



Report to Center on Halsted Board of Directors
By the Homeless Youth Task Force on -



**LGBT
Homeless
Youth**

Jean Butzen

Mission Plus Strategy Consulting

11/9/2009



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

This report was produced through the tremendous efforts of the Youth Homelessness Task Force, which has been meeting since April, 2008 to research permanent solutions to LGBTQ youth homelessness for Center on Halsted. The author wishes to thank all of the committee members:

- Mary Anderson, Board Director, Center on Halsted
- Illinois State Representative Greg Harris
- Robert Kohl, Chair Emeritus and Board Director for Center on Halsted
- James LoBianco, Department of Family and Support Services, City of Chicago, Volunteer
- Phil Palmer, Board Director, Center on Halsted
- Victoria Rayment, Board Chair, Center on Halsted
- Courtney Reid, Senior Director of Social Services, Center on Halsted
- Modesto (Tico) Valle, Executive Director, Center on Halsted

We also thank the nonprofit agencies and their staff who spent many hours sharing information about their housing and service programs with us. In particular we would like to thank:

- Sol Flores, Executive Director and Dulce Quintero, Program Supervisor, La Casa Norte
- Dr. Ozella Phillips, Clinical Director, Teen Living
- Katrina Van Valkenberg, Program Director, Corporation for Supportive Housing/Illinois

The committee would also like to thank Ben Gannon, Executive Assistant to Tico Valle, Executive Director, for all his attention to detail and his unfailing support to the Task Force throughout this process.

Cover photo credit: From the report: *The National Recommended Best Practices for Serving LGBT Homeless Youth*, by Lambda Legal and the National Alliance to End Homelessness.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

ITEM	PAGE(S)
I. Executive Summary	4—5
II. Introduction and Overview of the Process	6
III. Research on Youth Homelessness	7—8
IV. Government Response to Youth Homelessness	9—10
V. Housing Models: Transitional vs. Supportive Housing	11—12
VI. Local Tours of Youth Housing Developments	13—14
VII. Focus Feedback from Agencies: Youth and Staff	15—16
VIII. Cost Research: Capital, Operating and Services	17—23
IX. Final Recommendation from the Task Force	24—26
X. Conclusion	27
XI. Bibliography	28—29
XII. Appendix:	30
<i>Combined Youth Focus Group Responses Report</i>	31—35
<i>Combined Staff Focus Group Responses Report</i>	36—44



I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Homelessness is an issue for the clients of Center on Halsted. Each year the Center serves 100 homeless youth in their case management program, and each day, Monday through Friday, the Center feeds breakfast to between twelve and twenty youth. The Homeless Youth Task Force was created to answer the question: *How can Center on Halsted address LGBTQ youth homelessness?*

To accomplish its task, the Task Force carried out these seven steps over the course of 18 months:

1. Researched the issue of LGBTQ youth homelessness and youth housing programs in Illinois and around the country.
2. Dialogued with experts in the field of housing for the homeless, and LGBTQ youth homelessness.
3. Conducted tours of three youth housing programs in Chicago, meeting with the staff of these developments.
4. Held four focus groups with a total of 34 homeless LGBTQ youth to ask them for feedback on preliminary recommendations.
5. Held three focus groups with a total of 12 staff members of nonprofits serving LGBTQ homeless youth to seek their feedback on preliminary recommendations.
6. Conducted research on capital, operating and service expenses for youth homeless housing.
7. Developed a three-part recommendation to the Board of Directors of Center on Halsted.

In its efforts the Task Force learned the following facts about youth homelessness:

- Approximately 1.3M youth are homeless or runaways during a calendar year.
- In the state of Illinois, approximately 25,000 youth are homeless during a calendar year.
- There are only 350 shelter beds in the state of Illinois.
- In a study by the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, 62% of youth who are homeless in the state were victimized in some form.
- One out of every five homeless youth is LGBTQ identified (20%); compared to the general population, where LGBTQ youth are 4% of the population.
- LGBTQ homeless youth experience 7.4 more acts of sexual violence than straight youth.

Based on its research, the Youth Homeless Task Force respectfully submits the following three recommendations to the Board of Directors:



I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, continued

RECOMMENDATION #1: Develop a supportive housing project for homeless LGBTQ youth.

Create the state's first LGBTQ supportive housing project located on the North side of Chicago. With approximately 20 units of housing, the goal of the development would be to help LGBTQ youth gain the skills necessary to live independently by providing affordable quality housing, with on-site services, in a culture that is fully open and accepting of their sexual identity. Youth would be legal tenants, though they would be encouraged to transition into their next stage of housing in about two years.

Anticipated costs include:

- Capital construction: \$150/square foot;
- Operating costs: \$8,000/unit;
- Services: \$22,250 per person, per year.

Center on Halsted would seek a joint venture partner to co-own the project and serve as the developer, property manager, and asset manager. The Center, in addition to being a co-owner, would be the service provider.

RECOMMENDATION #2: Develop a facility to co-locate three or more nonprofits serving youth.

Center on Halsted will develop a facility with three or more nonprofit agencies that serve homeless LGBTQ youth to be located in the same building. A co-location strategy will create case management and program synergies between the various service agencies, economies of scale in terms of administrative and operating costs, and blended services for the benefit of the clients.

RECOMMENDATION #3: Create a network of youth-serving agencies in Chicago.

Identify the nonprofit agencies in the City of Chicago providing services to homeless youth, then enlist them in an effort to create a single network or continuum of agencies that share services, information and training, as well as conduct joint planning. The goal is twofold:

- 1) To create a web of services that are connected, so youth do not fall through service gaps.
- 2) To broaden the awareness of the prevalence and causes of homelessness for LGBTQ youth and to engage allies in supporting expanded services for LGBTQ homeless youth.



II. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

Center on Halsted feeds breakfast to 12 - 20 homeless LGBTQ youth Monday through Friday and serves about one hundred homeless or under-housed youth in its case management program each year.¹ Many of these youth actually sleep in the public areas of the building when possible because they have nowhere else to go.

This situation prompted the Board of Directors of Center on Halsted to create the Homeless Youth Task Force to examine the issue and determine:

How can Center on Halsted address LGBTQ youth homelessness?

The Homeless Youth Task Force was charged with bringing a recommendation to the Board of Directors on this matter.

Since the Homeless Youth Task Force was launched in May 2008 it has taken several steps to understand the problem of youth homelessness, in particular LGBTQ youth homelessness in Illinois, and what nonprofit agencies and government are doing to successfully help these young people. The committee created the following process, which ultimately led to a Board recommendation:

1. Researched the issue of LGBTQ youth homelessness and youth housing programs in Illinois and around the country.
2. Dialogued with experts in the field of housing for the homeless, and LGBTQ youth homelessness.
3. Conducted tours of three youth housing programs in Chicago and met with the staff of these developments.
4. Held four focus groups with a total of 34 homeless LGBTQ youth to ask them for feedback on preliminary recommendations.
5. Held three focus groups with 12 staff members of nonprofits serving LGBTQ homeless youth to seek their feedback on preliminary recommendations.
6. Conducted research on capital, operating and service expenses for youth homeless housing.
7. Developed a three-part recommendation to the Board of Directors of Center on Halsted.

Over a period eighteen months the committee developed a clear sense of the need for housing services for homeless LGBTQ youth, the alternative types of housing models and different financing strategies. The result of this work is a clear recommendation for the Board of Directors. The remainder of the report makes a case for a three-part recommendation.

The Appendix includes full copies of documents critical to the research or investigative process; the sheer number of documents produced for this process makes it impossible to attach all of

¹ Source: Courtney Reid, Senior Director of Services, Center on Halsted.



them. Please contact the Executive Director or the report's author for further information of any kind. Also, please refer to the Bibliography at the end of the document for further reading on this topic.

III. THE ISSUE: RESEARCH ON YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Just who are homeless youth and what are their needs? As with all homeless counts, it is impossible to be exact with figures due to the difficulty of counting people when they are homeless. The national estimate of the number of homeless and runaway youth (under the age of 18) is between 500,000 and 1.3 million people. In 2005, the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless conducted the first statewide census since 1985 of homeless youth, and found that Illinois had 24,968 unaccompanied homeless youth in 2004². CCH found that of those who were homeless, 30% were younger than 18, 62% had been victimized in some form, 38% were neglected or abused by a parent, and 62% had a parent with a substance abuse issue.



According to a report by Lambda Legal and the National Alliance to End Homelessness, *a conservative estimate is that one out of every five homeless youth is LGBTQ-identified*.³ Compared to the percentage of LGBTQ youth in the general population (4-10%), the disproportional representation of LGBTQ youth among the homeless is quite alarming. The authors of the Lambda/NAEH report state that this is due to the family abuse, neglect, and conflict LGBTQ youth experience due to their sexual identity.

Unfortunately, life on the streets for LGBTQ youth is quite dangerous. They experience 7.4 more acts of sexual violence per person than heterosexual youth. Transgendered youth are particularly at risk of harassment, physical assault, and arrest by the police because of their gender. LGBTQ youth are at great risk of sexual victimization, are twice as likely as a heterosexual child to be sexually abused before the age of 12, and are more likely to be pulled into the sex trade.

Mental illness is also higher among LGBTQ youth. Lesbian youth report more disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, and conduct disorders. Additionally, LGBTQ homeless youth experience major depressive episodes, and suicide attempts are much higher for them (62%) than for heterosexual youth (29%)⁴.

² T. Johnson and I. Graf (2005), *Unaccompanied Homeless Youth in Illinois: 2005* (Survey Research Laboratory, University of Illinois at Chicago).

³ Lambda Legal and the National Alliance to End Homelessness, *National Recommended Best Practices for Serving LGBT Homeless Youth*.

⁴ All data from this section is taken from the Lambda Legal and NAEH study cited above.

One of the most disturbing facts identified in the Lambda/NAEH study is that LGBTQ homeless youth report being discriminated against by agencies serving homeless youth. They are sometimes assaulted by other homeless clients and misunderstood by the adult supervisors.



III. THE ISSUE: RESEARCH ON YOUTH HOMELESSNESS, continued

With all of these factors stacked against them, it is no surprise that LGBTQ homeless youth, like many in their position, turn to illegal activities such as drug dealing and prostitution to survive, and that a large number end up in prison or on welfare.

The institutional options for homeless youth tend to be public or private shelters, or the foster care system operated by the individual states. Foster care can be a very mixed bag; one General Accounting Office study of several completed in 1999 found that 25-40% of youth in foster care become homeless after emancipation due to lack of a job and independent living skills. Many homeless youth have what is known as Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED), causing their transition to adulthood to be extremely difficult.

Despite the extent of youth homelessness and the vulnerability of youth on the street, very few resources are devoted to addressing this problem. Less than 0.5% (\$68.3 million) is dedicated to spending for homeless youth, out of \$44 billion spent in the U.S. on special population affordable housing programs.⁵ And of the \$4.175 billion spent on homelessness assistance from all federal agencies, less than 1% (\$195 million) is targeted to homeless youth services.⁶

⁵ National Alliance to End Homelessness, *Federal Funding for Affordable Housing, Including Youth* July 2009.

⁶ National Alliance to End Homelessness, *Federal Funding for Homeless Assistance Programs, Including Youth*, July 2009.



IV. GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS: GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Homeless and runaway youth are eligible to receive services and housing through two major types of government homeless youth systems. The systems are divided, however, in terms of the ability of the individual to live within or outside of state-sanctioned institutional care. In some cases, this division is based on the real emotional and development needs of the person.

The first government approach is called “Systems Youth,” and is designed for youth who have been placed in state custody because of parental neglect or abuse, or who have been engaged in criminal behavior, or are suffering from chronic health or mental health problems. The types of housing solutions in the Systems Youth approach include:

- child welfare/foster care
- residential treatment for youth with chronic mental or physical diseases
- juvenile justice system

The alternative government approach to financing youth homeless services is called “Non-Systems Youth,” which is designed for runaway and homeless youth living outside of mainstream institutional models and who prefer to use drop-in centers, shelters and otherwise are making do with whatever they can find. Government, recognizing that there are youth who wish to stay outside the Systems alternatives, has designed some funding opportunities called *Transitional Living Programs* (TLP) that promote family reunification and address the immediate health and survival needs of homeless youth. For older homeless youth for whom home family reunification is not an option, there are TLP funds available to help them make the transition to independent living.

The youth who live in Systems and Non-Systems housing tend to be very different. Following is a profile of the type of clients in each system:

SYSTEMS YOUTH	NON-SYSTEMS YOUTH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless Youth • LGBTQ sexual orientation • 16 to 21 years • Requiring a service-enriched environment • Comfortable with mandatory services • A long history of institutionalization • Not ready for independent living • May be in crisis or have serious behavioral problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless Youth • LGBTQ sexual orientation • 18 to 24 years • Like services to be present, but not mandatory • Need independence • Little history of institutionalization • High-functioning but need to master daily living skills • Some mental health issues • Potential drug/alcohol issues



IV. GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS: GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO YOUTH HOMELESSNESS, continued

By examining these two groups of youth, Center on Halsted can begin to get a sense of the issues each would bring to a housing development project, and the complexities of serving each population. Also, the organization can begin to understand which group Center on Halsted would be serving in a potential housing development project. Based on these definitions, the Task Force focused on the types of alternative housing solutions in use today to address the needs of homeless LGBTQ youth. There are two primary alternative approaches to serving the needs of homeless youth: Transitional Housing and Supportive Housing.



V. HOUSING MODELS: TRANSITIONAL vs. SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Transitional Housing is an outgrowth of the Non-Systems government funding provided through the Transitional Living Programs. This housing model is focused on Non-Systems youth who are 18 to 24 years of age, and are theoretically ready to take the step of preparing for permanent housing. These youth have often lived on the street for some time, are fairly independent, and ready for something more permanent.

Transitional Housing is designed as a short-term stay program, usually 18 - 24 months, to teach youth how to live independently, and then to help them make the transition to permanent, independent living. Residents live in a dormitory-style facility, or sometimes share an apartment with a few other youth. They pay no rent and receive mandatory social services including instruction in daily living skills, employment and training, and mental health services, among other things. Residents have their own room but share bathroom facilities and have a common kitchen for cooking, along with common areas for relaxation and entertainment. There is social service staffing 24/7 along with security. The end date for a resident's stay is fixed; there is usually no negotiating that deadline. Regardless of whether a person is ready or not to leave, he or she must go.

Supportive Housing functions much like Transitional Housing. Residents have their own unit, but share accommodations. The youth receive on-site social services, employment and training, as well as case management. The one important difference between Supportive Housing and Transitional Housing is that in Supportive Housing residents are tenants, sign a lease, and can stay as long as he or she wants. However, in youth supportive housing, this concept has been challenged; youth are told that this is not meant to be permanent housing and they are meant to stay only until they are ready to transition out, which is around two years, yet there is no fixed date of exit as there is in Transitional Housing. In this sense, the culture of supportive housing is focused on transition and moving into better housing accommodations to open a space for the next person. One benefit of Supportive Housing is that it allows the resident and the case manager to determine when the appropriate transition date should occur, rather than by a government contract. In addition, there are various types of financing available for Supportive Housing, which are not available for Transitional Housing.

V. HOUSING MODELS: TRANSITIONAL vs. SUPPORTIVE HOUSING, continued

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS OF TYPICAL TRANSITIONAL AND SUPPORTIVE HOUSING FOR YOUTH

	TRANSITIONAL HOUSING	PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING
GOALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combine temporary housing with mandatory services to stabilize clients' lives Develop skills and resources to make a successful transition to independent, self-sufficient adulthood. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combine stable, long-term, affordable housing with voluntary services Stabilize lives of the youth Develop skills and resources to maintain housing as well as to achieve and sustain self-sufficiency.
POPULATIONS SERVED	Targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth aged 16 to 21 years Homeless Aging out of the foster care system Transitioning from the juvenile justice or mental health system Pregnant and/or parenting. 	Targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homeless youth and young adults Aged 18 to 24 years Aged out of the foster care system or; Transitioned from the juvenile justice system or children's mental health system Thrive in a more independent setting.
TIME LIMITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically 18 months Offered until 21st birthday. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenant has lease or occupancy agreement No limits on length of tenancy as long as he or she abides by conditions of lease or agreement.

VI. LOCAL TOURS OF YOUTH HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

Once the Homeless Youth Task Force had an overview of the youth homeless issue, the government system, and the housing models for youth homelessness, the Task Force was ready to look at some actual housing developments serving youth. There are three notable nonprofits in Chicago that have exemplary housing programs for homeless youth. In one day we visited all three:

1. La Casa Norte, *Solid Ground Apartments*, Transitional Living Facility, Westtown.
2. Night Ministry, *Open Door Youth Shelter*, Westtown.
3. Teen Living, *Bronzeville Transitional Facility*, Bronzeville.

All three organizations were very impressive in terms of the housing and service operations for their youth, and yet each was somewhat different from the other.

1. ***The Solid Ground Apartments developed by La Casa Norte*** is an award-winning transitional living facility in a renovated former apartment building above a commercial establishment in Westtown, down the street from the organization's headquarters. This 16-unit facility has a community kitchen, common bathrooms and small private units for residents. There are common areas where youth can watch T.V., do homework, or work on a job application. Resident Advisors work 24/7 in the building and their offices are located by the front door where they can observe traffic in and out of the building. There are no desk clerks or other maintenance staff who work in the building; security for the building is maintained by the Resident Advisors and a system of locked doors, cameras and intercom system. Residents do not have keys to get into the building, but can lock their unit door. In addition to receiving help from a Resident Advisor, Solid Ground residents receive employment and training services and daily living skills training. The maximum length of stay is two years and residents pay no rent.



Solid Ground Apts., Chicago, IL

2. ***The Night Ministry's Open Door Youth Shelter*** in Westtown is a combination 120-day shelter and transitional living facility. It includes some units for pregnant and parenting teens. The Night Ministry provides case management services for the youth on-site and the shelter units are double occupancy. Residents are expected to leave the shelter during the daytime hours, as all shelter users do. Shelter residency is 120 days and the transitional living program is up to two years. The building was renovated in 2006 at a cost of \$3.5 million and provides shelter to approximately 50 homeless youth. The shelter serves youth 14 to 20 years old and the average length of stay is 40 days for the shelter. In the Transitional Program, residents must be 16 to 21 years of where the average length of stay is four months. Residents can return up to three times to the program.

VI. LOCAL TOURS OF YOUTH HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS, continued

3. **Teen Living's *Bronzeville* location.** At the time we saw the program it was located in an old three-flat in the Bronzeville community. It had been converted into a dormitory-style format for their program and they were in the midst of constructing a brand new building next door. The Bronzeville location has 20 units of housing. As a transitional program, youth can stay up to two years and are allowed to return. The goal is to transition youth to permanent housing, for which Teen Living has a 92% success rate. Teen Living offers a continuum of services including prevention services and post-placement services. Their new facility, which opened in 2009, has received tremendous reviews, however it was quite expensive (see section VIII for cost comparisons).

The site visits were very helpful in identifying critical issues to resolve for the Task Force's recommendation. These issues were:

- Tenancy: LGBTQ-exclusive, or not?
- Housing Model: Dormitory style vs. scattered site?
- Housing Location: North side, South side or West side?
- Services: Case management, employment and training; voluntary or mandatory?
- Housing design: What kinds of amenities?

The Committee gathered input on these critical issues from the people who would be using the housing and services, and from the staff who operate the facilities we visited, before settling on specific recommendations.



VII. FOCUS FEEDBACK FROM AGENCIES: YOUTH AND STAFF

A. LGBTQ Youth Focus Group

The Task Force drew on Center's strong working relationships with several youth agencies to arrange a series of four focus groups. The goal was to have LGBTQ youth give us feedback on a number of issues related to the design and operation of a homeless LGBTQ housing program. (For a complete set of the survey questions, see the appendix.)

The focus groups involved a total of 34 youth and 12 staff, from the following agencies:

- Center on Halsted (25 youth participants)
- Teen Living (4 youth and 6 staff participants)
- La Casa Norte (3 youth and 3 staff participants)
- Alternatives for Youth (2 youth and 3 staff participants)

The youth were diverse in terms of their homeless experience; some had spent time on the street and others had not. The group tended to be divided between those who had extensive experience in a transitional program, and those who had never lived in a transitional program. This created a different outcome in terms of the type of dwelling unit the youth would like to see created by Center on Halsted. Those who had already lived in a dormitory facility were ready for an apartment; those who had never lived in a dormitory facility with other youth were ready to do so.



The main issue that stood out in the staff focus groups was length of tenancy. Many of the staff that participated in the focus groups either had worked in Transitional Living Programs or were familiar with their strict timeframes of 18 or 24 months. Staff responses on length of tenancy tended to be influenced by their experience transitioning youth out of their programs before they were ready to leave. Staff members were also clear that without any kind of timeframe the youth would procrastinate and never address their issues. This was why the staff preferred a third way; a tenancy that has a timeframe with a flexible end date, allowing the case manager and the client to determine the appropriate transition date.

For a complete list of the questions and results of the focus groups, please see the reports *Combined Youth Focus Group Responses Report* and *Combined Staff Focus Group Responses Report*, contained in the Appendix of this report. Here is a summary of how both youth and staff felt about the key issues.



VII. FOCUS FEEDBACK FROM AGENCIES: YOUTH AND STAFF, continued

Summary of the key issues from the focus groups:

QUESTION	LGBTQ YOUTH	STAFF
1. What type of housing mix would you like to have in a housing development for homeless youth – exclusively LGBTQ?	Mixed – with an orientation towards LGBTQ	Mixed – with an orientation towards LGBTQ
2. How long should someone be allowed to live in the program? 2 years (transitional) or no end date (supportive)	Transitional – two years maximum	Both. A mix of the two would be preferable; a fixed end date for this population is rarely appropriate. It's important to have an end date.
3. What kind of housing model would you like? Scattered site? A whole apartment building? The floor of an apartment building?	A tie between a whole apartment building and scattered site	A whole building
4. What type of living space would you prefer – sharing an apartment or a dormitory-style building with shared baths and kitchens?	Dormitory-style format	Dormitory-style format
5. Where would you like the housing to be located?	North side of Chicago	North side of Chicago
6. What age range would you recommend for the participants?	N.A.	18 to 24 years of age

Working Concept

After completing all the focus groups, the Task Force developed a working concept for a housing development:

- A mixed housing project designed for an LGBTQ population, but open to straight youth
- A 20-unit housing development
- Serving youth 18 to 24 years of age
- Transitional in nature, but with as much flexibility about the exit date as possible
- Dormitory-style living with a private, modest living space for the individual, shared baths, and a community kitchen
- Most likely located on the north side of Chicago.

With a working concept completed, the next step was to research the cost and potential income sources for the concept, to determine if it was feasible.



VIII. COST RESEARCH: CAPITAL, OPERATING, & SERVICES

In Supportive Housing, there is a concept called *the three-legged stool*. A supportive housing project needs three types of funding: capital, operating and social services. Without any one of its legs, a stool cannot stand and without any one of its three types of funding, a Supportive Housing project cannot stand. Therefore, the task in financing supportive housing is to identify how to pay for each leg of the stool.

In researching financing we learned that a supportive housing project serving homeless LGBTQ youth would likely be very competitive. This is because it would be the only project of its kind in Illinois, and there are so few permanent housing facilities serving homeless youth at all in the state. Also, with the election of President Obama, Congress is reauthorizing the McKinney-Vento program and also recently enacted a new program called the Hearth Act, which will moderately increase funding for homeless initiatives, which may create some new funding opportunities for any project that Center on Halsted sponsors.

The Task Force benchmarked capital, operating and service costs for other youth housing developments, similar to what is being proposed to Center on Halsted.

A. CAPITAL EXPENSES

There are certain assumptions made about the type of design and construction the Center would want for its project that went into the financial projections. These assumptions include:

1. A renovation of an existing multi-unit building.
2. No private bathrooms or kitchens in the units.
3. Hall bathrooms.
4. One community kitchen.
5. 300 square foot private units for the tenants.
6. 20 residential units.
7. Two large common areas for recreation and study.
8. Four offices for staff.

We looked for existing projects that were similar in design and which had recently been built or renovated in order to create comparisons. We also requested information from one design/build firm, Summit Construction, which gave us comparisons for a variety of projects they had recently completed, including the new Teen Living Bronzeville youth housing project. Here are the numbers we obtained:



VIII. COST RESEARCH: CAPITAL, OPERATING, & SERVICES, continued

DEVELOPMENT	TOTAL COST	SIZE	TYPE OF WORK	COST PER S.F.
1470 Carmen	\$527,196	36,400 (living)	Light rehab	\$14.50/s.f.
Teen Living	\$2.4M	12,000	New construction	\$200/s.f.
La Casa Norte	\$965,000	6,250	Rehab	\$170/s.f.
Summit Design		average	New construction	\$125 - \$175/s.f.
Summit Design		average	Rehab	\$75 to \$100/s.f.

*Summit estimates vary based on size, density and types of finishes; do not include architectural/engineering fees; permits; furnishing costs. All comparisons exclude acquisition, developer fees. Costs include: hard construction, contingency, G.C. overhead & profit, architect/engineering fees, and furnishings.

ESTIMATED CONSTRUCTION COSTS: \$150/SQUARE FOOT FOR REHAB

FUNDING SOURCES FOR CAPITAL

There are some significant, affordable capital sources available for supportive housing projects through the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, and the federal government. Two critical assumptions are built into capital budgets for most supportive housing projects. First, most capital is borrowed at 0% interest, with 30-year deferred mortgages. Though the funds are loans, they function as grants. This is a very important underwriting criterion because supportive housing residents cannot afford to pay enough rent to cover operating expenses and debt. Government agrees with this premise and therefore works with the developer to make the developments essentially debt-free. A supportive housing developer should rarely, if ever, borrow to finance a project.

The second assumption about capital financing is that most of the capital needed to build or renovate the project will come from state and federal sources (for projects sited in Chicago, federal sources flow through the City of Chicago, for the most part). However, sponsors are expected to bring as many non-government (i.e. private) dollars to the table as possible. Therefore, Center on Halsted will be expected to contribute private funding towards the capital budget for its project; the more Center on Halsted contributes, the better, but 15-20% of the capital budget would be considered very positive by government lenders. That means that Center on Halsted will need to contribute approximately \$500,000 to \$700,000, (depending on the size of the budget) from private sources.

There are several potential sources of capital funding available for affordable and supportive housing projects:

- Federal Dep. of Urban Development HOME Funds, City of Chicago
- Illinois Housing Development Authority Trust Fund (\$750,000 to \$1 million)
- Federal Home Loan Bank
- Illinois Capital Bill Funding
- State Energy Grants

VIII. COST RESEARCH: CAPITAL, OPERATING, & SERVICES, continued



Robin's Nest – Glassboro, NJ

It is important to note that there is an ongoing issue being explored by the Illinois Housing Development Authority and the City of Chicago, Dep. of Housing involving the design of the units being proposed by Center on Halsted. In discussions with both agencies, Center on Halsted requested feedback on whether or not either government agency would finance housing units that did not contain a private bath or kitchen. In the past, both agencies would not have likely provided permanent financing to such units, since in the case of foreclosure they would have a very difficult time re-selling such a product on the market. Neither agency signed off on the concept of financing dormitory-style units, nor did they unilaterally refuse. In the case of the Chicago Department of Housing, Commissioner Ellen Sahli said, "I don't see this as a problem for the target population. It may have zoning needs that are different than a typical SRO." IHDA's Senior Policy Director Jane Bilger asked for an opportunity to explore the issue before giving Center on Halsted a response. Both agencies are likely to want each other involved in the financing. This issue will have to be explored much more should Center on Halsted move forward, however, initial indications are somewhat positive.

It usually takes two to three years to apply for, and close on, the permanent financing for an affordable or supportive housing development in Chicago, depending on how big and complex the project is, how competitive funding is, and how experienced and competent the developer is.

B. OPERATING EXPENSES

The assumptions for building an operating budget for this project are:

1. There will be no front desk coverage by desk clerks.
2. All security for the building will be provided by the Resident Advisors, whose desks will be located in the front of the building; security cameras and a door locking system will complete the security system in the building.
3. The operating budget does not include any staff salaries.
4. There are no costs for property taxes in the budget, because the assessor, due to the affordable nature of the housing, will waive these.

In looking for operating budgets to compare, we learned that there are no two youth housing operating budgets that are very similar. Therefore, it was very difficult to get a clear idea of what the operating expenses would be for a 20-unit project. In the end, we used the operating budget from La Casa Norte's *Solid Ground Apartments*, and extrapolated from there.



VIII. COST RESEARCH: CAPITAL, OPERATING, & SERVICES, continued

We currently have a “working” operations budget, which will need to be fine-tuned should the Center proceed with a development project. At this time, we estimate operating expenses to be approximately \$8,000 per unit, per year, excluding social services, property taxes, and a front desk.

ESTIMATED OPERATING EXPENSES: \$8,000/UNIT/YEAR, minus staff.

FUNDING SOURCES FOR OPERATIONS

Operating expenses for supportive housing projects do not include the cost of debt for capital, because the people who live in the development cannot afford to cover such costs. In reality, homeless individuals do not have enough income to even cover operating expenses such as utilities, maintenance, furnishings, etc. – even without debt – either. That is why supportive housing projects require an operating subsidy to cover the difference between what a tenant can afford to pay (usually determined to be 30% of their income, whatever that may be), and the average monthly expenses per unit. Most people are familiar with the Section 8 rental subsidy, which is underwritten by HUD. The Section 8 subsidy is administered by a public housing authority and pays a rental subsidy to cover the cost of a rental unit – usually anything above 30% of the tenant’s income. Another subsidy program which is more appropriate for supportive housing is part of the McKinney Vento program called Shelter + Care (S+C). Like the Section 8 program, the S+C operating subsidy also pays the difference between the full cost of rent and 30% of a tenant’s income. An S+C rent subsidy grant can be attached to the building, and the full subsidy must be matched, at least dollar-for-dollar, with spending on services for the residents. Eligible residents include people who are legally homeless and have a disability, such as a physical, mental, or emotional impairment (this impairment can be due solely to a substance abuse disorder).

S+C funding is applied for through the local Continuum of Care, which in Chicago is the Chicago Alliance to End Homelessness. If the request is ranked appropriately, Center on Halsted will continue to receive these funds in perpetuity – as long as it meets the program criteria – guaranteeing that the project will have a stable operating subsidy source for the foreseeable future. This will pay for operating expenses of the project without having to raise additional private dollars to cover operating expenses. The current fair market rent set for the S+C program for a studio unit in Chicago is \$781/month, which for a twenty-unit building would draw in \$187,000 a year in revenue. Residents are expected to pay one-third of their income for rent in the S+C program, so revenue is really a blend of tenant and federal sources to pay operating expenses. Also, tenants must meet the federal definition of homeless and be disabled to qualify for S+C. This will mean that Center on Halsted must purposely select homeless youth with extreme needs in order to apply for 100% of the units to receive the S+C subsidy, or else apply for fewer S+C units.



VIII. COST RESEARCH: CAPITAL, OPERATING, & SERVICES, continued

In any case, S+C should be an excellent source of operating subsidy for the project, and more than likely for most of the units. Whatever S+C does not cover could be covered through other rental subsidy programs, such as the excellent Chicago Low-Income Housing Trust Fund.

C. SOCIAL SERVICE EXPENSES

The Social Service budget for a supportive housing budget is often bigger than the operating budget, and that is true for the proposed 20-unit project for Center on Halsted. This is due primarily to the staff-intensive nature of the services, which must be available on a 24/7 basis to the youth who are susceptible to emergencies and in many ways, despite their age, still have the maturity level of a teenager.

The staffing for the proposed project is as follows:

- 1 full-time professional Case Manager (with a Master's in Social Work)
- 4 full-time Youth Development Specialists (with a Bachelor's degree)
- 2 part-time weekend Youth Development Specialists (12 hours each)
- 1 full-time Employment Specialist
- 1 full-time Project Supervisor (with a Master's in Social Work)

The total estimated budget at this time is \$445,000 for one year, or \$22,250 per person, per year. In addition to the personnel, the budget also allows for some program expenses. These costs are not the highest per person/per year identified around the country, but they are certainly noteworthy. The Task Force examined social service budgets for a variety of youth homeless projects and found that service budgets varied wildly from a low average cost of \$3,000 per unit per year, to as high as \$30,000 per unit per year⁷. Factors influencing the budgets significantly include:

- The size of the building
- The sophistication of the service program (i.e., whether psychiatry services were offered)
- The ability to share costs with other programs.

It will be important to find renewable funding sources for this project because these are available only through government. Of all of the expenses identified for this project, the service budget is the most difficult to resolve. As previously noted, most social service funding comes from the State of Illinois and given its fiscal condition of late, it will not be funding new projects for some time to come. Despite this, there are sources the Center can potentially draw on for funding for the services.

ESTIMATED SERVICE COSTS: \$22,250 PER PERSON, PER YEAR

⁷ See Corporation for Supportive Housing, *New Homes, Brighter Futures: Profiles of Housing Programs for Young Adults*, 2007.



VIII. COST RESEARCH: CAPITAL, OPERATING, & SERVICES, continued

FUNDING SOURCES FOR SOCIAL SERVICES

Compared to capital and operating support for supportive housing, funding for services in supportive housing is difficult to assemble. The fact is that the supportive housing “system” has done an excellent job of solving the first two financing barriers, but has yet to resolve the third.

The biggest barrier to financing services is the condition of the State of Illinois budget. Most service funding comes through the State of Illinois and given the severe budget cutbacks currently in place, there is little hope for new funding over the next three years. Up until the recession, the state had been the biggest funder of services for supportive housing developments, funding about 75% of the cost of every new project rolling out each year.

Inventory of all existing government sources for supportive service funding:

- Housing Opportunities for People With Aids (HOPWA)
- Transitional Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
- McKinney Vento/Hearth Program (potential uncertain)
- Illinois Dep. of Human Services, Supportive Services (potential uncertain)
- Illinois Dep. of Children and Family Services (potential uncertain)

According to the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, HOPWA funding should definitely be considered for the service budget, and possibly for rental subsidy funding as well, but only if the residents are HIV+ or have AIDS. The AIDS epidemic is particularly acute among the African American population where it is predicted that by 2010, one in two gay African American males in the United States will be HIV+. Much of the epidemic is being transmitted by youth, who for the most part do not practice safe sex and some of whom are intravenous drug users.

The HOPWA “formula” funding is a three-year cycle block-grant type of funding the City of Chicago, Department of Public Health receives for services and housing for people who are HIV+ or who have AIDS. This grant provides a flexible per diem that averages between \$40 to \$150/day per client, which is quite good. Three years from now a new HOPWA formula application cycle will be open and a homeless LGBTQ youth housing development could be very competitive. Also, the Center could consider applying for a second HOPWA program called *Special Projects of National Significance*, (SPNS) grant, which provides three years of funding up to \$1.5M for projects with national impact and this funding can be reapplied for every three years. Once again, a project such as the one the Center is proposing could be very competitive, simply because there are so few projects of its kind in the country.



D. CONCLUSION ON CAPITAL, OPERATING, AND SERVICE FUNDING

The process of assembling all the necessary funding for a supportive housing project is quite onerous and time-consuming. However, as government has come to recognize the benefits of housing people with special needs in supportive housing, it is increasingly adapting its systems to make the process easier. Capital funding for supportive housing projects, though competitive, costly and lengthy to assemble, can be done in two to three year’s time.

An LGBTQ homeless youth project would be extremely competitive for government and, most likely private funding. Similarly, an LGBTQ homeless youth project would also be extremely competitive for S+C operating subsidies (or possibly HOPWA funding). As long as the Center had a proficient partner in applying for both capital and operating subsidies, it would stand an excellent chance of receiving this funding.

VIII. COST RESEARCH: CAPITAL, OPERATING, & SERVICES, continued

The most difficult component to obtain in supportive or transitional housing projects of this kind is the social service funding. The lack of new service dollars for supportive housing in the State of Illinois is a significant barrier, though there are still other options for service funding to pursue. Despite the state budget, various state agency representatives expressed interest in this project, including the Department of Children and Family Services. Eventually the state budget will recover, and in the meantime there are other sources to explore.

A summary of the three funding estimates then is:

CAPITAL	\$150/ s.f. for construction, for 20,000 s.f.	\$3 million, excluding acquisition
OPERATING	\$8-9,000/Unit, per year X 20 units	\$160,000/year
SERVICES	\$22,250 per person, per year X 20 units	\$445,000/year

It is the conclusion of the Task Force, based on the following four factors, that the proposed project will ultimately have ample, renewable resources to finance the capital, operating and services for this project.

1. The availability of resources for capital, operating and services.
2. The unique nature of this project and the extreme need for it in the state of Illinois.
3. The length of time before it will be built and in operation (approximately 3 years).
4. The excellent reputation of Center on Halsted.

IX. FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE TASK FORCE

The research the Task Force conducted uncovered a significant need for housing and services for homeless youth, particularly for LGBTQ homeless youth. It is for this reason that the Task Force ultimately chose to create a three-part recommendation to the Board, to be implemented sequentially unless funding and real estate opportunities create incentives to combine more than one of these recommendations at one time.

RECOMMENDATION #1: Develop a supportive housing project for homeless LGBTQ youth.

GOAL:

1. To prepare residents for the responsibility of maintaining permanent, independent housing.
2. To connect residents to the services they need to ensure success in their housing stay and post-stay.

TARGET CLIENTS: Homeless LGBTQ and straight youth between the ages of 18 and 24.

LENGTH OF STAY: Tenants sign a lease within the culture of “extended stay,” i.e. with the expectation they stay around two years, but the exact transition date determined by the tenant and their case manager.

SERVICES: Case management services; employment and training; daily living skills training; access to physical health, mental health, and substance abuse treatment.

COSTS: Target range: \$150/sq. ft. for construction, \$8,000/unit/year for operations, \$22,250/person/year for services.

LOCATION: North side of Chicago.

DESIGN: Dormitory-style project with minimum of 20 units; community kitchen, shared bathrooms, shared community facilities e.g. work-out room.

PARTNER: Co-development partner to play the roles of development manager, property manager, asset manager and co-owner. Center on Halsted to be co-owner and services provider.

NEXT STEPS TO IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATION #1:

1. Identify the criteria for a co-development partner.
2. Identify prospective partners who meet the criteria.



3. Obtain approval from the Board of Directors for a process of approaching potential partners.
4. Meet with potential partners and select one to negotiate with.
5. Report to the Board and request a letter of intent to negotiate with the potential partner.
6. Create a negotiating committee with the partner and draft a memorandum of understanding.
7. Seek approval of the MOU from both boards.
8. Initiate the development process with Center on Halsted's development partner.
9. To continue to meet with state and federal agencies to firm up funding sources for this project, in particular for long-term renewable social service funding that will be identified prior to final commitments being made on any real estate investment.

RECOMMENDATION #2: Develop a co-location facility that houses multiple nonprofits.

When people are homeless, they have to wander from agency to agency to piece together the services they need. In order to simplify the service process, the Center on Halsted could bring together two or three partner agencies serving homeless youth and locate them in the same structure, thus creating case management synergies between the various service agencies, economies of scale in terms of administration, and blended services for the benefit of the clients. Co-location is a very effective strategy being used by nonprofit organizations today in order to lower operating expenses by sharing reception and other administrative duties, coordinate case management services so the clients are not seeing multiple case managers, and improve coordination of services and quality of care.

NEXT STEPS TO IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATION #2:

1. Meet with youth partner agencies to determine if there is interest in co-location.
2. Have each Board interested in exploring co-location sign a letter of intent.
3. Seek funding to underwrite a planning process.
4. Create a negotiations committee composed of representatives of each agency to prepare a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
5. Have the Boards approve the MOU and launch the collaboration.

RECOMMENDATION #3: Create a network of youth-serving agencies in Chicago.

Identify the nonprofit agencies in the City of Chicago providing services to homeless youth, and enlist them in an effort to create a single network or continuum of agencies that share services, information and training, and conduct joint planning. The goal is to create a web of services that are connected, so that youth do not fall through service gaps. This means program managers will be able to quickly access additional service capacity that becomes available anywhere within the service network on behalf of a client from any agency which may have an available service slot.



This effort is based on the model of *StreetWorks Collaborative* in Minneapolis, MN, which has created a continuum of “coordinated street-based outreach programs of 13 youth-serving agencies that offer an array of housing options and services.” *StreetWorks* identifies homeless youth on the streets of the Twin Cities through its 33 Outreach workers who canvass the streets from 2:00 p.m. to midnight every day. Member agencies pledge to provide easy access to their programs, so that outreach workers can immediately connect homeless youth into a continuum of services, while building trusting relationships with these individuals that may last for years.

1. Hold meetings of agencies serving homeless youth, and their donors.
2. Identify organizations that are interested in forming a network.
3. Have each Board sign a letter of intent to form a network.
4. Form a Negotiations Committee to design the network.
5. Raise funding to support the network.
6. Sign off on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
7. Launch the network.

X. CONCLUSION

In the course of a year there are tens of thousands of youth homeless in the State of Illinois. And yet, very few resources are allocated to address what may be one of the most vulnerable populations on the street today. There are no youth supportive housing projects in Illinois; there are no shelter programs that cater to LGBTQ populations. Why is this? Partly it has to do with the fact that the homeless youth population is so much smaller than the adult homeless population and so the majority of resources are going to the bigger problem. But perhaps the bigger difference is that the homeless youth population does not have a strong, capable nonprofit advocating for supportive housing for them in our state. There are dozens and dozens of nonprofits in Illinois that are creating supportive housing for adults and families – but not a single one of them is developing housing for homeless youth.

As the Task Force spoke to people in government, everyone seemed to genuinely want to help: during one of the worst recessions in the history of our country, government agencies were encouraging the Center in this effort. There is no supportive housing for youth in Illinois simply because no one has done it. It takes a nonprofit with strong political ties, a strong history of accomplishment and the passion for an issue to be a path-breaker and get it done. The question for the Board of Directors is: will the Center on Halsted be that change agent?



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, *No Youth Alone: A Campaign to End Youth Homelessness, Results of 2007 Survey of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Providers*. A follow-up report to the Coalition's count of youth homeless completed in 2005. This report discusses solutions to the youth homeless problem in the state of Illinois, and recommends, among other things, a doubling of the shelter beds in the state from 318 to 636. http://www.chicagohomeless.org/files/images/Youth_Survey_Report_Final.pdf

Corporation for Supportive Housing, *Housing Youth: Key Issues in Supportive Housing*, September, 2003. <http://documents.csh.org/documents/pd/youth/HousingYouthKeyIssues.pdf>

An overview of issues relevant to developing supportive housing for youth. This document was used extensively for the work of the Task Force.

Corporation for Supportive Housing, *Not a Solo Act: Creating Successful Partnerships to Develop and Operate Supportive Housing*, 1997. A training manual for creating collaborations in supportive housing. <http://www.csh.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pageID=3266>

Corporation for Supportive Housing, *Youth Supportive Housing*, <http://documents.csh.org/documents/pd/youth/youthsh.pd> An in-depth discussion of the issues related to the development and operation of youth supportive housing, including a discussion of various models, recommendations, and case studies of actual projects. This document was used extensively for the work of the Task Force.

Corporation for Supportive Housing, *New Homes, Brighter Futures: Profiles of Housing Programs for Young Adults*, Corporation for Supportive Housing, National Resource Center, 2007. <http://www.csh.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.viewPage&pageID=4017&nodeID=81>

Johnson, Timothy P. and Graf, Ingrid, *Unaccompanied Homeless Youth in Illinois: 2005*, Survey Research Laboratory, College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs, University of Illinois at Chicago. <http://www.srl.uic.edu/Publist/StdyRpts/youthreport.pdf>

National Recommended Best Practices for Serving LGBT Homeless Youth, by Lambda Legal and the National Alliance to End Homelessness. <http://www.lambdalegal.org/publications/booklets/national-recommended-best-practices-for-lgbt-homeless-youth.html>

National Center for Housing & Child Welfare, www.nchwc.org. Contains information on their web site about child welfare funding for homeless youth.

National Alliance to End Homelessness, *Federal Funding for Affordable Housing Including for Youth*, July 2009. Identifies all the affordable housing programs (\$44B), and those specifically for youth (\$68.3M), and determines that less than one half of one percent of affordable housing spending goes to youth. <http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/2473/>

National Alliance to End Homelessness, *Federal Funding for Homeless Assistance Programs, Including for Youth*, July 2009. <http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/2474/> Of the \$4.1B spent annually on homelessness assistance, less than one percent \$195M, is targeted to homeless youth.



National Alliance to End Homelessness, Federal Policy Agenda: Housing for Homeless Street Youth.

<http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/2501/>

A plan to end homelessness for 50,000 street youth in the United States.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Fact Sheet for Older Homeless Youth, Family and Youth Services Bureau. A fact sheet about the Transitional Living Program for Older Homeless Youth.

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/content/youthdivision/programs/tlpfactsheet.htm>



APPENDIX

HOMELESS YOUTH TASK FORCE COMBINED YOUTH FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF YOUTH FOCUS GROUPS; FIRST CHOICE RESPONSES

Center on Halsted held four focus groups at youth-serving agencies in order to speak directly with LGBTQ youth about their preferences on a number of issues related to a potential housing program serving homeless LGBTQ youth. In all, there were 34 youth interviewed. Here is a summary of the issues the youth voted on for the housing program. It should be noted that in many cases, the voting for the second choice was very close to the first choice. For the complete voting results, please read the full *Combined Youth Focus Group Results* report attached to this executive summary.

Key Issues:

Which type of housing would you like to live in? Mixed or exclusively LGBTQ?

Answer: Mixed

What length of housing tenure would you prefer – transitional or permanent?

Answer: Transitional

What type of housing model would you prefer? Scattered site, a floor of an apartment building or a whole building?

Answer: A tie between a whole building and a scattered site model

What type of living space would you prefer – a shared apartment or an SRO space with common dormitory style living?

Answer: SRO with dormitory style living

Where would you like a housing program like this located?

Answer: First choice: North side



COMBINED YOUTH FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES

March 2009

Introduction:

The Center on Halsted Homeless Youth Task Force is exploring the idea of creating an exclusive LGBTQ Homeless Youth housing program. The Task Force organized four focus groups with LGBTQ youth from January to March 2009. Some of the youth were currently homeless or had been in the past. The youth were given a written survey to fill out individually. They also participated in a public discussion of the issues, led by a group facilitator from Center on Halsted. A person was assigned to take notes on the comments made at each focus group session. When possible, separate meetings for staff members of the youth agencies were held to get their feedback on the issues as well. There is a separate report summarizing the staff responses entitled *Combined Staff Focus Group Responses*.

A point system was developed from one to five, to assign weight to each available choice with the highest weight given to the first choice (5 points) and the lowest weight given to the fifth choice (1 point). The points were tallied from each focus group and added up to determine which choices were preferred in descending order. These point totals are not meant to be binding decisions, but instead to help the Task Force measure the preferences expressed by the youth.

Point System:

First Choice: 5 points; Second Choice: 4 points; Third Choice: 3 point; Fourth Choice 2; Fifth Choice 1 point

Total Number of Participants: 34

Center on Halsted: 25

La Casa Norte: 3

Teen Living: 4

Alternatives: 2

1. Which Type of Housing would you prefer to live in?

TYPE OF HOUSING	FIRST CHOICE	TOTAL POINTS
Mixed	16; 0; 3 = 19 votes	95 points
Exclusive LGBTQ	2; 5; 1 = 8 votes	40 points

2. Are the staff at your current youth facility sensitive to the needs of people who are LGBTQ?

4; 20; 3 Yes

1; 5; 1 No

3. Are you able to be "out" to staff about your sexuality or gender identity?

5; 22; 4 Yes

0; 3; 0 No



COMBINED YOUTH FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES REPORT, continued

4. What services do you wish were available to you but aren't?

- Trans services
- LGBTQ staff
- Recreational programs, organized teams, fitness programs
- Music programs
- Fundamentals like how to read music
- Weight Watchers, life skills
- Bicycles
- Trans-specific housing in terms of the gender they identify as; live as you are
- GED classes
- Childcare
- After care support, help with rent
- Legal services
- Being able to have more talks like this one
- Everything is available for nothing.

The focus group participants were enthusiastic about having services. There are issues around childcare and people who are transgender, particularly, that they have unmet needs.

5. If you live in a shelter program now, or have in the past, are you or were you able to come out to the other residents who lived in the shelter?

2; 4 Yes

2; 0 No

6. Which type of length of housing tenure would you prefer?

TENURE	FIRST CHOICE	TOTAL POINTS
Permanent	4; 1; 2 = 7 votes	35 points
Transitional	17; 1; 2 = 19 votes	95 points

7. Model Preferences:

TYPE	FIRST CHOICE	SECOND CHOICE	THIRD CHOICE	TOTAL POINTS
Scattered Site	2; 6; 2 = 50 pts.	1; 2; 1 = 16 pts.	0; 2; 2 = 12 pts.	78 points total
Whole Floor	1; 0 = 5 points	0; 10; 3 = 52 pts.	3; 2 = 15 pts.	72 points total
Whole Building	2; 7; 2 = 55 points	2; 0 = 8 points	0; 3; 2 = 15 points	78 points total

Residents who are ready to graduate vs. residents who are newer to the program.



COMBINED YOUTH FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES REPORT, continued

8. Unit Preference: There are two kinds of living spaces you could have for yourself.

TYPE	FIRST CHOICE	TOTAL POINTS
A shared unit	4; 5; 2 = 11 votes	55 points total
SRO unit	3; 7; 2 = 12 votes	60 points total

9. Location Preference: Where would you want a possible LGBTQ housing program to be located? Rank your preferences #1 - #5. (Rank them #1 for your first preference, to #5, your lowest preference.)

	First choice (5 PTS.)	2nd choice (4 PTS.)	3RD choice (3 PTS.)	4TH choice (2 PTS.)	5TH choice (1 PT.)
North side	3; 4; 1=8 votes/40	1; 3 = 4 votes/16	1; 1 = 2 votes/6	0; 0 0 votes/0	0; 0;1= 1 vote/1
Northwest	1; 4=5 votes/25	1; 0 = 1 vote/4	1; 2; 1 = 4 votes/12	2; 1 = 3 votes/6	0; 1 = 1 vote/1
South side	0; 6; 1= 7 votes/35	0; 2 = 2 votes/8	2; 1 = 3 votes/9	1; 2 = 3 votes/6	2; 0 = 2 votes/2
West side	1; 3 = 4 votes/20	2; 3; 1 = 6 votes/24	1; 2 = 3 votes/9	1; 2 = 3 votes/6	0; 1 = 1 vote/1
No preference	1;3;2 = 6 votes/30	0; 0 = 0 votes/0	0; 0 = 0 votes/0	1;0;1 = 2 votes/4	3; 2 = 5 votes/5

NEIGHBORHOOD	TOTAL POINTS
North Side	63 points (1)
Northwest Side	48 points (4)
South Side	60 points (2)
West Side	60 points (2)
No Preference	39 points (5)

Male and female split.

10. What would you like this housing to look like?

Personal Space:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washing machines and dryers • Security cameras • Living room set • Set of kitchen dishes • Own bedroom • Lock on bedroom door • Own mini fridge in room • King size bed • TV with cable • Computer with Internet • Own bathroom, so your stuff doesn't go missing • Chi di print (sp.?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peaceful environment to sleep • Colorful; red everywhere • Desk • Pull up bed from a closet • Space to do yoga • Door with personal key • Green (environmental) design • Small refrigerator • Mirror on the ceiling • Cabinet to lock your possessions in • Desk • Dresser • Pink wall
--	--

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private showers • Carpet • Roomy • Be by myself • Phone • Me by myself • A nice big closet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queen size bed • White carpet • Closet • Full size bed • Reading chair • Lock on the door • Safe sex supplies
--	---

Group Space

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own space within apartment • Set guidelines as to placement of items/furniture • Meeting room • Computer lab • Kitchen • Two bathrooms on each floor • New furniture, couches • Make it look like the living room and dining room kitchen of the real world, homey, spacious • carpet • calm barrier • laundry room, free or cheap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheerful bright colors • Rooms where you can “express yourself” • Place where you can have a “night for LGBTQ people” • Dance studio • Art for creativity • Music room • Sports room/ chill-out space • Sitting area with TV • Phone room • Pet • Real World setting • “Sex & the City” theme • A cool place to relax
--	---

11. Additional thoughts.

I think that it should be a floor of a building where one unit would be an office for staff with a computer lab. I think that all people in a unit should sign a contract on specifics about chores to time scheduling for common use of living space.



CENTER ON HALSTED

HOMELESS YOUTH TASK FORCE COMBINED STAFF FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Center on Halsted conducted focus groups with the staff of nonprofit agencies serving homeless youth, in order to discuss the concept of an LGBTQ-exclusive youth homeless program in Chicago. In all, twelve staff members were interviewed from three nonprofit agencies: La Casa Norte, Teen Living, and Alternatives, Inc. Listed below is a summary of their preferences for the key issues. For a complete description of the voting along with sample comments from the staff, please read the full report attached to this Executive Summary.

Do you see a need for an LGBTQ-exclusive homeless youth program in Chicago?

Answer: No, it should be geared towards LGBTQ youth, but open to straight youth as well.

Which type of housing model is better – Transitional or Permanent?

Answer: Both, neither alone are really sufficient.

What age range do you recommend for the program?

Answer: 18 to 24 years of age.

Where would you site the program?

Answer: North side.

What type of housing model would you recommend – scattered site, the floor of a building, or a whole building?

Answer: A whole building.

What type of living space would you recommend – a shared apartment or an SRO/dormitory-style living?

Answer: SRO/Dormitory-style living.



COMBINED STAFF FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES REPORT

Introduction

The Center on Halsted *Homeless Youth Task Force* is researching the possibility of creating a homeless youth LGBTQ-exclusive housing program for Chicago. The Task Force interviewed the staff of nonprofit agencies serving LGBTQ homeless youth to get their feedback on a number of programmatic issues. Three focus groups with staff were arranged in the month of February and March 2009 with Teen Living (6 staff present); La Casa Norte (3 staff present); and Alternatives, Inc. (3 staff present). In all twelve staff people were interviewed for their perspectives. A second set of focus groups was held with LGBTQ youth, some of who were homeless at the time the focus groups were held. A separate report entitled *Combined Youth Focus Group Responses Report* summarizes the opinions of the youth participants.

A point system from numbers one to five was developed to assign weight to each available choice with the highest weight given to the first choice (5 points) and the lowest weight given to the fifth choice (1 point). The points were tallied from each focus group and added up to determine which choices were preferred in descending order. These point totals are not meant to be binding decisions, but instead to help the Task Force measure the preferences expressed by the staff members.

1. Do you see a need for an LGBTQ-Exclusive homeless youth program in Chicago?

AGENCY	YES	NO	UNSURE/SPLIT
TEEN LIVING		No, it should be open to straight youth as well, but with a heavy emphasis on LGBTQ and welcoming to non-LGBTQ, the way Center on Halsted is now.	
La Casa Norte		No, that would be like discrimination. It makes sense to have a diverse community.	
Alternatives			The staff members were split; some thought it was critical to have an exclusive facility, but others felt it was important to be open to straight kids too.

SUMMARY:

The staff members were all very positive about the concept of an LGBTQ youth facility. However, staff debated the merits of the issue of making it exclusively for LGBTQ youth, or not.



COMBINED STAFF FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES REPORT, *continued*

Most of the staff felt a lot like the youth; that the world was mixed and people needed to be open to both gay and straight, and that it was unrealistic to think a straight homeless youth on the door-step would be turned away, that the in-take workers would say, “Sorry, you are straight so you will have to find another facility to go to.” On the other hand, the facility can definitely be geared towards LGBTQ youth, and straight youth would have to be comfortable with that in order to choose to stay there.

SAMPLE QUOTES:

- *“It’s important to have separate housing for the LGBTQ youth; it gives them a choice, and to have a choice is to be empowered. Some youth would not want to be segregated; it depends on their experience. Can’t assume all queer youth have experienced trauma based on their sexuality, so giving them the choice is empowering.”*
- *“Folks who run the program may or may not be LGBTQ...what that would do for our young people would send out ripple effects; there are adults that do care about you... Lightning bolts into the community; a lot of that has happened in the bars, this will happen outside in a social service setting and be phenomenal.”*
- *“There’s something off-putting if it’s just for LGBTQ youth; what does that say to the youth? Your sexuality is who you are? As adults we’re also saying your sexual identity is not who you are.”*
- *“Yes, this is a good idea. Some of the challenges that trans youth face make it difficult for them to be in a general population; to secure a female bed when they are identifying male; that doesn’t work because everyone doesn’t always feel comfortable with that arrangement.”*
- *“How would you ensure that it will be an exclusive LGBTQIA-exclusive space?”*
- *“Bringing people together as people is important. Look at the big picture. We can create a safe space while including everyone.”*

2. Which type of housing model is better: Transitional or Permanent?

TYPE	TRANSITIONAL	PERMANENT	UNSURE/OTHER
TEEN LIVING			Both – it really needs to be a continuum of options; transitional alone is not enough.
LA CASA NORTE			Neither is best, and both would be preferable.
ALTERNATIVES			Other: if you serve youth down to 16, then 2 years is not enough. If starting at 18, then transitional is the choice, but having a flexible end date is preferable.



COMBINED STAFF FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES REPORT, *continued*

COMMENT:

This was one of the hardest questions for staff to answer. They understand the need to have parameters for the youth; however, the idea of strict deadline just doesn't work for most people. Also, they know that the youth tend to be more immature for their age than the average person of the same age, so there is a lot of development that needs to take place in a very short time in a transitional program. They wanted to have the flexibility of the permanent program with the service-intensity of the transitional model. The reality is that there is no model that exists in the funding world that works great for this population, so you have to modify whichever one you choose.

SAMPLE QUOTES:

- *“Transitional is better. LGBTQ youth, unless they have significant disabilities, do not need permanent supportive housing which is really for people living with severe mental illness or developmental delays.”*
- *“A continuum is really the answer. Of course, the issue between Transitional and Permanent is quality vs. quantity: do you want to serve a smaller group of people better or serve a lot of people but not as thoroughly? It’s very difficult to have both.”*
- *“I could never choose between Transitional and Permanent; just have to see what the best compromise looks like.”*
- *“Transitional is better because it creates pressure to improve one’s situation. Permanent housing on the other hand can become a crutch.”*
- *“Neither option is preferable. I would prefer a period longer than two years and for an age range older than 21 years, but it really depends on the youth.”*
- *“What about mixing the two together where you have transitional housing and relationships with landlords to create permanent housing opportunities?”*

3. What age range do you recommend?

AGENCY	18 TO 24 YEARS	18 TO 21	18 and UP	Other
Teen Living	Yes.			
La Casa Norte	Preferable.			
Alternatives				You should start at 16 years of age; the big homeless gap is 16-17 years old.

COMMENT:

The most significant comment we received on this was from Alternatives’ staff members, who were really pressing for Center on Halsted to consider a younger population. They believe that there is a significant gap in the homeless service system for youth aged 16-17 years. They are old enough to be independent, yet not legally emancipated so they cannot rent an apartment



or live in an adult shelter. Youth at this age are coming out to their parents and often find themselves on the streets because of their sexuality or gender. However, some of the laws are changing to make it possible for these youth to be in transitional living programs. Seventeen year olds can become legally emancipated in Illinois and there are attempts underway to create partial emancipation laws for 15 and 16 year olds who are living in transitional living programs.

SAMPLE QUOTES:

- *“Need to go down to 16 years of age. At 16, 17 parents are done with youth; the thinking is: you’re almost to 18 so I’m going to kick you out now. The child welfare system is not protecting kids between 16 to 18 years of age either; DCFS isn’t providing protection and services, either.”*
- *“16 and up would be great. At 16 years of age you start getting issues around the car, high school ...there are a lot of transitions and independence starts to come to a head around 16. People come out around 15 or 16 and this is a very rough period; kids have no support system. We really encourage you to think about adding 16 and 17 year olds to your program.”*

4. What clinical services would you provide that are geared towards LGBTQ youth?

- *“There’d be all the normal stuff; career, education etc.”*
- *“Safety.”*
- *“Dealing with depression”*
- *“Dealing with caring adults in their life”*
- *“Suicide awareness”*
- *“PTSD”*
- *“How do you create safety in a work environment; in an educational environment etc. Where the culture is not open, addressing the obstacles the LGBTQ youth might be experiencing.”*
- *“Who are going to be your allies? Where are you going to be safe?”*
- *“Advocacy – how to advocate for your rights.”*

COMMENT:

Staff members cautioned CoH to remember that these youth are like any other youth and have the same issues. Services need to be geared towards youth going through all the normal life transitions for someone at this age range, in addition to the specific types of services that could be geared towards LGBTQ people, who will also have unique problems to cope with in life.



COMBINED STAFF FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES REPORT, *continued*

5. Housing Design Issues

A. LOCATION:

AGENCY	NORTH SIDE	NORTHWEST	SOUTH SIDE	WEST SIDE	NO PREFERENCE
Teen Living	Yes, but.				
La Casa Norte			S.E., Central		
Alternatives	Definitely yes.				

COMMENT:

As one person said, “This is a difficult question.” Everyone talked about how it would great to put the program on the South Side, because the south side is so resource poor. But for that very reason, and because of the safety issue, everyone ultimately chose the north side as the preferred community to place the program.

SAMPLE QUOTES:

- *“Would love to see it on the south side, but it wouldn’t work there; more support on the north side.”*
- *“Don’t do this in Lakeview; it’s very white, it will be less effective; it’s too segregated already with LGBTQ. Look at Uptown, Rogers Park, areas which are easily accessible to Lakeview.”*
- *“There aren’t good services on the south side because there aren’t good services there. Lakeview is established; it’s a more open community; taking an isolated population and putting them in a community, i.e. in the south side, and keeping them isolated in an unsafe situation is not a good idea. The LGBTQ population is already coming to the north side and becoming part of this community.”*
- *“We need to address the fact that racism is rampant on the north side.”*
- *“A central location is most vital. To be accessible is the first priority.”*

B. MODEL TYPE PREFERENCE

AGENCY	SCATTERED SITE	WHOLE FLOOR	WHOLE BUILDING	OTHER
Teen Living			Yes. Therapy happens 24/7.	
La Casa Norte			Dormitory-style.	
Alternatives				N/A. (no experience running housing programs).



COMBINED STAFF FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES REPORT, *continued*

COMMENTS:

Staff at Teen Living emphasized that therapy happens throughout the day, in every part of their building. This isn't possible in a scattered site facility. Also, Teen Living has a scattered site program but that is for the youth who have graduated from their Bronzeville program, an entry-level program that prepares them for more independent living. Scattered site living is not appropriate for youth just off the street, in their estimation.

QUOTES:

- *“Therapy needs to happen 24/7; staff need to be around to facilitate all the time. So you need a facility where everything is incorporated into one. Also, therapy happens everywhere, even in the stairwell in the middle of the night. At Teen Living, there’s always someone around, there’s always something going on, which is why it works so well.”*
- *“Scattered site seems too hard to regulate, and the educational component would be hard to implement. A cooperative living situation is a great idea.”*

C. UNIT PREFERENCE

AGENCY	SHARED UNIT W/2-3 PEOPLE	PRIVATE SRO UNIT
Teen Living		Yes, private space is best,
La Casa Norte		Yes.

COMMENT:

Staff felt that the youth needed lots of reasons to be among people, in a dormitory-style setting, but still have private space where he or she could escape and be on their own. This led the facilitator to question whether or not the units should have private kitchenettes, or community kitchens.

SAMPLE QUOTES

- *“Youth assist with cooking the food; a community kitchen would be better because it would facilitate more group classes, but they would have to clean and maintain it as a group.”*
- *“The youth isolate when they have their own kitchen; the youth don’t deal with each other. The importance of a community space where people are coming together can strengthen the program’s results; community-building can happen but you have to be very intentional about it.”*
- *“What’s the point if they all have their own fully-functioning apartment, if we are creating an LGBTQ housing program?”*
- *“Having a sense of belonging and sharing, having the public space is valuable. However, people need their own space. And it keeps the BS down.”*



COMBINED STAFF FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES REPORT, continued

D. PERSONAL RESIDENTIAL SPACE

- *Bed*
- *Small desk*
- *Dresser*
- *Armoire or closet*

E. GROUP RESIDENTIAL SPACE

- *Laundry*
- *Computer lab*
- *Library*
- *Lounge/TV area*
- *Huge kitchen with huge table, benches no chairs*
- *Common dining area*
- *Large meeting space for events and activities*
- *Small meeting spaces*
- *Case managers have their own space*
- *Outside area for smoking; the one place where staff are not*
- *Pool table, foos ball, poker table, stuff to do so they want to hang out; introducing play into the environment is very important; they get bored easily and then they go and do things that are not good*
- *Extra clothes; business clothes, condoms everywhere.*

COMMENT:

Staff emphasized the importance of making the personal space as un-appealing as possible, in order to prevent people from isolating in their rooms.

SAMPLE QUOTES:

- *“Food issues; all the idiosyncrasies with food and people who are homeless. People tend to do things; food hoarding and stealing. Train staff on these issues. Food needs to be locked up; with an open kitchen you are going to have a problem with food stealing.”*
- *“Kids find community in bars, so create alternative community spaces in a home where that behavior in bars is limited.”*
- *“Make sure to have an “After Care” program like “Shoulder to Shoulder.” You will still need to give people access to all the services after they leave your program.”*
- *“Make sure to organize groups and activities, planned and unplanned; having that option available is goo; but sometimes unplanned things are really good too. Spontaneous activities, doing things that aren’t LGBTQ-specific, things that give back to the community.”*
- *“Community service could be part of the service activity, which would be good to add to the program.”*



COMBINED STAFF FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES REPORT, *continued*

- *“Select the appropriate staff, personality and how they fit with the agency; have a thorough staff selection process.”*
- *“Select or design a building that doesn’t look like an institution or an agency, something like Broadway Youth Center where it is very subtle and feels safe to walk into. It doesn’t shout what it is, it’s very unobtrusive; staff is young and hip.”*
- *“It’s so important to hire the right staff members in order to build community - you have to get the right people on the bus. Know their social work practices, build that culture and be very intentional about it. Staff should have the same philosophy.”*