

Helping Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Lisa Jeanne Graf, written Oct 2018

Addressing Emotional Needs

“My own garden”: Have partnerships with youth and community gardeners so that youth have a garden that can be theirs. Gardens cost about \$50 a year, not counting seeds and if they are maintained they can be permanent. I would think that having a garden that you maintain would be great emotionally and symbolically. In addition food could be grown.

“Safety for treasures”: Keeping treasured belongings safe is difficult without a permanent home. One option would be a bank safety deposit at a bank for maximum security. Also a locked space at a school could also work. Many youth without home don't have a sense of safety around personal space. Belongings being protected is important emotionally. Maybe some community savings banks would be open to offering this for no cost to a certain number of students. This could also be an opportunity to open a bank account.

“Prom”: It would be great to have partnerships with local retail stores that would be willing to donate some clothing for Prom each year.

Addressing Employment Needs

“Non-Profit Pipeline” Have non profits give preference in hiring to Boston residents, especially those who have experienced homelessness.

Post Office Box

Provide funding for a post office box at a preferred post office for families or youth's who are experiencing homelessness.

“Mayor's Mural Crew” Have a pilot program where young youth who are experiencing homelessness, and are currently selling their work on the sidewalk, are offered jobs with the Mayor's Mural Crew.

“Lifeguard Pipeline”: Students could take swimming lessons for exercise, and for access to showers. Classes could initially be through the Boston Public schools, or paid for by the YMCA with the understanding that in time there would be training for students to work as Life guards. This would be a win win for students and also the YMCA as many teenagers are choosing other jobs over being lifeguards and the YMCA are not filling needed positions easily.

Work/Housing Solution

Hotels could have a program where a worker is paid partially by having a small room to live in. This could work for a parent with a small child or an older youth. The YMCA has rooms to rent as well and could possibly also have a similar program.

Addressing Day to Day Needs

- At school there could be a place to shower, and do laundry
- There could also be a place to store clothes and school supplies that is larger than a regular locker in another part of the school like near the nurse's office.
- Mailing address for students at a school (for job applications, etc)
- There could be a brochure listing student's rights, options, programs and services available, etc..
- Supports for emotional needs (more social emotional supports at schools) and providing and connecting services for parents
- Substance abuse supports

Addressing Learning Life Skills

- Taking a business math class helps with budgeting
- Having a financial plan
- Jobs training and support
- Having a mentor to learn from
- Having a library to access for research and planning. A library card too.
- For off track youth have as many classes as possible give life skills as well as technical knowledge. An example would be a business math class and geometry math class as those math skills could be used in budgeting and carpentry and the arts.

Offering more rental housing options

Co-housing

Some neighborhoods have housing where children, and adults of all ages live together in cohousing. They share meals together and do housework together. This might be a supportive environment for some families.