



# Youth Count Readiness Assessment

## A Guide for Local Continuums of Care to Begin Planning a Local Youth Count

Compiled by Elizabeth Hoey & Amanda Miller, MSW at The Institute for Innovation & Implementation at the University of Maryland School of Social Work

The tools within this Readiness Assessment Guide are designed to help your local planning team identify key strategies and partnerships to help inform an action plan for implementation of your local Youth Count. Feel free to use some or all of the tools based on the needs of your planning team. If using multiple tools, it is recommended that they be completed in the order they are provided so that they can inform each other.

### How to Use this Guide to Inform your Youth Count Planning<sup>1</sup>

1. Schedule an initial planning meeting (or meetings, as it may be helpful to complete one of the tools per meeting) with your local planning team, including all stakeholders and youth ambassadors currently involved. Before this meeting, make copies of the tools and tool instructions and bring to the meeting to share with the participants.
  - a. Designate a group facilitator for the planning meeting who has good listening and group process skills who can keep things moving and on track.
  - b. Designate a recorder for the planning meeting. This person should use a flip chart or a large board to record the analysis and discussion points.
2. At the planning meeting, the facilitator should open by explaining the purpose of the meeting as assessing readiness and begin planning for the Youth Count, and let all participants introduce themselves.
3. The team should **identify any key goals** they have for the Youth Count to frame the following discussions and add these to the **action plan template**. If your CoC has conducted a Youth Count previously, these goals should be informed by lessons learned from prior Youth Counts. For example, is there a specific population you want to focus on connecting with? Are you wanting to expand outreach efforts or improve a certain strategy?
4. The facilitator should introduce each readiness assessment tool and its purpose to the planning team. This can be as simple as asking,
  - a. **SWOT**: “Where are we currently, and where can we grow?”
  - b. **Partnership Mapping**: “Who can help us?”
  - c. **Hexagon Tool**: “What strategies should we use?”
5. If your planning team is larger than ten, divide participants into smaller groups of three to ten to ensure everyone present is able to contribute. Make sure each group contains diverse representation to ensure a range of perspectives, and have each group designate a recorder to record their discussion and results.
6. Handout and review the goal and instructions for the first tool. Then direct the group(s) to complete the tool. Give the group(s) 20-30 minutes to brainstorm. Encourage them not to rule out any ideas in the beginning.
7. Reconvene the group at the agreed-upon time to share results. Gather information from the groups, recording and organizing each group’s ideas on the flip-chart or board. Once a list has been generated, the group should discuss the results and refine it to the best ten or fewer ideas in order to focus the discussion and planning. As part of this process, reflect back on the goals your team identified for this Youth Count and see where goals may need to be modified and which strategies best support these goals. Identify follow-up action steps and add these to the action plan template.
8. Repeat Steps 6 and 7 for the additional tools. *For the Hexagon Tool, brainstorm key strategies your team is considering making part of your Youth Count strategy prior to beginning the activity, and assign each group one potential strategy to examine.*
9. After the meeting, prepare a written summary of your analyses to share with participants and stakeholders for continued use in planning and implementation.

# Youth Count Action Plan

Goal	Action Steps	Org/Person Responsible	Resources Required (staff, materials, etc.)	Start Date	Due Date

# SWOT Analysis

(Adapted from from the Community Tool Box<sup>1</sup>)

A SWOT analysis helps you identify your Youth Count team's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. **SWOT helps your team develop a shared understanding of the current context of your team and community to assist with informed decision making as you plan your Youth Count, identifying the issues or problems you intend to change, setting or reaffirming goals, and creating a strategic action plan.**

A SWOT analysis will be more effective if you involve many stakeholders. Each person or group offers a different perspective on the strengths and weaknesses of your program and has different experiences of both. The best results come when the process is collaborative and inclusive.

## STEP 1: List your internal factors: Strengths and Weaknesses

Internal factors include your resources and experiences across all of your currently invested stakeholders. General areas to consider:

- Human resources - staff, volunteers, board members, target population
- Physical resources - your location, building, equipment
- Financial - grants, funding agencies, other sources of income
- Activities and processes - programs you run, systems you employ
- Past experiences - building blocks for learning and success, your reputation in the community

Don't be too modest when listing your strengths. If you're having difficulty naming them, start by simply listing your characteristics (e.g., we're small, we're connected to the neighborhood). Some of these will probably be strengths.

Although the strengths and weakness of your organization are your internal qualities, don't overlook the perspective of people outside your group. Identify strengths and weaknesses from both your own point of view and that of others, including those you serve. Do others see problems--or assets--that you don't?

How do you get information about how outsiders perceive your strengths and weaknesses? You may know already if you've listened to those you serve. If not, this might be the time to gather that type of information, and a great opportunity to *engage your youth ambassadors* and ensure you are capturing their thoughts and perspective.

## STEP 2: Listing external factors: Opportunities and Threats

Cast a wide net for the external part of the assessment. No organization, group, program, or neighborhood is immune to outside events and forces. Consider your connectedness, for better and worse, as you compile this part of your SWOT analysis.

Forces and facts that your group does not control include:

- Future trends in your field or the culture of your community
- The economy - local, state, or national
- Funding sources - foundations, donors, government grants
- Demographics - changes in the age, race, gender, culture of those you serve or in your area
- The physical environment (Is your building in a growing part of town? Is the bus company cutting routes?)
- Regulations and legislations
- Local, state, or national events

## STEP 3: Analyzing and Utilizing your SWOT

Once you have listed your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, think about how they impact each other. As you consider your analysis, be open to the possibilities that exist within a weakness or threat. Brainstorm strategies for how you can use your strengths and overcome your weaknesses in order to take advantage of opportunities, and how to use your strengths to avoid threats and minimize weaknesses. From these strategies, think about next steps and areas where there is an opportunity to expand or explore new possibilities, and identify key resources, areas for growth and expansion. These can all contribute towards development of your action plan for the Youth Count.

# SWOT ANALYSIS

<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> </ol>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> </ol>	
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Opportunity-Strength (OS) Strategies</b>  <i>Use the strengths to take advantage of opportunities</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Opportunity-Weakness (OW) Strategies</b>  <i>Overcome weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> </ol>
<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> <li>4.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Threat-Strength (TS) Strategies</b>  <i>Use strengths to avoid threats</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Threat-Weakness (TW) Strategies</b>  <i>Minimize weaknesses and avoid threats</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> </ol>

# Partnership Mapping

(Adapted from the Global Green Growth Forum<sup>2</sup>)

As you prepare for your Youth Count, your team should continually ask “what other stakeholders should be on this team?” **Stakeholders** are individuals and organizations which might affect or be affected by partnership activities. Partnership Mapping will help you brainstorm and analyze stakeholder roles as potential partners by assessing their assets, interest level, influence, and potential role. Using the table as a guide:

1. Brainstorm potential partners in each category identified in the table. When selecting partners, go beyond the traditional community to access ‘unusual suspects’ who can bring new and valuable contributions.  
**Helpful Tools:** If you need ideas, see the *2017 Youth Count CoC Partners* (in Appendix A), and the *Voices of Youth Count Potential Leadership Team and Stakeholder Team Members* (at <http://voicesofyouthcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Potential-Leadership-Team-and-Stakeholder-Team-Members.pdf>)
2. Discuss reasons for inclusion. Think about which stakeholders might become partners because of their **assets**, such as relevant expertise, financing capability, strong relationships, crucial services, or organizational capacity.
3. Identify and rank the stakeholders’ **interest**. This provides you with a framework for approaching them to create a partnership. Will it be difficult or easy to “sell” this stakeholder on working with your team?
4. Identify and rank the stakeholders’ **influence** on other organizations, entities, key decision makers, and their constituents or clients. What is that stakeholder’s capacity for raising awareness, providing services, or impacting local policy? Do they have an authoritative or collaborative influence on these players?
5. Remember, stakeholder **roles** and positions may change over time especially as partnership activities become more concrete.
6. Identify incentives for entering a partnership with an organization as well as potential risks to overcome problems and help ensure partnership success.

## Incentives for Including a New Partner Organization

- Achieving objectives
- Increased access to resources
- Better access to information and risk management
- Improved operational efficiency
- Organizational innovation

## Potential Risks for Including a New Partner Organization

- Reputational damage and loss of credibility
- High transaction cost
- Diversion of resources from priority issues
- Loss of autonomy
- Conflicts of interest

Once new potential partners are identified, do your due diligence to assess the effectiveness of partnerships with individuals and organizations. For example, is the partner financially viable and do they have the relevant contacts and information? Much of the information you need should be in the public domain but you may have to draw on your own network to fill in any gaps in knowledge. Consider the following questions before you commit to a partnership (in confidence with regard to sensitive information):

- Respect within their own sector/field
- Wide-ranging and useful contacts
- Access to relevant information/resources/experience
- Relevant skills and competencies
- Sound management and governance structure
- Financial stability and reliability
- Professional staff team
- Other

# Partnership Mapping

Stakeholder groups	Organization name(s)	Reasons for inclusion – what do they bring to the table?	Interest (1 = low, 5 = high)	Influence (1 = low, 5 = high)	Potential role
Youth and youth-specific organizations					
Direct service organizations (including orgs. focused on specific populations, e.g. LGBTQ or refugee youth)					
Government					
Coalitions					
Community Centers and Libraries					
Faith-based Organizations					
Legal services					
Advocacy organizations					
Hospitals and Emergency Service Providers					
Businesses					

# Hexagon Tool

(Adapted from the National Implementation Research Network<sup>3</sup>)

The Hexagon Tool helps teams systematically evaluate new and existing interventions via six broad factors:

- **Needs** of individuals; how well the program or practice might meet identified needs.
- **Fit** with current initiatives, priorities, structures and supports, and parent/community values.
- **Resource Availability** for training, staffing, technology supports, data systems and administration.
- **Evidence** indicating the outcomes that might be expected if the program or practices are implemented well.
- **Readiness for Replication** of the program, including expert assistance available, number of replications accomplished, exemplars available for observation, and how well the program is operationalized
- **Capacity to Implement** as intended and to sustain and improve implementation overtime.

The Hexagon Tool is a thorough exploration process focused on a proposed strategy that will help your Implementation Team have a productive discussion related to the six key factors, and to arrive at a decision to move forward (or not) grounded in solid information from multiple sources. That information will assist you in communicating with stakeholders and in developing an Implementation Plan for your Youth Count.

There are a number of discussion prompts listed under each area of the hexagon. These prompts are not exhaustive, and you may decide that additional prompts need to be added. The prompts direct you to relevant dimensions that your team may want to discuss before rating the factor.

For example, under the area labeled *Fit*, you are reminded to consider:

- How the proposed intervention or framework ‘fits’ with other existing initiatives and whether implementation and outcomes are likely to be enhanced or diminished as a result of interactions with other relevant interventions
- How does it fit with the priorities of your state, community, or agency?
- How does it fit with current state, community, or regional organizational structures?
- How does it fit with community values, including the values of diverse cultural groups?

## Recommendations for Using the Hexagon Tool

1. The team will discuss information related to the six factors of the Hexagon Tool for the possible Youth Count strategy identified.
2. Following discussion, group members should individually rate each area on a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 indicates a low level of acceptability or feasibility, 3 a moderate level and 5 indicates a high level for the factor. Midpoints can be used and scored as 2 or 4.
3. Average scores for each area across individuals and arrive at an overall average score for each of the six factors, with a higher score indicating more favorable conditions for implementation and impact. However, cut-off scores should not be used to make the decision.
4. The scoring process is primarily designed to generate discussion and to help arrive at consensus for each factor as well as overall consensus related to moving forward or not. **The numbers do not make the decision, the team does.** Team discussions and consensus decision-making are required because different factors may be more or less important for a given program or practice and the context in which it is to be implemented. There also will be trade-offs among the factors. For example, a program or practice may have been used effectively by several CoCs (Evidence), but that ongoing costs or staffing (Resource Availability) may be a concern for effective implementation. The team should discuss these trade-offs and how they affect the overall feasibility of the strategy.
5. We recommend that after reviewing information related to each factor, individually scoring each factor, summarizing ratings, and discussing the strengths and challenges related to each factor of the proposed intervention, that the team members decide on a process for arriving at consensus (for instance, private voting or round-robin opinions followed by public voting) as to whether to include the identified strategy as part of the Youth Count.



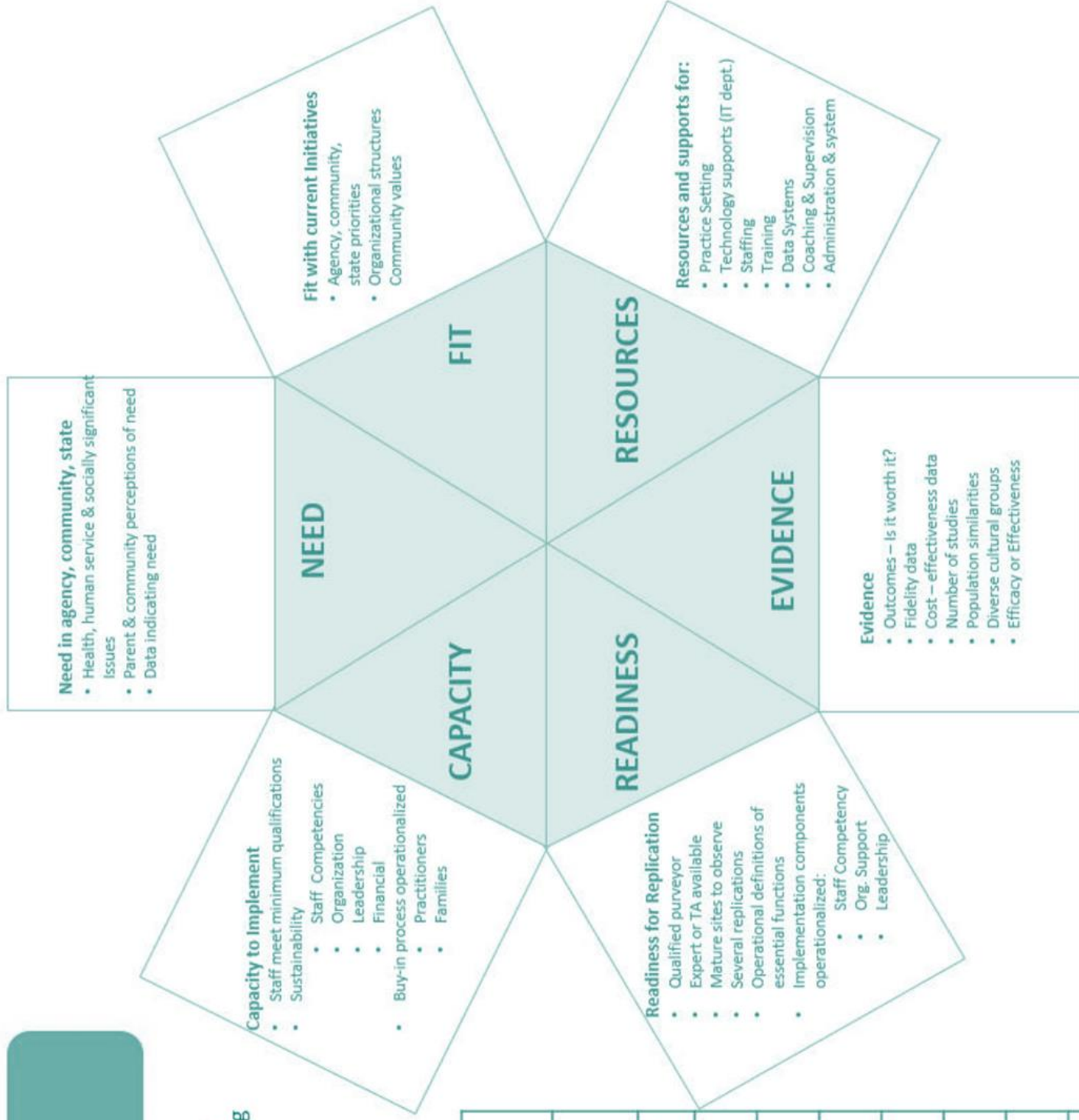
# The Hexagon Tool

## Exploring Context

The Hexagon Tool can be used as a planning tool to evaluate evidence-based programs and practices during the Exploration Stage of the Implementation.

See the Active Implementation Hub Resource Library <http://implementation.fpg.unc.edu>

EBP:	5 Point Rating Scale: High = 5; Medium = 3; Low = 1. Midpoints can be used and scored as a 2 or 4.		
	High	Med	Low
Need			
Fit			
Resource Availability			
Evidence			
Readiness for Replication			
Capacity to Implement			
<b>Total Score</b>			





## References

---

- <sup>1</sup> Renault, V. (2017). Section 14. SWOT Analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. *Community Tool Box*. Lawrence, KS: Center for Community Health and Development, University of Kansas. Retrieved from <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/swot-analysis/main>
- <sup>2</sup> Global Green Growth Forum (3GF). (n.d.). Partner Mapping. Copenhagen, Denmark: Global Green Growth Secretariat, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Retrieved from <http://3gf.dk/en/publications/>
- <sup>3</sup> Blase, K., Kiser, L. and Van Dyke, M. (2013). The Hexagon Tool: Exploring Context. Chapel Hill, NC: National Implementation Research Network, FPG Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Retrieved from <http://implementation.fpg.unc.edu/sites/implementation.fpg.unc.edu/files/resources/NIRN-Education-TheHexagonTool.pdf>

## Appendix A: 2017 Youth Count CoC Partners

This list includes all organizations identified by Continuums of Care (CoCs) as partners in their implementation of the 2017 Youth Count. Partners are organized by category and then by CoC. Categories are ordered by the commonality of partnerships within that category across the CoCs.

Use this list to brainstorm other partners your CoC could enlist to assist in your local Youth Count. In what area(s) does your Continuum of Care lack partnerships? Are there particular partners who might be able to assist in reaching a particular goal? Even if you had partnerships in an area, compare your list to others' to see where you could expand.

*\* denotes that part of this program is specifically youth focused.      \*\* denotes that the program is entirely youth focused.*

### Direct Service Providers

100% of CoCs partnered with organizations providing direct services, including job readiness/workforce development, mental health services, behavioral health services, crisis centers, meals, food pantries, clothing, and more.

#### Anne Arundel County

- [Blessed in Tech Ministries](#)\*
- [YWCA](#)
- [People Encouraging People](#)\*

#### Baltimore City

- [Health Care for the Homeless](#)\*
- [Catholic Charities](#)\*
- [Joy Baltimore](#)\*\*
- [Star Track](#)\*\*
- [YO! Baltimore East Side](#)\*\*
- [Weinberg Housing and Resource Center](#)
- [Penn North Recovery/Behavioral Health Center](#)\*
- [Helping Other People through Empowerment \(HOPE\) Wellness and Recovery Center](#)\*
- [Our Daily Bread](#)
- [Turnaround, Inc.](#)\*
- [House of Ruth](#)\*
- [Franciscan Center](#)

#### Baltimore County

- [Prologue, Inc.](#)
- [New Pathways Center](#)\*\*
- [Community Assistance Network](#)\*
- [Turnaround, Inc.](#)\*
- [Streets of Hope](#)
- [On Our Own](#)
- Emergency assistance centers
- Methadone clinics

#### Carroll County

- [Carroll County Business & Resource Center](#)\*
- [Family & Children's Services of Central Maryland](#)\*

#### Howard County

- [Howard County Food Bank](#)

- [Bridges](#)
- [Voices for Children](#)\*\*
- [Humanim](#)\*
- [Mental Health Authority](#)
- [Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center](#)\*
- [Columbia Workforce Center](#)
- [Multi-Service Center](#)\*

#### Lower Shore Counties

- [HALO \(Health Assistance Program\)](#)\*
- [HOPE: Help and Outreach Point of Entry](#)
- [Catholic Charities/Seton Center](#)
- [Telamon](#)\*

#### Mid Shore Counties

- [Mid-Shore Behavioral Health](#)
- Local outpatient mental health clinics
- County Community Action Agencies

#### Prince George's County

- [Maryland Multicultural Youth Center](#)\*\*
- [Maryland Youth Service Bureaus](#)\*\*
- [Right Hands for Left Hearts](#)\*\*
- [So Others Can Keep Striding \(SOCKS\)](#)
- [Teen Challenge DC](#)\*\*

#### Southern Maryland Counties

- [LifeStyles of Maryland](#)\*
- [Project Echo](#)
- Soup kitchens
- Local employment agencies

#### Washington County

- [Washington County Community Action Council](#)
- [The Salvation Army](#)\*
- [Turning Point of Washington County](#)\*

## Local Government

---

100% of CoCs partnered with government entities including homelessness-specific programs, Social Services, Human Services, Youth/Juvenile Services, Health Departments, Local Management Boards, Boards of Education, Parks and Recreation, Housing, and Police Departments.

### Anne Arundel County

- Anne Arundel County Department of Social Services Homeless Outreach Team

### Baltimore City

- Mayor's Office of Human Services-Homeless Services Program
- Family League

### Baltimore County

- Baltimore County Department of Planning
- Baltimore County Department of Social Services
- Baltimore County Health Department
- Baltimore County Detention Center
- Baltimore County Local Management Board

### Carroll County

- Carroll County Department of Citizen Services
- Human Services Program of Carroll County
- Carroll County Sheriff's Office
- Carroll County Department of Social Services
- Carroll County Health Department
- Carroll County Youth Services Bureau
- Carroll County Local Management Board

### Howard County

- Howard County Office of Local Children's Board
- Howard County Continuum of Care for Homeless Services and the Office of Workforce Development
- Howard County Police Department
- Howard County Department of Social Services
- Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks
- Howard County Department of Health
- Maryland Department of Juvenile Services

### Lower Shore Counties

- Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester Boards of Education
- Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester Health Departments

## Community Coalitions

---

80% of CoCs partnered with local coalitions.

### Anne Arundel County

- [The Anne Arundel County and Annapolis Coalition to End Homelessness](#)

- Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester Departments of Social Services
- Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester Local Management Boards

### Mid Shore Counties

- Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot County Departments of Social Services
- Department of Juvenile Services

### Prince George's County

- Prince George's County Department of Social Services Community Services Division and SOAR Outreach Team
- Prince George's County Department of Family Services
- Maryland Department of Juvenile Services
- Prince George's County Local Management Board
- Prince George's County Department of Parks & Recreation
- Prince George's County Health Department (including community health workers and Healthy Teen Centers)

### Southern Maryland Counties

- Charles, Calvert, and St. Mary's County Departments of Social Services
- Charles County Department of Community Services/Housing Authority
- St. Mary's County Housing Authority
- St. Mary's County Department of Aging & Human Services
- Calvert County Department of Community Resources
- Calvert County Health Department
- Charles County Department of Health

### Washington County

- Washington County Department of Social Services

- [Partnership for Children, Youth & Families\\*](#)

### Baltimore County

- [Baltimore County Communities for the Homeless](#)

### Carroll County

- [PFLAG \(Families and Allies of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Queer Community\) Carroll County Chapter\\*](#)
- [Circle of Caring Homelessness Board\\*](#)

### Howard County

- [PFLAG\\*](#)

### Mid Shore Counties

- [The Mid-Shore Roundtable on Homelessness](#)

### Prince George's County

- [Prince George's County LGBT Youth Task Group\\*\\*](#)
- [Maryland Coalition of Families' Youth Peer Support Group\\*\\*](#)
- Prince George's County Homeless Service Partnership

### Southern Maryland Counties

- [Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland](#)
- [Tri-County Youth Services Bureau\\*\\*](#)

### Washington County

- Washington County Homeless Coalition

## Public Schools

80% of CoCs partnered with local public schools or community schools.

- Anne Arundel County Public Schools
- Baltimore City Schools
- Baltimore County Public Schools
- Carroll County Public Schools
- Howard County Public Schools
- Prince George's County Public Schools
- TNI@School (Prince George's County Community Schools Network)
- Charles, Calvert, and St. Mary's County Public Schools
- Washington County Public Schools

## Homeless Service Providers

70% of CoCs partnered with organizations providing day shelter, overnight shelter, emergency shelter, transitional housing, or permanent housing.

### Baltimore City

- AIRS/City Steps
- Youth Empowered Society (YES)
- Geraldine Young House
- My Sister's Place
- Hearts and Homes for Youth
- The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Community Center (GLCCB)

### Baltimore County

- Eastside Family Shelter
- Westside Men's Shelter
- Northpoint Code Blue Shelter
- Hannah More Shelter
- Family Crisis Center
- INNterim Housing Corporation
- Night of Peace

### Howard County

- Day Resource Center

### Lower Shore Counties

- Diakonia
- Samaritan Ministries
- Village of Hope
- Joseph House
- Christian Shelter

### Prince George's County

- Greenbelt Transitional Housing
- Lifestyles of Maryland
- Promise Place Sasha Bruce Youth Shelter
- Shepard's Cove
- St. Anne's Center for Children, Youth and Families

### Southern Maryland Counties

- Three Oaks Center

### Washington County

- REACH of Washington County

## Libraries

---

60% of CoCs partnered with local libraries.

- Baltimore County Public Libraries
- Carroll County Public Library
- Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot County Public Libraries
- Prince George's County Memorial Library System
- Charles, Calvert, and St. Mary's County Public Libraries
- Washington County Public Libraries

## Faith-based Organizations/Places of Worship

---

50% of CoCs partnered with religious institutions.

### Anne Arundel County

- i5 City Church

### Baltimore County

- Patapsco United Methodist Church
- Boulevard Christian Church
- Mt Calvary AME Church

### Howard County

- Solomon's Porch Worship Center

### Lower Shore Counties

- Remove all Hindrances to Success Ministries

### Prince George's County

- Gethsemane United Methodist Church
- University of Maryland Lutheran Campus Ministries

## Higher Education

---

50% of CoCs partnered with colleges or universities.

- Community College of Baltimore County
- Towson University (Baltimore County)
- Carroll Community College
- McDaniel College (Carroll County)
- Howard Community College
- University of Maryland Eastern Shore (Lower Shore)
- Salisbury University (Lower Shore)
- Prince George's County Community College

## Legal Services

---

20% of CoCs partnered with organizations providing legal services.

### Anne Arundel County

- Organization of Hispanic/Latin Americans of Anne Arundel County

### Baltimore City

- Homeless Person's Representation Project (HPRP)
- The Public Justice Center

## Advocacy Organizations

---

10% of CoCs partnered with advocacy organizations.

### Baltimore City

- Advocates for Children and Youth
- Center for Urban Families

## Hospitals

---

10% of CoCs partnered with local hospitals.

- Howard County General Hospital