



# Runaway and Homeless Youth Training & Technical Assistance Center

## **Unprecedented Times:**

How RHY Programs Support Youth Well-being During and Beyond the Pandemic: Input from the Field

# Unprecedented Times: How RHY Programs Support Youth Well-being In and Beyond the Pandemic Input from the Field

**Anne F. Farrell, PhD**, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago

**Maddox Guerilla**, Youth Catalyst Team Member

**Lisa Hameed, ASW**, Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services  
Department, Family and Children's Division



# Greetings and Introductions

## **Context for today's session:**

- Bring forward and discuss input from the field on COVID-19
- Reflect & discuss; guide preparation and recovery efforts
- Say hello in the chat;
  - What are you most looking forward to right now?

## **Presenters:**

- Maddox Guerilla, Youth Catalyst, Youth Collaboratory
- Anne Farrell, Director of Research, Chapin Hall
- Lisa Hameed, Mental Health Program Specialist II, Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services Department, Family and Children's Division

## **During this session:**

- Feel free to be on/off camera

# Agenda

- I. **Frame the Conversation:** What have we learned and what can we learn?
- II. **Feedback From the Field:** RHY National Grantee Training sessions
- III. **Observations & Reflections:** Maddox Guerilla
- IV. **Moving to Virtual Support:** Lisa Hameed, Virtual You
- V. **Observations & Reflections:** Maddox Guerilla
- VI. **Q & A / Discussion**

# Findings from National RHY Grantees Training

## November 2020 - Unprecedented Times panel/breakout sessions

- 222 participants from across the U.S.
  - Reps from street outreach, basic and drop-in centers, emergency youth shelters, transitional living, supportive housing programs
  - Note on virtual format
- Identified **10 themes** in 3 categories (below) plus **TTA recommendations**
  - Challenges faced by providers
  - Strategies for adaptation
  - Participant suggestions for training & technical assistance (TTA)



# Theme 1 – Identifying Youth Who Need Support

## Challenges:

- Outreach and program safety
- Reduced building/service capacity
- Fewer youth referrals

## ➤ Recommendations:

- Strategies for positive relationship building and identification
- Insight into continuum of care
- Document financial implications
- Take interventions “upstream”

# Theme 2 – Connecting Youth to Housing and Employment

## **Challenges:**

- Lack of affordable housing, pandemic concerns
- Safety risks in work environments

## ➤ **Recommendations:**

- Leveraging relief/stimulus funding to match needs
- Stretching available resources/creative use of funding

# Theme 3 – Staff Concern: Enforcing Health Measures

## Challenges:

- Ready access to supplies (PPE); safe spaces
- Lack of non-punitive strategies to enforce social distancing
- Less frequent staff visits and unit cleanliness

## ➤ Recommendations:

- Collaborate with youth to develop TA on influencing COVID-safe behavior



# Theme 4 – Staff Face Labor-intensive Adaptations

## **Challenges:**

- Staff stress, burnout, intensive schedules
- Constant plan adjustments

## ➤ **Recommendations:**

- Training on strategies to alleviate staff stress
- Encourage routine mental and physical health breaks
- Advance guidance and preparation

# Theme 5 – Creative Strategies to Support Youth

## Strategies:

- Helping youth access stimulus payments/benefits
- Outdoor outreach, food delivery
- Centralized public health coordination

## ➤ Recommendations:

- Further assessments of grantee strategies
- Provide spaces to share best practices among grantees
  - e.g. TA cafes, virtual boards, networking opportunities

# Theme 6 – Using Technology to Reach Young People

## **Strategies:**

- Utilizing apps, social media, texting to reach youth
  - e.g. Band app, Houseparty app, Facetime
- Upgrading Internet connections and equipment

## ➤ **Recommendations:**

- Assess pros and cons of different resources
- Share information amongst grantees

# Theme 7 – Education & Safety Efforts

## **Strategies:**

- Lead sessions with youth to foster safe behavior
- Developing new education efforts or methods to address well-being

## ➤ **Recommendations:**

- Collaborate with youth to create training on finding/sharing accurate information on platforms youth use and trust

# Theme 8 – Advocate for Those At-risk for COVID-19

## **Strategies:**

- Prioritize youth with COVID-19 health concerns in coordinated entry systems
- Advocate early vaccine access for staff/youth in congregate settings

## ➤ **Recommendations:**

- Targeted training on management of health conditions and disabilities
- Guidance on advocating for youth most at risk for COVID-19

# Theme 9 – Guidance on Leveraging Technology

## **Strategies:**

- Finding secure/confidential platforms for caseworker use
- Using technology to
  - Reach and address youth needs
  - Counter social isolation
  - Support operational management

## ➤ **Recommendations:**

- Resources for smartphones and mobile/data plans for youth
- Trainings on various apps and virtual relationship-building
- Address mental health needs & prevent crisis

# Theme 10 – Guidance on COVID-Safe Youth Engagement

## Strategies:

- Training on best practices for:
  - Outreach
  - Communication
  - Decision-making protocols
  - Accessing stimulus/funding
  - Encouraging safety

## ➤ Recommendations:

- TA on youth outreach, information sharing, engagement
- Preparedness manuals for crises to ensure seamless services

# Observations and Reflections

**Maddox Guerilla**, Youth Catalyst Team Member

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# Virtual You: Navigating Wellness Online

**Lisa Hameed, ASW**, Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services Department,  
Family and Children's Division

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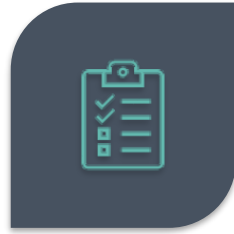
# Agenda



PROJECT  
DESCRIPTION



PROJECT  
BACKGROUND



IMPLEMENTATION



LESSONS  
LEARNED



QUESTIONS AND  
ANSWERS

# Virtual You: Navigating Wellness Online

## Description



A partnership across multiple community organizations to provide support & services to youth & young adults across 15 Santa Clara County communities in a virtual environment



Services are free to all youth ages 12-24 and includes workshops on a variety of topics



Goals are to increase awareness, engage youth, and increase skills

# Virtual You Background



Provided by Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services Department (SCC BHSD) in partnership with community agencies



Focused on youth engagement, wellness, education & employment support, and psychoeducation



Developed using input from a county Youth Advisory Group (YAG) and programs adjusted using group feedback



Intended to be a part of a newly established integrated health sites program which was delayed in opening due to the Covid19 pandemic

# Implementation



Met with community partners to identify group facilitators, platforms, scheduling of workshops, and outreach materials



Outreach efforts and the YAG created a social media video



Worked across the CYF system of care to share information on programming



Created registration and data collection pathways for program evaluation

# Lessons Learned



Utilize youth as a resource in developing program offering



Outreach diversity



Utilize consistent registration and virtual platforms for continuity



Understand virtual meeting fatigue and have a plan



Family & Youth  
Services Bureau

Runaway and Homeless Youth  
Training & Technical Assistance Center

# Contact Information

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# Observations and Reflections

**Maddox Guerilla**, Youth Catalyst Team Member

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# Questions and Discussion

## **Responses: Where does this leave us?**

- Processing the experience of disruption, loss, trauma
- Illuminating the inequities in systems

## **Implications**

- How do we turn these experiences into meaningful change?
- How can we prepare for future events?

## **Informing RHYTTAC efforts**

- What forms of information and support are needed going forward?
- Suggestions for future TA and presentation topics



# Evaluation and Upcoming Events

- Please complete the evaluation: <https://tinyurl.com/sc9dbcjw>
  - Select “Webinar” as the Event Type and “Unprecedented Times” from the dropdown
- **Join us for upcoming RHYTTAC events:**
  - [Regional Training for RHY Grantees](#)
    - May 24-27
    - Register by May 20<sup>th</sup>
  - [Covid-19 Webinar Series](#)
    - COVID-19 Latest Developments: Vaccinations and Variants
    - *Coming June 2021*
- Slides and Recording will be posted in eLearning on [rhyttac.net](http://rhyttac.net)

# Runaway and Homeless Youth Training & Technical Assistance Center

## Connect with Us!

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