



Rising Up – A Public Private Partnership To Reduce Youth Homelessness in San Francisco

November, 2020

Introduction

Rising Up is a public/private partnership that was launched by Mayor London Breed in January 2019 to reduce the number of young people experiencing homelessness in San Francisco by 50% by 2023. It's a city-wide, systems level approach that brings together City resources, corporate partners, individual funders, philanthropy, and non-profit partners to provide services to connect young people with housing and employment, and set them on the right track for the future. The Rising Up partnership is led by the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH). Larkin Street Youth Services is the anchor non-profit institution. Below is a report which outlines our Rising Up progress over the past calendar year.

Program Data

Programming Overview

Rising Up starts with **Coordinated Entry (CE)** – a citywide system for all people experiencing homelessness. There are six Youth Access Points specifically where young people are screened for eligibility, offered immediate assistance, and assessed for housing. All data is tracked in the citywide ONE system.

There are two major program components of Rising Up. **Problem Solving** helps young people immediately resolve their housing crisis and avoid the homelessness response system altogether. The goal of Rising Up is to provide Problem Solving services to 450 young people by 2023. The other component is **Rapid Rehousing**: where young people can receive a \$27K rent subsidy and intensive case management support for up to 3 years. The goal of Rising Up is to house 500 young people through Rapid Rehousing by 2023.

Results to Date

- **We have resolved homelessness for 72 young people** through problem solving, e.g. move-in assistance for housing, first and last months' rent, contributions to household utility costs, gas cards, grocery cards, finding a safe place to live with a friend or family member, and more.
- **We have housed 187 young people through Rapid Rehousing, with another 37 in the pipeline** for placement.
- **In total, we have helped 296 young people find a pathway out of homelessness** and toward independence.

All participants housed through Rising Up have benefited from **Supportive Services** including: intensive case management, education services, employment opportunities, financial management guidance, and linkage to physical and behavioral health resources.

Demographic Information

- **Race:** 60% Black, 16% White, 3% Asian, 2% Pacific Islander, 2% Native American, 11% No Data
- **Ethnicity:** 23% Hispanic/Latinx, 77% Non Hispanic
- **Sexual Orientation:** 73% straight, 12% Gay/Lesbian, 10% Bi sexual, 4% No Data
- **Gender Identity:** 55% Female, 42% Male, 3% Transgender, 1% Gender Non Conforming

Youth Achieving Independence

- Five young people have successfully exited Rising Up through various means: remaining independently in housing and able to pay their own rent when the subsidy ended, reuniting with family, moving on to permanent supportive housing, or in one case, being able to take advantage of the cash-out incentive and covering the rent independently.

Challenges

- Black and Brown youth are dramatically over-represented among those experiencing homelessness, including the young people in Rising Up. However, as shown in the demographic information above, there is an underrepresentation of LGBTQ youth in Rising Up, i.e. 12% of the young people in Rising Up identify as LGBTQ, compared to 46% of the overall population of young people experiencing homelessness in San Francisco, as shown in the 2019 Point in Time report.
- Many of the young people being housed have never lived on their own and as such require a great deal of education and support in obtaining housing, being a good neighbor, communicating effectively with a landlord when concerns arise.
- The economic shut-down has caused many young people in the program to lose jobs or wages, creating financial uncertainty, the need for increased rent subsidies, food insecurity, and more.
- Some of the clients who are referred into Rising Up have a complexity of needs or serious mental health issues that affect their ability to take full advantage of the program. For some of these clients, the program model is not ideally suited to provide the intensity of services required. Additionally, the pandemic, along with the anger and fear brought about by racial justice issues, has led to an increase in mental health issues overall, as well as an increase in incidences of substance abuse and rates of domestic violence.
- Since approximately 85% of the Rising Up placements are outside of San Francisco (primarily in the East Bay region), the challenge of transferring mainstream benefits between counties and ensuring an adequate referral network has been significant.

Successes/Accomplishments

- Like the young people, the staff members at each partner organization are also continuing to adjust to their own ever-changing circumstances; balancing child-care, family, and/or health challenges with the needs of their jobs. Still, these staff members (our first responders) continue to creatively and tenaciously support young people. They are learning more effective processes and protocols to move more young people into housing, provide access to food, secure physical and behavioral health support, provide technology for online learning, and more.
- Prior to the pandemic, the Rising up model was already bringing the partners together in an increasingly effective and cohesive manner. Thus when the pandemic struck, there was a solid base of communication and teamwork in place between the City and nonprofit partners, and also among the nonprofit partners themselves. As a result, all of the public and private partners have been able to work together to identify issues, develop solutions, and more effectively meet and address the changing needs of the young people.
- For Five Keys Schools and Programs, the stable housing that Rising Up provides has led to an interruption in a cycle of recidivism back into jail for many of the young people they serve through Rising Up.

- The City’s Office of Financial Empowerment has successfully developed and integrated a financial capability model, Smart Money Coaching, into Rising Up to support youth participants to achieve long-term financial stability and help remove barriers to housing and employment. Thus far, 44 young people have worked with a certified financial coach and through this effort:
 - 44 young people have opened a safe and affordable bank account or prepaid card.
 - \$11,000 in collections debt has been cleared from youths’ credit reports.
 - 8 young people have been enrolled in public benefits such as Unemployment Insurance and CalFresh, helping to increase their overall income.
 - Many of the young people have received support in navigating the financial impacts of COVID-19, such as accessing their stimulus checks.
- And above all, Rising Up has helped 371 young people find a path to independence. These are young people who were sleeping on the streets or in their cars and who are now are stable and in their own homes. For most of the youth in the program, it is the first time they have qualified for a program that both houses them and provides them with a respite so that they can begin to heal. Clients are surrounded by a community, a team working on their behalf providing life skills, job development, financial coaching, and housing coordination. With the support from this team many of the young people are working and will be able to take over their lease when the subsidy ends.

Next Steps and Sustainability

Rising Up – Plans for the coming year

- While Rising Up participants have always been encouraged to opt in to shared living arrangements, roommate matching has been a logistical challenge. Given the economic benefits of shared housing, Rising Up program staff and leadership are identifying easier and more expeditious ways to quickly match roommates so that participants can spread their subsidy allotment over a longer period of time. Despite the economic and social benefits of shared housing, we also know that tensions can arise between roommates; staff and young people will soon have additional support around conflict resolution and mediation through Community Boards.
- Due to the significant increase in issues related to mental health, drug abuse, and domestic violence among Rising Up youth, the Rising Up Steering Committee has approved the addition of two new positions to support the behavioral health care needs of the youth in Rising Up; a Clinician and a Peer Support Specialist. These staff members will also facilitate connecting the young people with services in the counties where they are housed. We are seeking private and/or public funding to support these positions.
- We’re re-evaluating some of our other programming to determine how we can strengthen it, i.e.:
 - Evaluating how we think about employment in this new economic environment; looking at what industries are hiring and what jobs will be available.
 - Further strengthening the financial counseling program that has been put in place.
- We are working with the Urban Institute to conduct an in-depth evaluation of the Rising Up programming. The learnings from this evaluation will help us adjust and/or strengthen the long-term strategy of Rising Up, while making immediate changes as needed.
- Through our own analysis, we are going to take a closer look at why we don’t have a higher population of LGBTQ young people in Rising Up, and work closely with the Youth Access Points located at The LGBT Center and LYRIC (nonprofit partners that focus on LGBTQ+ youth) to identify barriers their young people are encountering in accessing housing.

- We have added a young person to sit on the Rising Up Steering Committee, knowing that strategic decisions we make going forward will be more well informed with input from the youths' perspective.
- The partners are evolving and adapting their services so that going forward they will be using more of a hybrid approach. For example, there will be elements of behavioral health programming and education and employment programming that will be both virtual as well as face-to-face.

Rising Up Goals and Objectives

Based on the strength of the Rising Up model and the success we have had thus far with its implementation, we are holding to our original goals of reducing the number of young people experiencing homelessness in San Francisco by 50% by 2023; and accomplishing this by serving 450 young people through Problem Solving and 500 young people through Rapid Rehousing.

Similarly, the original budget for Rising Up was \$35M. We have raised \$17.3M to date, about half of the total. This \$17.3M has allowed us to house nearly half of the young people originally projected, confirming that our budget projections were accurate. Moving forward, our existing funding will allow us to support the young people currently in Rising Up Rapid Rehousing. We are focusing now on raising the second half of the campaign funds in order to deliver on the goal.

Rising Up Fundraising

To reach our ultimate goal of a 50% reduction by 2023 in the number of young people who are homeless in San Francisco, we must have the support of the community to raise the rest of the funds, and we are redoubling our efforts to do just that. Prior to the pandemic, we were in conversation with a number of corporate and foundation prospective funders; some with soft commitments, some with questions and suggestions; all very willing to talk with us.

Starting in March, 2020, the dual impact of the pandemic and the racial justice issues caused most of these prospects to ask that we put our fundraising on hold while they sorted out new giving priorities. This was understandable and in fact, Rising Up was the fortunate beneficiary of a very generous \$75,000 Covid-19 relief grant from the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation. From March through May we focused on keeping all of our supporters, both funders and others, informed with regular reports and a set of informative Virtual Roundtables.

Starting in June, 2020, we once again started reaching out in virtual meetings to the original prospects as well as to a number of new ones. Although to date there are still no firm funding commitments, the conversations are more positive. Almost all of the prospects have told us that we should not anticipate any funding until 2021, but to be sure to keep in touch.

The area of public funding is a bit more complicated. There are a number of conversations going on at City Hall about funding efforts to reduce homelessness for all populations. The current ballot has several revenue measures which, if passed, could bring in funding for housing and homelessness. The funds from [Prop C](#), passed in 2018, have now been released and are intended to support homelessness and housing, including a 20% set-aside in services funding for Transition Age Youth. Overall, there is not a clear path at this time to obtaining additional public funding for Rising Up. However, we are continuing to actively advocate for it.

A Youth Story

'Antonio' is a 21-year-old Rising Up participant who was able to find permanent housing through Rising Up. Although young in age, Antonio has experienced plenty of ups and downs in his life. He has experienced incarceration, struggled with addiction, and having no supportive role models in his life. After spending a year in intensive addiction recovery, he has turned his life around with the tools provided by the Rising Up program. Antonio has transformed into a young man who is empowered and not limited by the cycles of poverty and addiction. He holds a full-time job, often working over-time to fulfill his dream of buying a home in his native Daly City. He is profoundly involved with his community and dedicates his professional life to giving back to the community that assisted him in attaining sobriety, all the while maintaining his signature buoyant and cheerful nature. Justin is currently residing in Oakland and is adapting to his new life with new-found resolve and gratitude.

In Closing

The Rising Up partnership model has more relevance now than ever before. With its focus on youth of color and LGBTQ+ youth, Rising Up squarely addresses the issue of racial and social equity that now must become part of our national dialogue. We know, in fact, that funding Rising Up at this time will provide its own form of COVID relief. Young people who are on the streets can find a home. Others who lost their jobs can get back to work. Still others who are getting a diploma or a degree can get the technology they need to complete it. And importantly, young people whose mental health has been affected by the pandemic will get the care they need.

On behalf of the 296 young people we have served thus far, we deeply appreciate the support we have received from our generous funders and supporters.