

## Introduction and Background

The Nevada Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Division of Welfare and Supportive Services (DWSS) has contracted with Social Entrepreneurs, Inc. (SEI) to conduct a study to better understand:

- the prevalence, characteristics and intervention needs of youth experiencing homelessness,
- the current system supports and financial structure available to support youth experiencing homelessness, and
- the system gaps that need to be addressed to better serve Nevada's youth.

This study is taking place over a two-year period from July 2023 through June 2025. It is designed and will be conducted explicitly to include LGBTQ+ youth, and to incorporate the voices of people with lived experience whenever possible in study design and data collection activities.

One of the initial activities is the refinement of the study design. SEI drafted and submitted to DWSS a general scope of work for the project which included a high-level set of general tasks and activities anticipated to be necessary to meet the study objectives. However, subject matter expertise and local knowledge of individuals are being utilized to refine this design and ensure the success of the study. **As such, SEI convened a Study Design Subcommittee to:**

- **finalize the research questions to be investigated and the population(s) of focus,**
- **determine the independent research to be conducted, and**
- **identify the primary and secondary data to be collected through a mixed methods approach**

The Study Design Subcommittee met once in November of 2023 to discuss the topics above. Following that meeting, it was determined that a longer, in-person meeting would be the best approach for finalizing the Study Design. As such, the Study Design Subcommittee met on January 17, 2024, in Las Vegas NV. Attendees at the meeting included<sup>1</sup>:

<b>Alejandra “Ally” Holmes</b> The Just One Project and LivedX Consultant	<b>André Wade</b> State Director, Silver State Equality	<b>Arash Ghafoori</b> Champion, The Movement to End Youth Homelessness
<b>Keasia Braggs</b> LivedX Consultant	<b>Martin Castro</b> Street Outreach Worker for Chicanos Por La Causa and LivedX Consultant	<b>Melissa Jacobowitz</b> Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth
<b>Tamika Edwards</b> LivedX Consultant	<b>Trevor Macaluso</b> Chief Executive Officer, Eddy House	SEI Staff: Emma Rodriguez, Kim Hopkinson, and Judy Bartlett

During this meeting, the group finalized the populations of focus, prioritized research questions to be investigated, and had preliminary conversations about the types of data that should be collected to explore those research questions. The Subcommittee asked that SEI develop a data collection methodology and present it back to the group for review. To support this, SEI will be convening a Data Collection Subcommittee; all Study Design Subcommittee members were invited to join the Data Collection Subcommittee to continue to support development and review of the data collection methodology and tools.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Pamela Juniel, the McKinney-Vento State Coordinator for the Nevada Department of Education, and Lupie Janos, Social Services Chief III for the Nevada Division of Child and Family Services, also served on the Subcommittee but were not able to attend the meeting on January 17th.

## Population of Focus

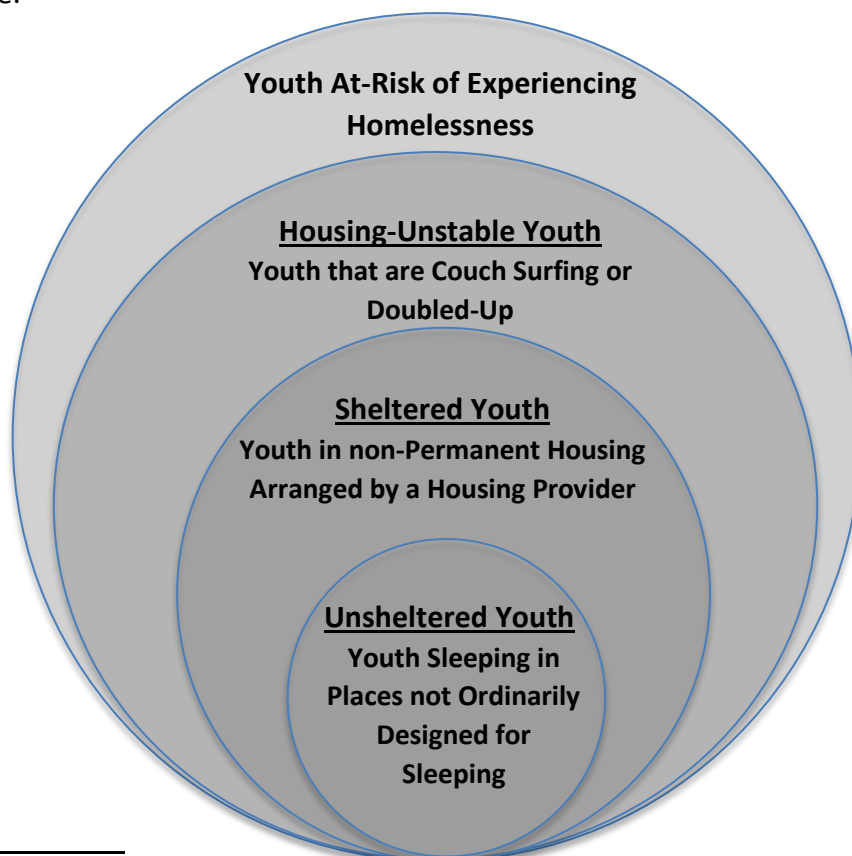
For the purposes of this study, **youth experiencing homelessness** (YEH) is defined as **young people aged 12-24 who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence**. This definition comprises:

- unaccompanied youth aged 12-24 who are the only member of their household,
- parenting and pregnant individuals aged 12-24, and
- youth in households<sup>2</sup> where all members are aged 12-24.

**The definition explicitly does not include individuals aged 12-24 that are part of a household with an adult 25 or older.**

The other population this study will explore are youth aged 12-24 who are at risk of experiencing homelessness. This study will utilize national trends regarding YEH to understand which groups of youth are most at risk of experiencing homelessness. It also aims to quantify how trends in Nevada compare to national trends to better understand which youth in Nevada are most at risk. The study will explore how the characteristics of youth in Nevada that fall within the first three circles of the graphic below compare to national data; in other words, how the characteristics of youth in Nevada that **lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence** align with or differ from national trends.

All groups anticipated to be engaged through this study are illustrated in the figure below; the types of data available to explore the number, characteristics, and experiences of each of these groups will differ. The definition of YEH includes youth who are unsheltered, sheltered in non-permanent housing, and those who are housing unstable.



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<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this study, a household is any grouping of people who reside together and share responsibility for housing costs and is not limited to people with a romantic or familial relationship. Individuals aged 12-24 who are “couch surfing” are not included in the household of the individuals they are temporarily staying with.

## Research Questions

The following research questions will be explored through this study; an initial draft of questions was developed by the Subcommittee and refined by the Core Team in February 2024.

### Understanding and Serving Youth Experiencing Homelessness

#### Description of Youth Experiencing Homelessness

- What is the prevalence of youth experiencing homelessness in Nevada?
- What are the characteristics of YEH (e.g., gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, educational level, income, background, and engagement in other systems such as foster care or criminal or juvenile justice) in Nevada? How does this compare to national trends about the groups most at-risk of homelessness?
- What are the common pathways to youth homelessness in Nevada?
- What is the impact of ending youth homelessness?

#### Youth Perspective

What are the perspectives of youth who have experienced homelessness in Nevada?

- What resources do they/did they need most but did not have access to?
- What resources do they or did they have access to but chose not to access? Why didn't they access them?
- What role did families play in supporting exits from homelessness?

#### Provider Perspective

- What strategies and tools are in place to identify, assess, and characterize YEH in Nevada?
- What are providers' perspectives on how well they are identifying, engaging, and serving YEH? What do they view as the most important factors contributing to their success? What do they view as the most important factors impeding their success?

#### Housing Resources

- What are the occupancy, vacancy, and waitlist rates for the housing resources that specifically target YEH in Nevada? Is the housing inventory in Nevada sufficient to serve the estimated number of youth experiencing homelessness?
- What are the number and types of housing resources (e.g., emergency shelter beds, transitional housing units, etc.) that specifically target YEH in Nevada?
- To what extent do youth access housing resources that are targeted to people experiencing homelessness but not specifically to youth in Nevada?

#### Identifying and Serving YEH

- What strategies and tools are in place to support Nevada YEH in obtaining stable housing?
- What are common pathways from housing instability (including homelessness) to housing stability in Nevada?
- What are the number and types of (non-housing) resources available to serve YEH in Nevada? *Note that exploration of this question will be limited to non-housing resources that are specifically designed to support YEH in obtaining housing stability.*

## Policy Infrastructure

- Which policies that don't currently exist are needed to support the goals of preventing and ending youth homelessness?
- To what extent and in what manner has the state government or local governments established policies that support the goals of preventing and ending youth homelessness?
- What funding streams are being utilized in Nevada to support ending youth homelessness?
- What public funding streams are not being utilized or not in existence here in Nevada?

Both the Study Design Subcommittee and Core Team acknowledged the importance of understanding the role that prevention activities play in ending youth homelessness in Nevada. The final study will include information on this topic that is gathered from existing research and best practices, but prevention will not be a focus of data collection activities or a primary area of inquiry.