative to groups of young people taking turns watching belongings ■ Reduces **Considerations:** ■ NIMBY ■ Relies on both a reliable and central location *Example: H.O.P.E Lockers (Salt Lake City, UT)*
Collective Model 	**Benefits:** ■ Cost-efficient ■ Self-managed and operated by storage program users **Considerations:** ■ Space ■ NIMBY ■ Fundraising for start-up and ongoing cost *Example: WHEEL and SHARE (Seattle, Washington)*
Virtual, Cloud-Based Storage 	**Benefits:** ■ Cost-efficient ■ Scalable **Considerations:** ■ Proprietorship *Example: Springwire (Seattle, WA)*
Document and Mail Storage 	**Benefits:** ■ Requires minimal space and is inexpensive to operate **Considerations:** ■ Must have secure storage and functional filing system so as to avoid disorganization and misplacement of documents ■ Important to create systems to notify youth participants when time-sensitive mail arrives *Example: Broadway Youth Center (Chicago, IL)*

E. RECOMMENDED LOCKERS, BINS, & EQUIPMENT



Recommended for storage program located within an existing basic needs program:

- Storage Type: Locker (25% wider than standard lockers)
- Material: Constructed of 16 gauge steel
- Locker door type: louvered (slats), ventilated
- Organization: hooks and compartment shelves
- Security: Resettable Combination locks can be set to a fixed combination or a combination that can be reset after each use and can be accessed with a master control key
- Dimensions of individual locker: 15" W x 72" H x 18" D[25]
- Cost: $150 (unassembled)-$190 (assembled) per locker; installation cost will vary depending on number of lockers installed



Recommended for satellite storage program in close proximity to existing services and resources

- Storage Type: Bins and Shelving
- Material: Stackable and durable 27-gallon plastic bins with snapping lids OR 96 gallon recycling bins on wheels
- Security: Bins are not secure but are stored in a secure location and retrieved individually for participant use.
- Cost: $40 per 27-gallon bin; $200 per 96 gallon wheeled trash/recycling can
- Installation: Installation of shelving that can withstand multiple bins weighing up to 50 lbs. each is required. Shelving should be industrial in strength and constructed with wood or metal.
- Additional space needs: Operating a bin system requires the creation of a participant greeting and waiting area separate from the secured storage bin area.

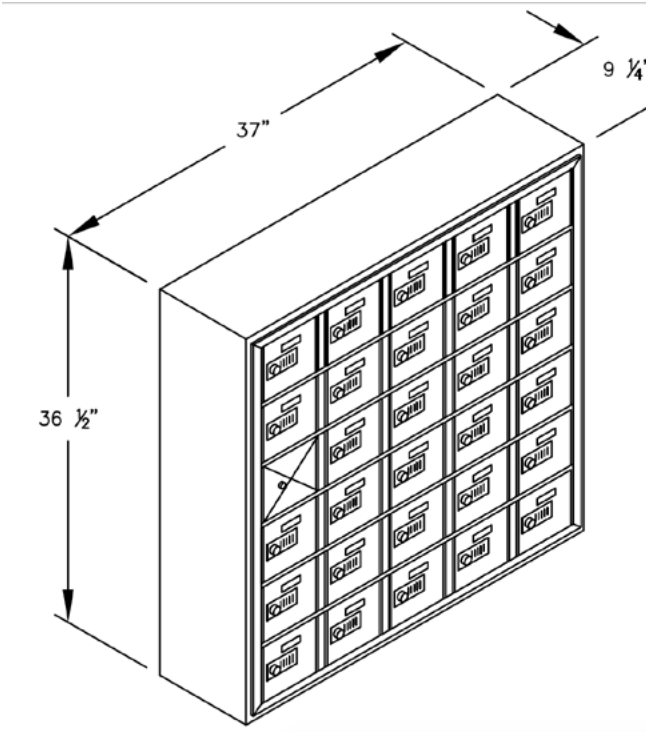
Recommended storage solution for transitional or interim housing programs:

- Storage Type: Small lockers
- Material: Constructed of 16 gauge steel
- Security: Resettable Combination locks
- Cost: $460 (unassembled) to $585 (assembled) for 18 units plus locks
- Installation: Wall mount installation highly recommended

25. The average luggage dimensions of a carry on suitcase are 9" deep x 16" wide x 22" high. The average school locker is 12" wide x 15" deep x various heights (66"), although some are as small as 12" x 12" in width/depth.

Recommended storage solution for drop-in centers with limited space (and limited installation options):

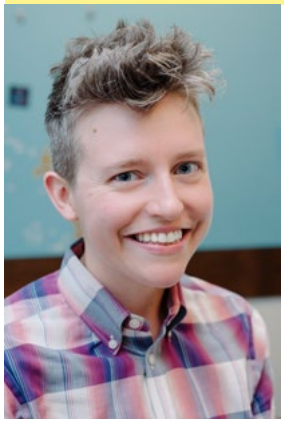
- Storage Type: Daily Use Cell Phone Locker
- Material: Aluminum
- Security: Resettable Combination locks, includes flexible grommet for cell phone charging cables
- Dimensions of individual locker: 37" W x 36.5" H x 9.25" D (Weight: 100 lbs.)
- Cost: Approximately $1,200 for 30 units or $1,400 for 35 units plus cost of locks
- Installation: No installation with purchase of free-standing enclosure for storage unit; however, electrical access in proximity to the locker is required.



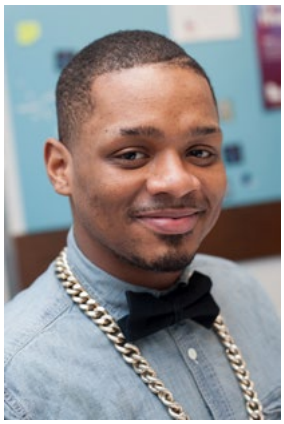
General recommended space needs:

- Tables for organizing belongings near storage lockers or bins
- Access to bathrooms, showers, and laundry in close proximity
- Access to toiletry and hygiene supplies
- Locked secure area for lockers and bins
- Bins (unlocked) should always be secured in an area that only designated individuals have access to

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

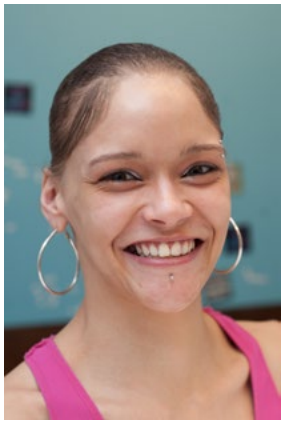


Lara Brooks is a Chicago-based consultant, youth worker and organizer. Since 2001, Lara has been a part of projects and organizations that support queer and trans youth, survivors of violence, and youth experiencing homelessness and housing instability. Brooks is the former Director of the Broadway Youth Center (BYC), a one-stop-shop model of social service and healthcare for LGBTQ young people and young people experiencing homelessness in Chicago. Currently, Brooks trains, teaches, and consults on accessible and visionary program design, program and system evaluation, harm reduction, and community accountability practices.



Ka'Riel Gaiter is a Chicago-born activist and artist with training in theater of the oppressed. For two years, Ka'Riel choreographed the prize-winning youth choir of Great St. John Missionary Baptist Church and attended Dora Lynn Music Academy for vocal training. Ka'Riel has been an ensemble member of Youth Empowerment Performance Project (YEPP) since 2012 and has a passion for fashion and performance. Ka'Riel has supported organizations like the Center on Halsted and the Broadway Youth Center as a computer instructor, group facilitator, and vocational trainer. Ka'Riel was a part of Chain Reaction: Alternatives to Calling the Police, an action research and popular education project started with the goal of supporting conversations about alternatives to calling police on young people. Ka'Riel aspires to become a social worker who incorporates art as a tool for healing.

Gregory Slater is a Chicago-based artist and performer. Raised in Naperville, Illinois, Gregory was a part of various music-based programs at his high school—including Mosaic Ensemble, Chamber Singer, and Varsity. He also participated in the Gay-Straight Alliance ant the Steppers Team. With training in gymnastics, cheerleading, ballroom, jazz, tap, and ballet, Gregory joined the Young Empowerment Performance Project as an Ensemble Member in 2013. In June 2014, Gregory was selected to train in modern, ballet and contemporary dance at the Intensive Summer Program at Deeply Rooted.



Daphnie Williams was the Administrative Coordinator for Young Women's Empowerment Project (YWEP), a social justice organizing project led by and for young people of color with current or former experience in the sex trade and street economies, until the project closed its doors in 2013. Daphnie provided administrative and operational support to YWEP between 2005 and 2013. She was a member of Street Youth Rise Up, a campaign created to shift the ways Chicago institutions see and treat youth experiencing homelessness, homefree youth, and street-based youth. She was also a member of YWEP's syringe exchange and outreach program, the only youth-led syringe exchange in the country. Daphnie has a passion for animals, pet grooming, cosmetology, and office organization. She has travelled all over the U.S. educating organizers and young people about harm reduction, reproductive justice, participatory action research, and sexual health.