

Dear CEA Policy Makers and Stakeholders,

On behalf of the Youth and Young Adult Service Providers in King County, we would like to address the institutional racism that exists in the Coordinated Entry for All system. Racist components of the ways in which the system functions are hindrances to supporting young people experiencing homelessness to access housing. We are concerned that the current CEA system is not conducive to ensuring that youth homelessness is rare, brief and one time. It is our intention to address the specific concerns of disproportionately impacting youth of color and offer potential solutions to improving the system.

#### Equity

Currently, the youth homelessness system does not have a shared definition for equity. There is a statement on the All Home website that discusses the importance of *Leading with Race* in efforts to end homelessness, but does not specify how equitable practices should be implemented in the systemic structure as a whole. **The Youth and Young Adult Providers in King County would like to request a common definition for equity, so that there is communal understanding regarding the intention and focus of our efforts in improving CEA.**

#### Assessment

We are concerned that the current data related to young people who have access to the CEA system does not accurately capture the number of youth and young adults who may have discussions with staff at varying agencies about housing opportunities through CEA, yet do not qualify for the housing available. We are also aware that within the current priority pool there is racial disproportionality based on the number of white young adults versus young adults of color that are represented in the top 40. There are many systemic factors that impact the data including the questions that are asked on the TAY-VISPDAT assessment. This screening tool does not offer questions that are culturally relevant to obtaining accurate answers from youth and young adults of color. We are aware that CEA will be moving forward with utilizing a new assessment that will address this issue. **Nevertheless, we would like this new tool to be informed and supported by young people with lived experience and the Youth and Young Adult Service Providers in King County.**

#### Mobility, Training and Representation of Assessors and Prioritization

There also is racial disparity between the youth and young adults who complete the housing assessment from the demographics of those who are administering this screening tool. In some geographic areas of King County the housing assessment may not be accessible to those who are unsheltered and living on the street. We have found that young adults are working on rebuilding their life and that might be in a different community than they originally were assessed. Transitional Living Programs are penalized for mobility transfers even though that might be the best option for the young person (i.e. closer to work, school, or geographic region that the young person may identify as safer than their current location). **We would like to request that mobility transfers not negatively impact funding or outcome measurements for programming.**

It is not a guarantee that the Regional Access Points have assessors who are familiar with the unique and specific needs of youth and young adults. **We would like there to be specific training for all CEA assessors that is focused on culturally responsive care and anti-oppression. We have identified that it is crucial to have assessors regularly connecting with young people in the juvenile justice system. We**

**also acknowledge that young people who will be reaching their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday need to be prioritized in the CEA system in order to avoid further homelessness and traumatization. We would like to propose that in the next iteration of Dynamic Prioritization for youth and young adults, there is an emphasis on the unique needs of youth who are newly 18 and ensures that they have access to housing services quickly.**

The case conferencing process, while successful in breaking down barriers and placing individuals into housing reinforced structural inequity in the CEA referral process. Young people are more likely to obtain a referral if they are active with a case manager and/or advocate who can attend weekly case conference meetings. The advocates in the room are overwhelmingly from larger organizations which has caused inequity amidst youth and young adults who are referred to housing and access housing throughout King County. While advocates in the room at case conferencing are following the structure of the case conferencing process, advocacy itself can inevitably lead to nominations for young people who are connected to service providers at each meeting. This is especially concerning when we acknowledge that the resources and agencies available to young people are not equitably distributed throughout King County. **We propose that CEA modifies the process for selecting housing referrals for young people on the priority pool in order to improve equitable distribution of referrals.**

Finally, there has been discussion regarding utilizing racial demographic as a component for prioritization. We recognize the various factors involved in taking the risk to move forward in support of including race as a vulnerability factor. **We ask that you consider doing so as the cost outweighs the risk of continued racism throughout the youth homelessness system.**

We look forward to continued partnership in ensuring that every youth and young adult can access safe, supportive and sustainable housing. We hope that our efforts in dismantling institutional racism in our community will be a solution to addressing youth and young adult homelessness.

Sincerely,

Youth and Young Adult Service Providers of King County