

# ENDING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

## A Plan to Ensure Housing Safety and Stability for Youth and Young Adults Experiencing Homelessness in Polk County

### OUR VISION

Polk County will be a place that provides everyone support, safety, and a stable place to call home.

A home is a place of refuge. Home provides safety, belonging, and a foundation to thrive. For too many youth and young adults in Polk County that foundation is disrupted.

### THE CHALLENGE

In Polk County in 2016:

- 214** youth under age 18 ran away from home or became homeless
- 1,500** students were identified by schools as homeless
- 427** young adults and parents ages 18-24 were homeless

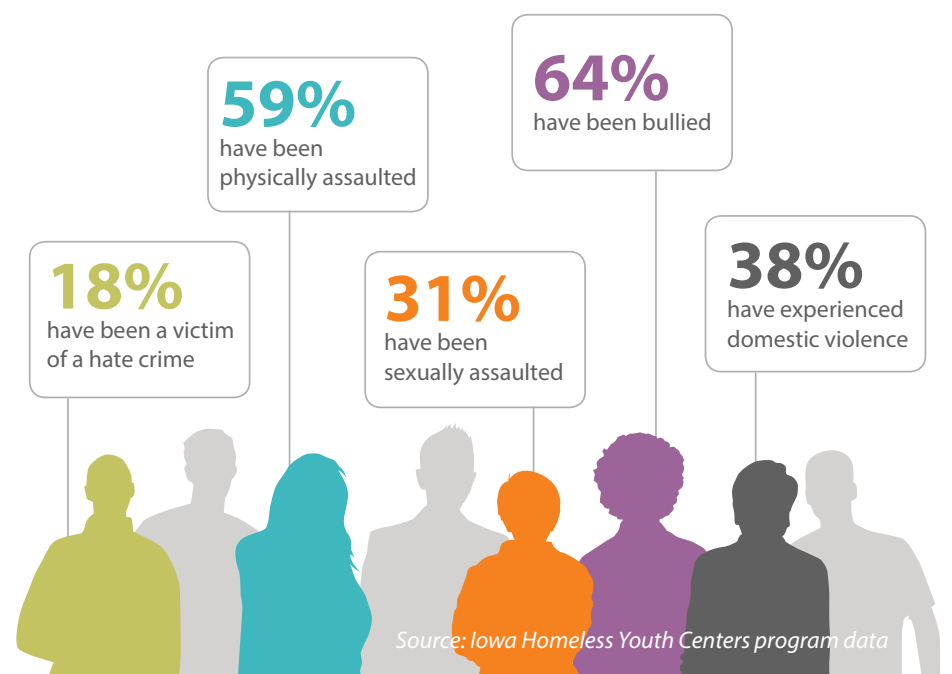
Some youth and young adults are more at risk of becoming homeless than others including:

- Youth of Color
- System-involved youth
- LGBT youth
- Doubled-up or Precariously Housed
- Parenting

### WHAT'S AT STAKE

Homelessness during adolescence is particularly troubling as young people are still developing intellectually, emotionally and socially.

Youth who are homeless have often experienced trauma such as abuse, neglect, physical and sexual assault, and domestic violence. Trauma impacts brain development, behaviors, coping skills, mental health and the ability to maintain relationships.



With financial support from the Mid-Iowa Health Foundation, an active Youth Advisory Board and community stakeholders developed a blueprint to end youth homelessness in Polk County.

### PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

The plan includes eleven strategies and multiple action steps that reflect positive youth development principles, trauma-informed responses and cross-system collaboration to meet the unique developmental needs of youth not often found in traditional adult homeless services.

#### Stable Families and Social Supports

- Keep families safe and together when possible.
- Ensure that youth who are involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice system have the social networks, skills, and resources needed to gain and maintain stable housing before exiting care.
- Identify and support vulnerable students and their families.

#### Early Intervention

- Improve identification and referral of youth experiencing homelessness and youth at risk of homelessness to available services.
- Increase the number and availability of welcoming, youth-focused safe places for youth to sleep and engage in services.

#### Pathways Out of Homelessness

- Fully utilize and build upon existing housing resources.
- Expand housing options that reflect the needs of young adults who have had juvenile justice and child welfare involvement.
- Address barriers to housing stability.

#### Community Level Solutions to Systemic Challenges

- Address/reduce over-representation of youth of color who are homeless.
- Strengthen the network of services and supports available to youth and young adults.
- Reduce structural and community barriers to housing stability.