



**YESS
COMMUNITY
ASSESSMENT &
DATA PROFILE
REPORT**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Purpose of Report and Project	1
Overview of YESS: Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals	3
Methodology	7
Key Findings	13
Critical Needs of Youth in Crisis	16
Community Attitudes, Perceptions, and Readiness	22
Recommendations	36
Final Reflection and Closing Statement	40
 Appendices	
Appendix A - Stakeholder Interview and Survey	41
Appendix B - Community Data Highlights	43
Appendix C - Letters of Support and Endorsements	46
Appendix D - References	47

Purpose of Report and Project

This comprehensive report has been developed to document the needs, resources, and stakeholder perspectives related to youth homelessness in Hubbard County and to inform the planning of the YESS project. The report's purpose is twofold: (1) to gather evidence and insights that ensure the YESS program is designed effectively to meet local needs, and (2) to demonstrate the levels of community support and document youth needs to potential funders and partners. In short, the report will be used as a tool to secure funding, partnerships, and encourage broad-based community buy-in for establishing the youth shelter.

YESS recognized early on that data and community input would be critical to justify the project. Local officials had previously expressed hesitation about a youth shelter due to a lack of concrete data on the extent of youth homelessness. This assessment was therefore undertaken to provide that data and to elevate the voices of community stakeholders. The project has involved conducting interviews, surveys, and research to answer these key questions: How many youth are affected? What are their most urgent needs? What services currently exist and where are the gaps? How do community members feel about YESS, and what concerns or ideas do they have? By addressing these questions, the report will help ensure YESS's plans are grounded and aligned with community expectations.

Another purpose of this report is to foster transparency and collaboration. YESS depends on strong partnerships with county agencies, schools, health providers, tribal entities, and local nonprofits to succeed. This assessment process itself has been a way to open dialogue with those stakeholders. The findings and recommendations will be shared with the community to demonstrate that by working together, we can provide the support needed to help these youth and their families create safe and stable environments.

In doing so, YESS hopes the report will rally continued support: whether it's a county commissioner approving a partnership, a school referring students, or a donor contributing funds, everyone can see their role in the solution.

Ultimately, this comprehensive report will accompany grant applications and presentations to stakeholders. It serves as evidence of due diligence – showing that YESS has carefully assessed the situation and built a network of support. Potential funders and decision-makers will be able to review the data, stakeholder quotes, and planned approach, giving them confidence in the project's necessity and feasibility. For example, the report includes concrete statistics on local youth homelessness, results of a stakeholder survey, and documented letters of support from city councils and others. This level of detail can strengthen proposals to state and federal programs (such as the Homeless Youth Act grant) and to local foundations or community investors.

In summary, the purpose of this community assessment report is to guide YESS's development and to secure the resources to make it a reality. It is both an internal planning document and an external communications tool. The project of conducting the assessment (interviews, surveys, data gathering) has already helped YESS refine its strategy and engage partners; now, the final report will ensure those insights are put into action and shared widely to benefit Hubbard County's youth.



Overview of YESS:

Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals

Mission: Youth Emergency Shelter & Supports (YESS) is a grassroots 501(c)(3) nonprofit in Hubbard County, Minnesota, dedicated to helping youth in crisis. YESS’s mission is to provide “a safe and supportive environment for youth in need of crisis emergency shelter”. In practice, YESS plans to offer emergency shelter, life skills development, emotional support, and connections to community resources to help homeless or at-risk youth “navigate through times of crisis and transition into independent living”. YESS was established in 2023 in response to an urgent gap in local services: many Hubbard County youth face homelessness or housing instability due to family conflict, abuse, or economic hardship, yet there are few resources dedicated to homeless youth in the community. YESS aims to fill this gap by creating a safe, nurturing “safe haven” where these youth can find stability and begin working toward a brighter future.

Vision: YESS envisions more than just a shelter, it strives to provide a comprehensive, community-based support system for youth in crisis. According to YESS’s vision statement, the organization “will strive to provide community-based shelter services and support to youth who are at risk of homelessness or in transition between housing options. Services will be offered to all youth who are in need.” In other words, YESS’s vision is to ensure no youth is left without safe shelter and support in Hubbard County, no matter their background or situation.



Core Values: YESS is guided by core values that emphasize safety, inclusion, empowerment, adaptability, and quality. These values include:

- **Security:** Every young person deserves a safe and secure place to stay when in need. YESS is committed to providing stable housing as the foundation for all other services.
- **Inclusion:** Services will be offered to all youth in need, respecting and welcoming young people of all backgrounds. YESS believes in partnering with the whole community to ensure every youth is supported.
- **Inspiration:** By celebrating milestones and showing genuine care, YESS strives to inspire youth to thrive beyond their crisis. Youth are encouraged to envision and work toward a hopeful future.
- **Adaptability:** As circumstances change, YESS will meet youth “where they are” and adjust to their evolving needs. The program will remain flexible and responsive as challenges arise.
- **Quality:** YESS pledges continuous improvement in the quality of services provided, in order to fulfill its obligation as a trusted community resource.

Goals:

YESS’s goal is to establish a fully functioning, sustainable youth shelter in Hubbard County that provides not only emergency beds but also holistic services. Key goals include access to community resources like connecting youth to mental health services, education, and medical care. YESS plans to open a 24/7 emergency youth shelter in the Park Rapids area (the county’s largest town), with capacity for about 8–10 youth. The shelter will provide food, clothing, counseling, and on-site referrals. YESS’s three-year strategic plan lays out a roadmap: **Year 1** focuses on raising community awareness, building partnerships, and securing initial funding; **Year 2** on expanding outreach, engaging donors and grant funders, and finalizing building plans; **Year 3** on obtaining long-term funding, selecting a building site, and opening the shelter. Ultimately, YESS’s goal is not only to provide emergency shelter but to prevent youth homelessness through early intervention and to equip vulnerable youth with the skills and support needed to thrive independently in the community.



Key Objectives for Project Success

From the outset, YESS and its consultants established several key objectives for this community assessment project to ensure the success of the planned youth shelter initiative. These objectives served as guideposts for the work:

1. Identify and Document Needs: The top priority was to clearly identify the critical needs of youth in crisis in Hubbard County. This meant quantifying how many local youth experience homelessness or housing instability and understanding what specific support they lack (e.g. shelter, counseling, life skills training). Achieving this objective provides a factual foundation for why YESS is needed.

2. Gather Stakeholder Insights and Support: The project aimed to listen to a broad range of stakeholders including social service providers, educators, law enforcement, healthcare providers, civic leaders, and community members to learn their perspectives on youth homelessness and YESS. A key objective was to surface any concerns or misconceptions that might hinder the project and identify champions who could collaborate. This ensures the program is shaped with community input and that potential partners feel heard and invested.

3. Map Existing Resources and Gaps: To design YESS effectively, it was essential to catalog current resources available to youth in crisis, such as any regional shelters, host home programs, crisis lines, or agencies like MAHUBE-OTWA and pinpoint the gaps in services. By knowing what is already in place, YESS can avoid duplication and instead fill unmet needs, for example, addressing the lack of an emergency youth shelter within the county. This objective helps define YESS's role in the broader network of support.

4. Build a Case for Funding: The assessment was needed to produce data and narratives that would persuade funders and decision-makers. Objectives included collecting local data like school homelessness figures, survey statistics, and personal stories or quotes that illustrate the problem. A successful report would tie these findings to clear, solution-oriented recommendations, essentially making the case that investing in YESS will have a positive impact on youth and the community.

5. Enhance Community Awareness and Reduce Stigma: An important objective was to use the process to educate the community and stakeholders about youth homelessness and what it looks like in a rural area and why local action is needed. By sharing facts like definitions of “homeless youth” and examples of hidden homelessness and facilitating conversations, the project aimed to dispel myths like the notion that “We don’t have homeless youth here.” and build empathy. Success would be measured in part by stakeholders acknowledging the issue and expressing support for solutions.

6. Identify Opportunities for Collaboration: Finally, the assessment sought to identify concrete partnership opportunities. Objectives included finding out which agencies or organizations are willing to collaborate and in what ways, such as referrals, sharing data, joint programming, or funding support. This ensures that moving forward YESS can integrate into existing systems, such as schools and county services rather than operate in isolation. In the survey, for example, stakeholders were asked how local systems could support YESS, and many potential avenues emerged from cross-agency case coordination to providing in-kind support.

By meeting these objectives, this project lays a strong groundwork for YESS. It not only provides a clear picture of the current situation and community sentiment but also charts a path to move from idea to action. Each objective aligns with making the YESS shelter project feasible, community-supported, and impactful once implemented.

Methodology

To achieve the above objectives, YESS carried out a comprehensive community assessment using multiple methods. This section describes the methodology, including stakeholder engagement approaches, data collection techniques, and analysis processes. The assessment combined qualitative and quantitative research and was conducted in partnership with an external consulting team for objectivity and rigor.

Stakeholder Interviews: One core method was conducting key informant interviews with stakeholders across various sectors. A total of 15 one-on-one stakeholder interviews (in-depth listening sessions) were planned with individuals identified as having important perspectives on youth homelessness and youth services. These individuals included county government officials, social services management, school administrators, counselors, law enforcement, leaders of local non-profits and charities, youth program coordinators, and health/mental health professionals. YESS's team, with guidance from the consultant, developed a Stakeholder Interview Guide (see Appendix A) containing open-ended questions about youth needs, existing resources, gaps, collaboration barriers, and partnership ideas. Interviews typically lasted 20–30 minutes and were conducted between May and July 2025, either in person, by phone, or by video call.

Interviewers began each session by introducing YESS and the purpose of the interview, emphasizing a confidential, non-judgmental conversation. They used active listening techniques, probing for clarification when needed, but took care not to lead the interviewees or advocate during the interview. Notes were taken during each session, and key quotes or points were later extracted with identifying information removed to include in the report findings. The consultant provided training to YESS staff on effective interviewing to ensure consistency and impartiality.

Community/Stakeholder Survey: In parallel with interviews, YESS administered surveys via social media to the public to broaden the input beyond the key informants interviewed. The survey was delivered primarily via an online Microsoft Forms and was shared through targeted emails and later through social media.

Early on, stakeholders completed the survey during their interview ensuring that both interview conversation and survey data were captured together. After completing the planned surveys, the same survey link was distributed publicly on YESS’s Facebook page and emailed to community contacts, to invite additional community members and professionals to contribute their perspectives. The study used a two-stage approach in-depth interviews followed by a broad survey to capture detailed insights and generalizable patterns.

The survey included a mix of multiple-choice, Likert-scale, and open-ended questions mirroring the interview guide topics. For example, it asked respondents to select critical needs for youth in crisis. Multiple options were provided such as shelter, mental health services, life skills training, participants were able to rate the importance of youth staying in their community during crisis, and to describe any perceived gaps in services. It also asked participants to point out potential barriers to collaboration. These barriers included, lack of funding, lack of awareness, stigma, and more. The survey asked how local systems can collaborate providing options like refer youth to YESS, share data, or provide funding. In addition, respondents could indicate if they were personally interested in getting involved with YESS and if so what role they or their organization might play such as referral partner, volunteer, funding partner, or collaborating in services and community projects and events. Basic demographics were collected to better understand participation, such as the respondent’s sector/role, the community they live/work in, and their age range.

A total of 46 survey responses were received between May–July 2025 including those filled in during interviews. Respondents represented a diverse cross-section of the community: for instance, participants included school principals and counselors, county social service personnel, mental health practitioners, nonprofit leaders, youth program volunteers, and a few general community members and parents. They came from locations across the area such as Park Rapids, Laporte, Nevis, Akeley, as well as neighboring counties. Approximately 38% of respondents indicated they would be interested in partnering with YESS in some capacity, showing a solid base of engaged stakeholders. The survey was anonymous unless the individual chose to provide their name/contact, about one-third did so, typically those representing agencies. Survey data has been analyzed in aggregate – the report presents statistics (like “X% of stakeholders agreed on Y”) and anonymous quotes from the open-ended responses to illustrate common themes.

Community Data Profile and Secondary Research: To complement the interviews and survey, the team compiled a Community Data Profile focusing on youth homelessness and related indicators in Hubbard County (see Appendix B for a summary). This involved gathering existing data from various sources: U.S. Census and American Community Survey for demographics, Minnesota Student Survey results for local youth risk factors like mental health and housing instability, county and state reports like the Homeless Youth Act report, Continuum of Care data, school district McKinney-Vento counts of homeless students, and local studies or news articles. For example, data on the number of homeless students identified in Hubbard County schools, the percentage of youth experiencing poverty, foster care statistics, and youth mental health provider availability were collected and analyzed.

The analysis methods for this assessment were both quantitative and qualitative. Survey multiple-choice results were tallied to produce frequencies and percentages, such as how many respondents selected each critical need or each perceived barrier. Qualitative responses from interviews and survey open-ended questions were coded for key themes. The consulting team reviewed notes and answers, looking for recurring topics or concerns such as “lack of awareness” coming up frequently as a barrier, or “transportation” frequently mentioned as a challenge. Representative quotes were extracted to give voice to those themes in the findings. For instance, if several stakeholders said something in different ways about the need for an emergency shelter, a concise quote capturing that sentiment was chosen to include. All identifying information was removed from quotes to maintain confidentiality. The analysis also involved comparing the quantitative data with qualitative insights – for example, if 23 out of 46 people marked “stigma” as a barrier in the survey, we would also note any quotes or stories that illustrate what that stigma looks like in the community.

Quality control measures were built into the process. Consultants met bi-weekly with YESS leadership to review progress and ensure key stakeholders were represented. A midpoint review of survey responses helped identify gaps, prompting additional outreach where needed. Data collection concluded in August 2025, followed by synthesis and review by YESS board members to confirm accuracy and local relevance.

Overall, the mixed-methods approach—combining interviews, surveys, and data analysis—provided a balanced, evidence-based understanding of youth homelessness in Hubbard County and informed practical, community-grounded recommendations.



Timeline and Responsibilities

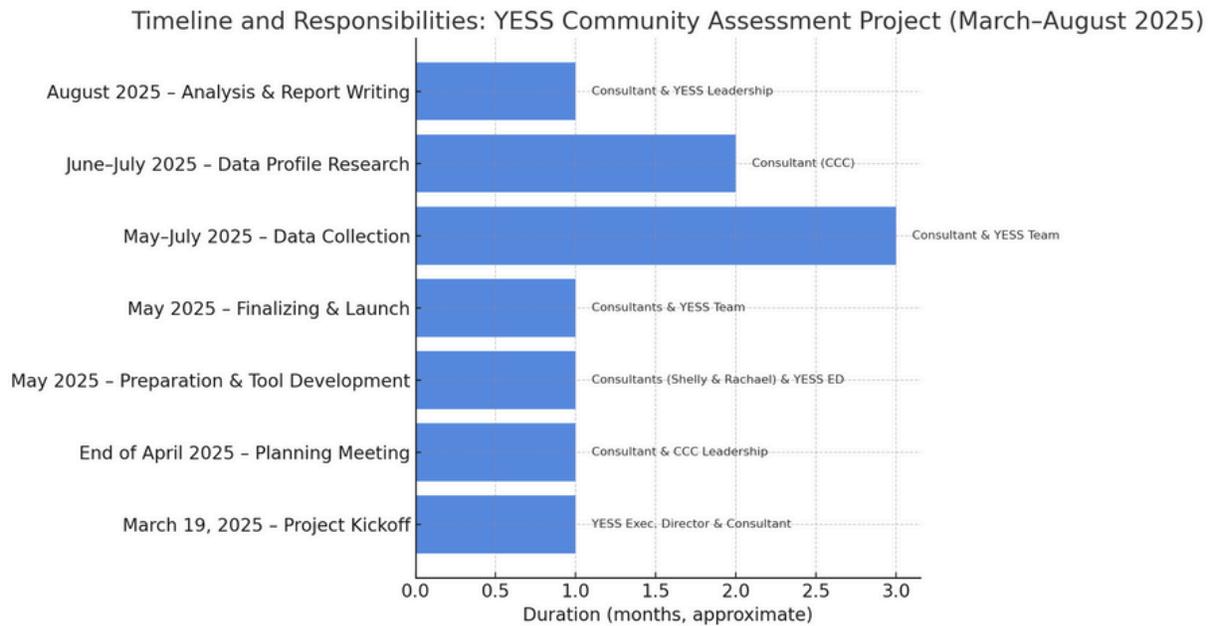


Figure 1: Timeline and Responsibilities for the YESS Community Assessment Project (March–August 2025). Each bar represents a project phase, its approximate duration, and the primary parties responsible for that stage.

The community assessment project took place over roughly six months (March – August 2025), following a structured timeline of activities and clearly defined responsibilities between the consultant team and YESS staff/volunteers. Below is an overview of the timeline with key milestones and the individuals or groups responsible for each step:

- **March 19, 2025** – Project Kickoff: YESS officially engaged Creating Community Consulting to assist with the needs assessment and feasibility study for the shelter. A contract was signed effective 3/19/2025 through 9/30/2025, outlining deliverables including stakeholder interviews, a community survey, data analysis, and a final report. Responsibility: YESS’s Executive Director (Kori Nelson) and the lead consultant (Megan Jenson) initiated the agreement and set initial goals.
- **End of April 2025** – Planning Meeting: The consultant facilitated a planning session (via video conference) with CCC leadership to develop a detailed work plan and timeline. In this meeting, the team reviewed YESS’s existing strategic plan and any background materials. They identified target stakeholder groups to interview, and data needed for the community’s data profile.

- **May 2025** – Finalizing Instruments and Launch: In early May, YESS and the consultants met in person in Park Rapids to finalize all materials and prepare for data collection. On May 6, 2025, the consultants conducted an interview training workshop with YESS representatives (Kori and two board members, Ben and Amanda). They walked through the interview guide, role-played an interview scenario, and emphasized strategies for remaining neutral and curious during stakeholder conversations. By May 7, all suggested edits from YESS were incorporated into the tools. On May 8–9, the online survey form was created and tested. It was branded with YESS’s logo and messaging so that recipients would recognize it. A shareable link to the survey was generated, and a PDF of the YESS One-Page Summary was hyperlinked to the survey’s introduction so participants could read background info before answering. Responsibility: Consultants took the lead in creating the survey form and training YESS staff, while YESS team members provided approval and input. By May 9, the survey was ready to be sent and the interview process was ready to begin.
- **May – July 2025** – Data Collection: Stakeholder interviews were conducted from May through late July on a rolling basis as schedules allowed. The consultant, Creating Community Consulting (CCC), attempted about 5 of the key interviews such as, the Hubbard County Social Services director on June 5, and the Headwaters Regional Development Commission director on June 9. Meanwhile, YESS board members and staff conducted additional interviews with contacts they had easier access to, such as a local school board member or a police liaison. About 15 interviews were done by the YESS team independently after receiving training. By August 1, 2025, nearly all targeted individuals had been interviewed or had provided input via the survey. Survey distribution happened in two phases: initially, the survey link was emailed directly to stakeholders as part of interview invitations starting mid-May. In late June, YESS broadened outreach by posting the survey on social media and encouraging board members to share it within their networks. A meeting on July 8, 2025, reviewed the number of responses so far and identified a need to get 7 more impactful interviews and boost survey participation in underrepresented groups. Following that, reminders were sent, and specific individuals were followed up with.



- The survey officially closed on July 24, 2025, when the last responses were received. Responsibility: Both the consultant and YESS team shared duties during this phase. The consultant was responsible for some interviews and entered those interviewees' answers into the survey to capture the data. YESS staff were responsible for sending out the survey link email, (see Appendix A for the email template) to stakeholders and for the remaining interviews. All team members coordinated to avoid duplicate outreach and to share progress in bi-weekly check-ins.
- **June – July 2025** – Data Profile Research: Alongside collecting survey and interview data, the consultant compiled the Community Data Profile (incorporated into this report) in June and July. On June 4, 2025, a meeting was held to outline which data points to gather like homelessness counts and housing statistics and to assign tasks for obtaining them. CCC pulled information from state reports and the U.S. Census. By early July, most secondary data had been collected and analyzed for inclusion in the report.
- **August 2025** – Analysis and Report Writing: In the first half of August, the consultant team combined all the information and began drafting the narrative report. They analyzed survey results, exporting response data and calculating key metrics and identified representative stakeholder quotes. On August 12, a draft of the findings and recommendations was shared with YESS's Executive Director and a couple of board members for review and feedback. They provided additional context where needed and helped refine some recommendations to ensure they were realistic. By the end of October 2025, the final report was completed. Responsibility: The consultant was primarily responsible for data analysis and writing the report. YESS leadership reviewed drafts for accuracy and clarity and also compiled some supporting materials for the appendix.

Throughout the project, communication and coordination were maintained via regular check-ins. YESS staff helped facilitate connections to community members and ensured the project stayed aligned with YESS's goals and community relationships. The Consultants focused on guiding the YESS team, technical research, data collection, and analysis. YESS focused on relationship management and internal decision-making; the project stayed on track and was completed on time.

Key Findings

The following sections present the comprehensive findings of the community assessment, organized by key themes. These findings synthesize data from the stakeholder survey—quantitative results and written responses, insights from one-on-one interviews—qualitative quotes and observations, and relevant statistics from the Community Data Profile.

Together, they paint a detailed picture of the current situation of youth homelessness in Hubbard County, the perceived needs and gaps, community attitudes, and opportunities for collaboration. Each subsection below addresses one aspect of the findings, supported by direct quotes from stakeholders (in italics) and data references.

Youth Homelessness in Hubbard County: The Scope of Need

One of the clearest findings of this assessment is that youth homelessness and housing instability are real and pressing issues in Hubbard County, even if they are often less visible than in rural areas. Both statistical data and stakeholder input confirm a substantial level of need:

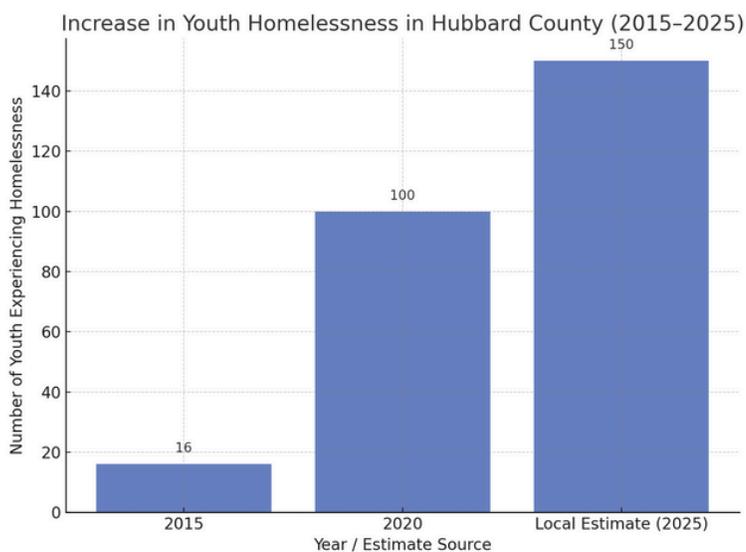


Figure 2: Number of Hubbard County public school students identified as homeless, 2015 vs 2020. Local schools documented a sharp increase in youth homelessness over five years (16 students to 104 students), reflecting that many previously “hidden” homeless youth were finally being counted.

- According to local estimates, roughly 14% of Hubbard County youth have experienced homelessness, which equates to about 150 kids in the county. This aligns with school data showing that in 2020, over 100 K-12 students in the county (approximately 4% of the student population) were identified under the McKinney-Vento definition as lacking a fixed, stable nighttime residence. This was a dramatic rise from just a few years prior, in 2015, only 16 students were identified as homeless. Such an increase suggests both a growing underlying problem and improved awareness/reporting. (See Figure 2.)

- These youth are typically “hidden homeless” – a theme echoed by many respondents. In Hubbard County, it is rare to see unsheltered teens on the streets or sleeping outdoors downtown. Instead, homelessness often looks like “couch hopping, staying temporarily with friends and relatives, or sleeping in vehicles or camping” in warmer months. One stakeholder explained that a lot of local youth “aren’t on the street corner; they’re bouncing between homes each week,” which can mask the severity of their situation. Community members sometimes underestimate the problem, thinking “we don’t have homeless youth here; they can always stay with someone.” However, as the data and stories show, these arrangements are unstable and can evaporate quickly, leaving youth with nowhere to go.
- Stakeholders universally affirmed the need for a local youth shelter and services. Many interviewees were frankly shocked by the statistics once they learned them. “I had no idea 14% of our youth didn’t have a home – that’s huge,” said one community member after reviewing the data. Several pointed to broader state trends as a warning sign: on any given night an estimated 6,000 youth are homeless in Minnesota, and Northwest Minnesota (our region) has some of the highest rates of youth homelessness and related risk factors (for instance, this region led the state in the percentage of youth who have traded sex for shelter or basic needs). In the words of YESS’s Executive Director, “Hubbard County needs a safe place for youth to stay.” Social Services representatives agreed, with one noting that currently any local youth requiring emergency placement “aren’t housed in Hubbard County” because there is no facility here – they must be sent to Bemidji, Duluth, St. Cloud or wherever a bed is open. This often means uprooting the youth from their school and community during an already traumatic time.



- Youth voices, captured through earlier focus groups and relayed by stakeholders, further underscore the need. In focus group discussions at the Park Rapids Alternative Learning Center (ALC) in 2023, “almost every single kid said they knew someone who was homeless or had been homeless themselves.” This peer knowledge indicates youth homelessness is not an isolated phenomenon; it’s part of the lived experience of local teens. Yet, many youths didn’t initially identify as “homeless” because they were couch-surfing or staying in makeshift situations, like a garage or a camper, rather than sleeping outside. This suggests a lack of awareness among youth about what homelessness encompasses, and what help might be available, as well as a stigma that leads them to hide their situation. As one stakeholder put it, “Kids won’t say they’re homeless – they’ll say they’re crashing at a friend’s. They’re afraid of being judged or getting authorities involved.” Overcoming this hidden nature is a challenge addressed later in this report.

In summary, the scope of need is significant: hundreds of youth in Hubbard County experience episodes of homelessness or near homelessness annually. The problem has been growing and becoming more visible as schools and programs like YESS actively identify youth in crisis. Every data point from the 150 local youth estimated homeless, to the spike in school-identified cases, to the percentage of youth dealing with family instability indicates that Hubbard County urgently requires resources for these vulnerable young people. The next sections delve into what those specific needs are and how the community currently is, or is not, equipped to meet them.



Critical Needs of Youth in Crisis

When asked about the most critical needs for youth in crisis and homeless situations, stakeholders across the board highlighted a broad spectrum of support, reinforcing that these young people require more than just a roof over their heads. In the survey, respondents were presented with a list of possible needs and could select all that applied. The results were striking: most stakeholders effectively said, “all of the above”. In fact, 33 out of 46 respondents checked an “All of the above” option, indicating that every listed need is considered important for youth in crisis. This reflects an understanding that youth homelessness is a complex problem needing a comprehensive solution. Key needs identified include:

- **Safe, Youth-Friendly Emergency Shelter:** Nearly every stakeholder emphasized the need for an immediate safe place for youth to go in an emergency. This is a foundational need, without safe shelter. Addressing any other issues becomes nearly impossible. As one respondent concisely put it, “physical safety is necessary before addressing any other needs.” Many noted the shelter should be designed for youth, like having a welcoming, supportive environment, not just a generic shelter, and located in Hubbard County, so youth aren’t sent far away.
- **Access to Mental Health and Emotional Support:** A large proportion of respondents, specifically 19 out of 46, highlighted mental health services as critical. Youth in crisis often deal with trauma, depression, anxiety, or substance use issues that can contribute to and result from homelessness. Several stakeholders commented that “mental health support must go hand-in-hand with shelter.” They pointed out the severe shortage of youth mental health resources in the area and long wait times. Thus, having counselors or therapists accessible through YESS, or strong referrals to behavioral health is vital. One stakeholder noted that even when counseling exists, “youth don’t always trust the services or know how to access them,” so YESS will need to bridge that gap by providing on-site support or advocates who can connect youth to care”.

- **Life Skills Training for Independence:** About 17 respondents flagged independent living skills as a key need. Youth who experience homelessness often lack guidance in basic life skills. They may not know how to find a job, manage money, cook, rent an apartment, or navigate adult responsibilities. As one stakeholder wrote, “Youth struggle a lot with independent living skills and not having anyone to teach them these skills.” Another said simply: “Stability. Safety. Skills.” Underscoring that beyond immediate safety, we need to equip youth, so they don’t fall into crisis again. Training in financial literacy, job readiness, cooking, self-care, and conflict resolution were mentioned. This aligns with YESS’s goal to offer life skills development programs as part of its holistic approach.
- **Access to Education and Employment Opportunities:** Respondents also highlighted the need for support in continuing education and finding jobs (16 respondents selected education/employment pathways as critical). Homelessness disrupts schooling as youths may drop out or miss a lot of classes. They need help staying in school or re-engaging like connecting to flexible school options and GED programs as well as guidance on career paths and credit recovery. Similarly, finding stable employment is tough if you lack transportation or a permanent address. One stakeholder observed that “meaningful opportunities to grow, learn, and contribute” through jobs or training can give youth hope and purpose, which is as important as immediate aid”. The community’s data profile showed Hubbard County has limited job opportunities for young people and a higher high-school dropout history than the state average, so this need is pressing.
- **Connection to Trusted Adults and Mentors:** Another need that about 17 respondents marked was supportive relationships. Youth in crisis often lack reliable adult guidance – they may be estranged from family or have no one to turn to. Stakeholders said “These youth need someone to advocate for and guide them, whether through mentors, supportive staff, or host home families. A safe shelter alone isn’t enough; it’s the supportive adults at YESS or in the community who can build trust with a youth, encourage them, and model stability”. This human aspect was frequently brought up: “a positive relationship can make all the difference,” noted one interviewee who works with at-risk teens.



- **Necessities and Other Services:** Additionally, stakeholders mentioned things like transportation and health care as needed. For example, one respondent added transportation and emergency physical wellness exams to their list of critical needs. Transportation is a huge barrier in our rural area (discussed further under barriers), and medical attention may be needed for issues like untreated injuries or reproductive health for youth who've been couch hopping. YESS plans to provide or coordinate access to food, clothing, hygiene supplies, and basic healthcare for youth upon intake, which aligns with what stakeholders feel is necessary.

In essence, stakeholders perceive the needs of homeless youth as multi-faceted and interrelated. There is no single “silver bullet” needed, instead respondents described a continuum of care. One stakeholder’s response summed it up: “The above really covers everything... Youth need a safe place, support for their mental health, life skills, education – it all matters. If any piece is missing, they fall through the cracks.” This holistic understanding reinforces YESS’s approach to combining shelter with wraparound support. It also sends a message to funders: resources must be allocated not only to a building and beds, but to the programs and staff that deliver counseling, skill-building, and mentorship.

Existing Resources

Stakeholders acknowledged that some services exist in Hubbard County to support youth, but most are limited in accessibility, capacity, or alignment with the needs of homeless or at-risk youth. The following were identified as existing supports:

Hubbard County Social Services handles child protection and foster care cases. However, local foster placement options for teens are limited. Services often require court involvement or legal custody, leaving youth in voluntary crisis situations. One stakeholder noted, “Social Services, MAHUBE-OTWA are there, but require adult approval,” which poses a barrier for unaccompanied minors.



MAHUBE-OTWA, a regional community action agency, provides short-term motel vouchers and housing-related support, but its services are largely designed for families or adults. Youth under 18 typically require involvement from a parent or guardian, which can be a barrier when family conflict is the cause of the housing crisis. MAHUBE-OTWA does employ a Youth Homelessness Action Team through state funding, but the team covers a five-county region and cannot meet all local needs. Despite limitations, stakeholders saw MAHUBE as a potential partner in transitional housing or prevention services.

Mental health services are available through the regional Mobile Crisis Team, Sanford Behavioral Health in Bemidji, and local agencies like Stellher Human Services and Lake Country Associates. These providers offer therapy and psychiatric services, including in-school support. However, there is no youth-specific drop-in mental health resource or shelter that integrates clinical care.

Community-based youth programs exist, such as Hubbard in Prevention (HIP), Big Brothers Big Sisters, and church youth groups. While these offer prevention and mentoring services, they are not equipped to address youth homelessness. Evergreen Youth & Family Services in Bemidji was the most frequently cited external resource. It provides shelter and transitional living services for youth, but 60 miles away, distance and lack of transportation limit its usefulness. One stakeholder stated, “Evergreen in Bemidji is great, but might as well be a world away for a kid who has no ride.”

Local school districts employ McKinney-Vento liaisons who help homeless students with supplies, transportation, and connections to shelters. Schools also offer alternative learning environments and informal support through staff and local churches. Still, schools reported frustration with the lack of local shelter options. One respondent shared, “There’s nowhere in the county to send them for the night.” Temporary solutions often involve motel vouchers or temporary stays with relatives, which are neither sustainable nor stable.

Gaps in Services

While some resources are in place, stakeholders and survey participants overwhelmingly identified critical gaps that leave youth unserved or underserved. The most pressing gap is the absence of any emergency shelter or youth housing in Hubbard County. This includes a lack of basic overnight shelter, drop-in services, or dedicated safe spaces for youth. Youth in crisis have no local options and often face dangerous alternatives or must leave the county.

Services that do exist are often fragmented and hard to access. Youth face eligibility restrictions, waitlists, or the need for adult involvement to qualify. Navigating services independently is difficult, especially for minors without family support. One respondent noted, “Services like MAHUBE or county support often require adult involvement or are not built for minors on their own.” As a result, unaccompanied youth fall between systems—excluded from both child protection and adult services.

There is a lack of transitional housing or supportive long-term options for older teens and young adults. Programs such as supervised apartments, life coaching, or housing navigation are not available locally. Youth aging out of foster care or leaving unsafe homes struggle to secure stable housing. As one interviewee stated, “No apartments or landlords are willing to rent to young people,” especially without income, credit, or cosigners.

Transportation was described as a barrier that intensifies every other gap. Services are concentrated in Park Rapids, while youth living in more remote towns or rural areas have no way to access them. Youth unable to reach Bemidji or another service center may end up sleeping in unsafe situations locally. Limited county bus routes are not youth-centered and often run on restricted schedules.

Preventative outreach and early intervention services are also lacking. Stakeholders expressed concern that by the time a youth is homeless, many systems have already failed. A need was identified for outreach workers who engage youth before crisis, provide referrals, and build relationships with disconnected or high-risk individuals. One respondent commented, “YESS is already there in the trenches, but we need more.”



A specific concern raised was the absence of emergency foster homes or host homes for teens. Hubbard County has a higher-than-average rate of youth in foster care, and many youth experiencing homelessness have prior system involvement. Stakeholders saw value in creating a host home program—safe volunteer-based placements for teens who don't need a shelter bed but can't remain at home.

Finally, survey respondents emphasized the need for coordinated, comprehensive services housed in a single program. YESS was described as the missing piece that could bring all the fragments together.

Stakeholders were asked how YESS could fill these gaps, and their responses essentially described YESS's mission: create a dedicated safe space in-county with comprehensive services. One respondent wrote, "We need more than just a day shelter. We need an actual facility that would provide mental health respite care for youth... continuous support." Another said YESS should "get all these services under one roof so kids don't have to jump through hoops." Indeed, the YESS model being proposed – a 24/7 shelter that also connects youth to counseling, education support, and other help – directly targets the largest gap (no shelter) and coordinates the fragmented services.

A particular gap worth noting is the lack of emergency foster or host homes for teens. The data profile noted that Hubbard County has one of the higher rates of youth in foster care, around 20 per 1,000 youth, above the state average, and many homeless youth have histories in the foster system. When those youth age out or run away from foster care, they become homeless with nowhere to turn. Yet currently, there is no host home program here. Several stakeholders, especially those in social services and non-profits, see developing host homes as something YESS could collaborate on to address this gap for youth who might not need shelter if they had a safe family setting.



In summary, the service landscape is insufficient: the only options for a homeless youth tonight are to leave the county or hope for a temporary couch. The YESS shelter and support program is widely seen as the missing piece that will fill the most critical void. By doing so, it can also coordinate with and amplify existing resources, for example, YESS can work with the schools' liaisons, utilize MAHUBE's housing funds for clients and bring in mobile crisis counselors to the shelter, etc. The findings clearly validate YESS's mission – stakeholders perceive a critical gap that YESS is aiming to fill, and there is eagerness to have that gap filled sooner rather than later.

Community Attitudes, Perceptions, and Readiness

One of the most illuminating aspects of the assessment was uncovering how the community perceives youth homelessness and YESS's efforts. Understanding attitudes, positive, negative, or neutral is important because community buy-in, or lack thereof, can make or break a project like YESS. The findings show a mixture of strong support and lingering skepticism/stigma in the community. Overall, stakeholders seem largely supportive of YESS's vision, believing it will have positive impacts, but they also highlighted the need to continue educating the public and addressing concerns openly.

Perceived Impact of YESS: We asked stakeholders, “What impact do you think the program YESS will have on youth, families, and Hubbard County?” Virtually every respondent foresees a positive impact, often a profound one, if YESS is implemented well. Common themes in their answers included increased safety for youth, improved family stability, reduced strain on law enforcement/child protection, and long-term community benefits like reduced poverty and crime.

- “Overall, huge positive impact – having the resources locally will keep kids from falling through the cracks and help families heal.” – wrote one school staff member, highlighting that YESS could strengthen family and social outcomes by intervening early.

- “A safe place for youth to connect with resources. Providing youth-focused recreational activities. Building trust and community with populations that lack resources.” – noted another respondent. This underscores that people see YESS as more than a shelter; it’s a community center where trust can be rebuilt.
- “Stability. Safety.” – wrote one respondent in a terse but powerful answer. This suggests that even providing those two fundamentals to youth who currently lack them would be transformative.
- “If the program is implemented and programmed successfully, it could potentially save lives and change trajectories – keeping youth out of legal trouble, helping them become contributing adults.” – shared by a law enforcement-adjacent stakeholder. There is a sense that YESS could prevent future negative outcomes like incarceration and chronic homelessness by catching youth now and setting them on a better path.

Even those few who admitted they weren’t very familiar with YESS still supposed it “has tremendous potential to have impact”. Importantly, no one argued that YESS would have a negative impact on the community; the question was more about how big the positive impact would be and how to ensure it materializes. Some tempered their optimism with notes that it “depends on execution” or that the program would need broad community support to reach its full potential. But the idea that helping these youth will benefit the community was widely accepted.

Keeping Youth in Their Community: One specific attitude question was whether stakeholders felt it is important for youth to be able to stay in their own community rather than being sent to a distant city while in crisis and working toward independence. The majority agreed that it is important: about 60% of survey respondents answered somewhat or strongly agreed with keeping youth local, while the remaining 40% were neutral; not a single respondent disagreed. This consensus aligns with YESS’s argument that youth have better outcomes when they remain connected to their school, friends, and local support systems.



Those who strongly agreed commented that staying local avoids additional trauma of displacement and keeps the youth within reach of their existing positive relationships such as teachers, mentors, and extended family.

The neutral respondents generally explained that while local is ideal, the priority is that youth get help somewhere implying that if local services are inadequate, they'd rather see a youth go to a quality program elsewhere than stay in a community unprepared to help them. This reinforces the need to build local capacity of YESS so that sending kids far away becomes a last resort.

Awareness and Stigma: The assessment revealed that lack of awareness and stigma remain challenges in Hubbard County, though progress is being made. On the survey question about barriers to collaboration, three of the top issues identified were lack of awareness or understanding (23 respondents), stigma around youth homelessness (17 respondents), and relatedly coordination/communication challenges (23 respondents). This indicates that many stakeholders feel the public, and even some agencies, do not fully grasp the extent or nature of youth homelessness, and that negative stereotypes might affect support.

Top Barriers to Collaboration Identified by Survey Respondents

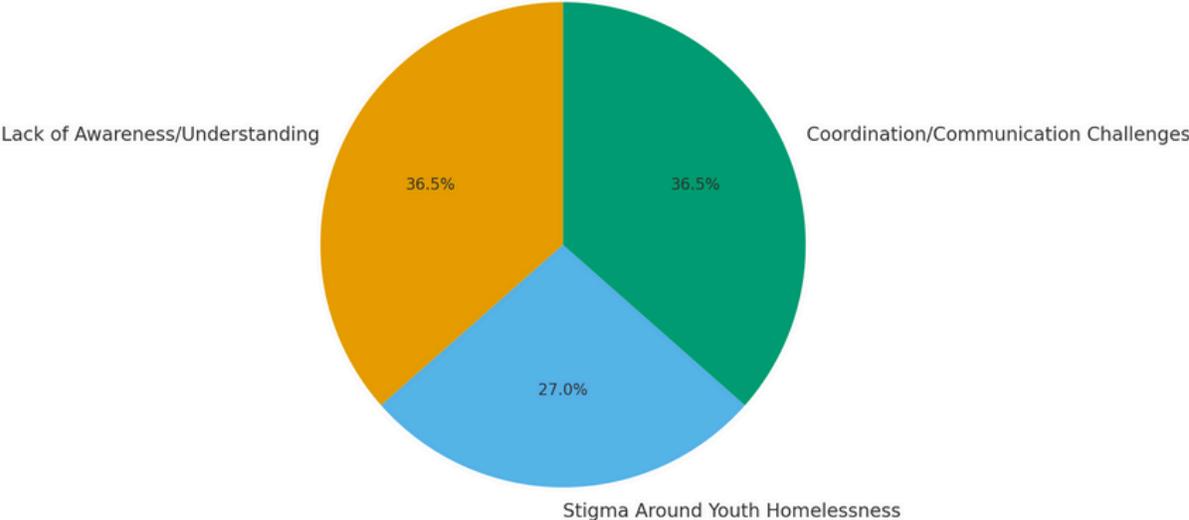


Figure 3: Top barriers to collaboration identified by survey respondents. The largest issues cited were lack of awareness or understanding and coordination/communication challenges (each 23 respondents), followed by stigma around youth homelessness (17 respondents).



Several stakeholders recounted instances of skepticism or denial in the community. One stakeholder wrote candidly about the initial communication missteps and misunderstandings between YESS and some community members: “Many people in the community were turned off... people do not believe that there is a problem. Education could help teach them what homelessness really is.”. This comment refers to early pushback YESS encountered, for example, on social media where some questioned if youth homelessness was real or assumed it was due to “bad kids”. It suggests that YESS’s passionate advocacy on Facebook may have unintentionally triggered some defensiveness or doubt among locals who weren’t yet informed on the issue.

In public meetings, similar sentiments were noted. As cited earlier, a county commissioner in March 2025 questioned supporting YESS without concrete data, reflecting a not uncommon perspective that until they see the numbers or faces, some leaders hesitate to acknowledge the need. The data drought historically (only 16 homeless students reported years ago) gave a false impression that the problem was minimal. This is changing: as YESS’s outreach and school efforts have revealed more cases (104 students by 2020), denial is harder to maintain. But overcoming the out of sight, out of mind mentality is still a work in progress.

Stakeholders mentioned talk they hear around town, such as “those kids are troublemakers,” “their parents just need to straighten up,” or “if it was really a problem, we’d see it.” The data and stories compiled in this report directly counter that talk, for instance, showing that family dysfunction, not teen rebellion, is a root cause in most cases. Many community members simply had never had this issue on their radar. After learning about it, we observed people shifting from skepticism to empathy. A stakeholder from a local business association admitted initially thinking homelessness “happened elsewhere,” but after seeing local youth testimonies, they became a vocal supporter for YESS, saying “these are our kids, in our town, we have to help them.”

In short, stigma and lack of knowledge are present and can be addressed through continued public education and transparency. This assessment itself, and the resulting report, serve as tools for that education. Already, the process has prompted local newspaper coverage with articles emphasizing that youth homelessness is often hidden because of stigma, fear, and lack of awareness. YESS leaders have noted a positive change: more community leaders are returning phone calls and showing interest now than a year ago, likely because they are armed with better information.

Community Support and Willingness to Act: Despite any early hesitation, the stakeholder input indicates a broad willingness to support and collaborate with YESS now. Many respondents including those from county agencies, schools, and nonprofits indicated explicitly that they or their organization are interested in partnering (17 out of 44 respondents said “Yes” to getting involved, others said “maybe later” or only “No” if outside their capacity). This is a strong base of support for a new initiative. Specific offers ranged from volunteering time, to serving as referral partners, to advocating for YESS in their professional networks.

Crucially, no stakeholder outright opposed the project in our interviews or survey. The concerns people raised were more about how to do it right (funding, safety, coordination) rather than whether to do it at all. This suggests that with proper planning and addressing of concerns, YESS can launch with community goodwill. A few illustrative quotes on support:

- “Our community’s responsibility is to be on the front line of support for these youth. We’re the adults in the village – it’s on us to step up.” – wrote one respondent, invoking the idea that the whole community is responsible for its youth. Many echoed that sentiment, saying things like “everyone’s responsibility” and “we are stewards for the next generation.”
- “If they truly gave a darn, they would be doing a lot more... Only kids who come out of this community are the ones the community invested in.” – one passionate (if blunt) comment suggesting that the community at large needs to care more and invest more in youth, otherwise we collectively fail them. This reflects frustration but also a call to action for more community engagement.



- “We need to support it all the way – from the prevention aspects to the immediate front-line help.” – noted another, recognizing that support must be holistic and ongoing, not just a one-time thing.

Such statements show that among those in the know, there is moral urgency and a readiness to champion YESS. The task ahead will be to broaden that circle of understanding, turning neutral or unaware community members into supporters. The recommendations section will address strategies for continuing to shift perceptions and build widespread support.

In conclusion, community attitudes are trending positive: stakeholders see YESS as beneficial and necessary, and many are eager to assist. However, continued engagement and education are critical to fully dispel lingering misconceptions and stigma. The more the community understands the realities of youth homelessness – that these youth are not delinquents but rather victims of circumstance and trauma – the more robust the support for YESS will become. The findings suggest a solid foundation of support to build upon, with collaboration being the norm and outright opposition being minimal when facts are presented.

Collaboration and Partnership Opportunities

A strong theme in the findings is that collaboration across local systems is both highly desired and necessary for YESS to succeed. We specifically asked stakeholders how various entities like county agencies, schools and medical providers could work together to support YESS, and what role their own organization might play. The response was overwhelmingly proactive: people offered many ideas for partnership and generally indicated that no single organization can do it alone. YESS is seen as a community project, and stakeholders are willing to come to the table.



Role of Key Systems: Survey respondents were given a list of potential collaboration actions and asked which one's local systems should take to support YESS. The results show broad consensus on multiple fronts. Nearly everyone agrees that institutions should be referring youth to YESS and coordinating care. In fact, 39 out of 46 respondents said that schools, law enforcement, social services, and others should “refer youth in crisis directly to YESS for shelter and services.” This was the top-rated action indicating stakeholders want a clear referral pipeline so that whenever a youth is identified by any entity, YESS is looped in immediately to provide help.

Other collaboration strategies that were highly endorsed with 30+ respondents each include:

- **Cross-Agency Case Coordination:** 35 respondents believe agencies should “participate in cross-agency case planning” for youth. This means, for example, having regular meetings or communications where YESS staff, school counselors, social workers, etc., discuss cases to ensure the youth’s needs are met comprehensively. Stakeholders want to break down silos rather than each system working in isolation; they envision a team approach around the youth.
- **Data Sharing:** 31 respondents said local systems should “share relevant data to help YESS identify needs and track outcomes”. This might involve schools sharing aggregate info on homeless students (within privacy limits) or the county informing YESS of any trends they see. The lack of data was an issue raised earlier, so formal data sharing agreements can help fill that gap and evaluate progress as YESS gets going.
- **On-Site or Mobile Services at YESS:** 34 respondents agreed that providers should “offer on-site or mobile services (e.g., mental health, public health, case management) at the shelter.” The vision is that YESS doesn’t operate as an island instead; existing services come to the youth at YESS. For example, a public health nurse could hold a weekly clinic at the shelter, or a mobile mental health counselor could visit to hold sessions, or a career counselor from the workforce center might come to teach a workshop, some of this is already in action. This co-location of services makes it easier for youth to access them (solving transportation issues) and ensures continuity of care.



Include YESS in Planning: 34 respondents also said organizations should “include YESS in county/school/health system planning for youth services.”. Essentially, YESS should have a seat at the table in broader community initiatives – whether that’s the county’s annual human services planning; school district student support discussions, or regional youth homelessness task forces. This inclusion will keep YESS aligned with other efforts and signal its legitimacy as part of the system.

Provide Funding or In-Kind Support: 30 respondents recognized the need for tangible support, checking “provide funding or in-kind support for operations (e.g., transportation, supplies, staffing).”. Ideas mentioned in interviews included things like the county potentially providing some funding if they see reduced out-of-county placement costs, or businesses donating food/clothing, or the health system offering free physicals or nurse time. There is an appetite to explore creative contributions from different sectors.

Promote Awareness: 31 respondents said local systems should “promote awareness of YESS through staff, newsletters, and public events.”. For example, schools can inform families about YESS, the hospital can have YESS brochures in their lobby, and the police department can mention YESS as a resource when dealing with a runaway youth situation. Spreading the word ensures those who need YESS to know about it and help maintain community support.

These results show that stakeholders are not short on ideas for partnership in fact; many likely checked all the above options (the average respondent checked 5-6 out of 7 collaboration items). People see that multi-sector collaboration is imperative. One respondent even wrote, “All of the above” and joked they “picked two” only because the form required it, but truly they endorsed every strategy. This enthusiasm is a huge asset.

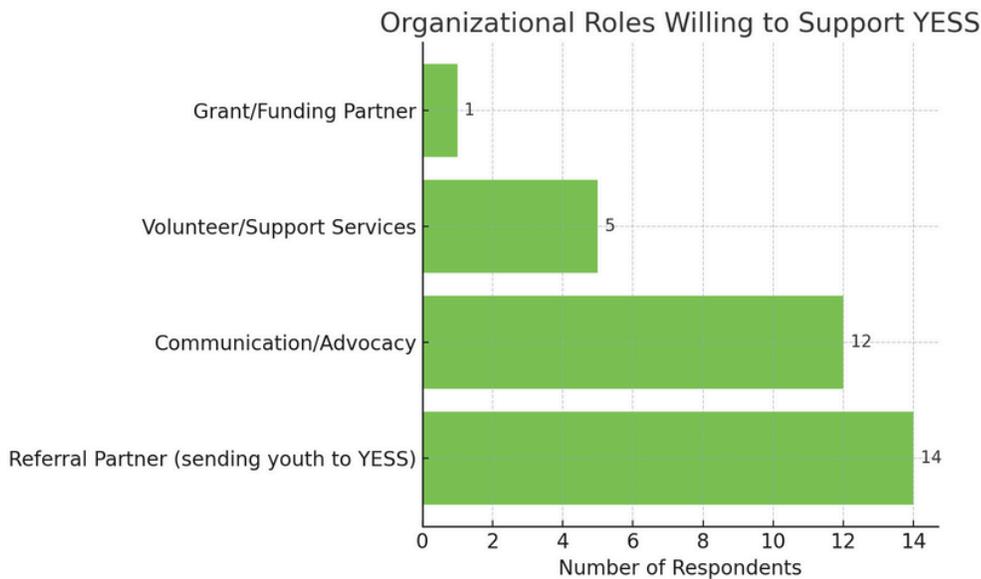


Figure 4: How organizations are willing to support YESS. The most common roles identified were Referral Partner (14 respondents) and Communication/Advocacy (12 respondents), followed by Volunteer/Support Services (5) and Grant/Funding Partner (1)

Specific Partner Roles: In addition to general actions, we gathered what roles specific organizations are willing to play. Out of those who answered the question about their organization’s role, the most common were Referral Partner (sending youth to YESS) – 14 respondents saw themselves in that role – and Communication/Advocacy – 12 respondents. A smaller number (5) said Volunteer/Support Services, and at least 1 identified as a potential Grant/Funding Partner.

What this tells us is that many stakeholders consider their primary contribution to identifying and connecting youth to YESS. For instance, school counselors, probation officers, and social workers all indicated they would refer to eligible youth. Nonprofit leaders and community members often saw themselves as advocates, spreading the word or rallying resources. A few individuals from philanthropic organizations (like a representative of Northwest Minnesota Foundation) or civic groups did express interest in helping with grant writing or funding, which is encouraging sustainability.

Volunteering had a lower count, but that may be because it was mostly professionals answering the survey, and they might support YESS through their work role rather than as a separate volunteer. However, we do know from YESS’s outreach that community volunteers (mentors, people to help staff at the shelter, etc.) will also be crucial. It’s likely something to recruit for as YESS moves forward, beyond this stakeholder group.



Existing Partnerships to Leverage: Stakeholders also suggested partnerships YESS should explore, often mentioning successful models or networks elsewhere:

- Several pointed to collaborating with Evergreen Youth & Family Services in Bemidji and checking what is working in other counties. Essentially, don't reinvent the wheel to learn from those running shelters in similar rural areas.
- Some mentioned national networks like YMCA youth programs or Boys and Girls Clubs if not directly for shelter but instead for programming ideas or support.
- A very practical suggestion was to utilize "Unite Us", which is a referral software platform many health and social service agencies use to coordinate client referrals. Getting YESS on that platform could help referrals flow seamlessly between hospitals, clinics, and the shelter.
- Another suggestion was connecting with Community Wellness Center (if one exists regionally) and even local hotels as emergency options perhaps negotiating with hotels for occasional emergency lodging if the shelter is full, etc.
- People also noted the importance of tribal partnerships though not explicitly in the surveyed responses we saw, it came up in one interview: making sure to coordinate with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and White Earth Nation social services if any Native youth from Hubbard overlap with their programs, given the higher representation of Native youth in the homeless population regionally.

Overall, stakeholders are advising YESS to be collaborative, not competitive. One local nonprofit leader said in her interview, "There's plenty of work to go around – we just all need to communicate better and support each other instead of everyone guarding their own turf." This attitude is a positive sign that YESS will be welcomed as a partner, not seen as stepping on toes. However, it comes with the expectation that YESS will actively reach out and coordinate rather than operate in isolation.



Coordination Challenges: While people are eager to collaborate, they also acknowledged challenges in doing so, some of which were covered in the barriers of question. For instance, jurisdictional issues (16 respondents noted these) can arise: which entity is responsible for a youth, especially if they cross county lines or are 18+ but still need help? Also, communication challenges (23 respondents) making sure information flows between agencies must be addressed systematically, perhaps via regular coalition meetings or an online info-sharing system.

One insightful comment from a stakeholder meeting was, “Plenty of room at the table”. More collaboration vs competition is needed.” They referenced that sometimes nonprofits compete for the same grants or recognition, but in this case, everyone seems to agree collaboration is the way forward. The recommendation is to set up a formal network or task force that meets youth homelessness, something YESS could lead or co-chair to keep partners engaged and accountable. A few respondents suggested ideas like multi-agency Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) that outline how referrals and data sharing will work between YESS and schools, the county, etc., to avoid any ambiguity.

In summary, the findings on collaboration opportunities are very encouraging: stakeholders are not only supportive in theory but are ready with concrete ways to partner. They expect to be involved in YESS’s work through referrals, coordinated case management, information sharing, and even resource contributions. The community clearly prefers a collaborative model where YESS is integrated into the existing fabric of services rather than operating alone. The groundwork is laid for a strong coalition – now it will be up to YESS to cultivate and formalize these partnerships as the program moves into implementation.



Limitations and Data Gaps

While this assessment is endeavored to be thorough, it is important to acknowledge its limitations and potential biases. Understanding these limitations provides context for the findings and helps temper conclusions with appropriate caution. The following are the main weaknesses or challenges encountered in the data or process:

- **Incomplete Representation:** Despite efforts to engage a broad range of stakeholders, some perspectives are underrepresented. Notably, we have limited direct input from homeless youth themselves in this report. Due to ethical considerations and timing, we relied largely on adults (professionals, community members) to speak on youth’s behalf, and on secondhand youth input from prior focus groups. The voices of currently homeless or formerly homeless youth are not extensively quoted here, which is a gap. Their firsthand experiences might highlight issues adults overlook. In future planning, YESS should seek more direct youth participation (e.g., a youth advisory board). Additionally, certain community segments did not participate heavily in the survey: for example, we did not get feedback from any local business owners. Thus, the survey sample is not a random cross-section of the public; it’s weighed towards those already engaged or aware. The views of those who did not respond possibly due to lack of awareness or interest remain uncertain.
- **Response and Social Desirability Bias:** The stakeholders who did respond to interviews/surveys may have provided answers influenced by social desirability – the tendency to give “acceptable” or expected answers. For instance, when asked about supporting youth or collaborating, few would openly say they oppose these ideas, even if in practice they might have reservations. Similarly, some might have downplayed contentious opinions knowing YESS was conducting the survey. We tried to mitigate this by ensuring anonymity and phrasing questions neutrally, but the possibility of bias remains. For example, the nearly unanimous positive impacts predicted for YESS could be somewhat idealized, in reality, there might be more mixed feelings that people didn’t express to us directly.



- **Data Reliability and Gaps:** The quantitative data available on youth homelessness in Hubbard County is still somewhat limited and inexact. We cited the figure of 14% of Hubbard youth identify as homeless from MAHUBE-OTWA; however, that was likely an estimate based on a specific survey or definition, and it may not capture all scenarios. The homeless student count (104 in 2020) is concrete, but data post-2020 might have changed like the pandemic in 2020 could have influenced numbers. We didn't have 2021–2023 updated school data at the time of writing – a gap due to timing. Also, many statistics in the Community Data Profile (poverty rates, dropout rates, etc.) are drawn from sources like the Census or state reports that have a margin of error or lag; some were as of 2022 or earlier. While they paint a useful picture, conditions might shift (for instance, economic changes could alter youth employment stats). The lack of historic local data means we rely on these point-in-time or short-trend figures. Interpretation of data like the 62% increase in unsheltered homelessness statewide must be used with caution – that stat isn't specific to Hubbard and is a few years old. In short, some numerical findings are estimates or extrapolations and should be treated as approximate indicators rather than precise measures.
- **Selection of Stakeholders:** The interviews focused on about 15 key stakeholders identified by YESS and the consultants as critical (e.g., heads of agencies, key decision-makers). This was practical and targeted, but it means some potentially relevant voices weren't heard. For example, frontline workers (like a school bus driver or a police officer on patrol) might have different observations than their managers. We also did not formally interview any parents of homeless youth; their perspective on needs and barriers could be valuable and is not directly captured. The stakeholders involved likely skew toward those open to conversation; those strongly opposed might have declined to participate. Thus, there could be a bias towards more favorable opinions in the qualitative data.



- **Timing and Evolving Situations:** The assessment took place over several months, during which situations can change. For instance, if a new resource started or a policy changed in mid-2025, we might not have captured it. Also, attitudes can shift quickly – a crisis event or a viral social media post could influence public opinion after our survey closed. The report is a snapshot based on information up to August 2025. Ongoing developments (like grant announcements or news stories) might affect the context. We acknowledge that this report is current as of its writing, but the landscape of funding, public sentiment, and youth needs will continue to evolve.
- **Potential Consultant/Organization Bias:** This report was produced with the involvement of YESS (the organization seeking to establish shelter) and a consultant hired by YESS. We have an inherent interest in demonstrating the need and support for the project since that is the goal of the project. While we have tried to remain objective and report negative findings too, there is a conscious or unconscious bias toward framing things in a way that supports YESS’s mission. For example, we likely probed more on positive collaboration ideas than on reasons someone might oppose YESS. We did ask about challenges and concerns, and we have reported those (like stigma and funding worries), but it’s possible some stakeholders held back criticism due to knowing the interviewer was affiliated with YESS. We attempted to create a safe space for criticism, and we did receive some constructive criticism, as noted, but full impartiality is difficult in an internal assessment. Engaging an external evaluator in the future could provide an additional level of neutrality once the program is running.
- **Unquantifiable Factors:** Some aspects of this issue are hard to measure or were outside the scope of our research. For instance, youth who are on the cusp of homelessness (couch surfing but not identified by schools, etc.) can’t quantify them well. There may also be cultural factors, like attitudes in different communities within the county, or among different age groups that we haven’t dissected deeply. The qualitative data hints at things like an attitude difference between some long-time residents vs. newer residents in how they view “helping youth”, but we did not have the means to fully explore sub-group differences. Recognizing these nuances might need further community conversations beyond this report.



In acknowledging these limitations, we underline that the findings of this assessment are directionally valid; they clearly indicate significant needs and broadly supportive stakeholder attitudes. They should not be seen as exhaustive or infallible. The recommendations will include steps to address some of these gaps, such as improving data collection going forward and ensuring continued community engagement to capture voices not heard yet.

Finally, it's worth noting that even with perfect data, any community initiative carries uncertainties. This assessment provides a best-faith, researched foundation for action, but continuous learning and adaptation will be key. YESS and its partners should treat the findings as a guide, not a final verdict, and remain open to new information and feedback as the project moves into implementation.



Recommendations

YEAR 1 (2024–2025)

Goal: Increase awareness and understanding of the need for a youth shelter in Hubbard County.

1. Strengthen Community Messaging Based on Survey Themes

- Use the report's findings 'pain points' to create educational content.
- Develop monthly messages that address top survey topics: emergency shelter, mental health support, transportation barriers, and mentorship.
- Highlight the local need by referencing that 61% of respondents could not name any existing youth resource in the county.



2. Establish a Clear and Consistent Public Communication Process

- Based on both stakeholder survey data and internal discussion, create a formal communication protocol.
- Assign at least one other person (staff or board) to review public-facing content, including social media posts.
- Ensure all external messaging is positive, professional, and non-confrontational, per survey concerns.
- Provide training to staff and board on trauma-informed communication and conflict de-escalation.
- Clarify that Kori, the ED, has shown strength in communication with select audiences but would benefit from shared responsibility to ensure messaging stays aligned with YESS values.

3. Use Survey Results to Engage the Community

- Share selected quotes and graphs from the survey to build awareness at 5–8 annual community events, in line with the Strategic Plan.
- Empower board members to use the survey summary when connecting with stakeholders and potential donors.
- Introduce key report takeaways through presentations at schools, churches, city meetings, and local service clubs.

4. Address Survey Timing Gaps for Future Rounds

- Ensure future surveys or outreach occur during the school year to include school district staff and students.
- This will improve the representation of education sector voices, an acknowledged gap due to summer layoffs.

5. Clarify Confidentiality Commitments and Protect Participant Privacy

- Honor the survey's privacy disclaimer: "...no individual will be identified in any findings or reports."
- Do not disclose names or quotes from respondents who included their identities in open-ended responses.
- Establish an internal confidentiality procedure for future data collection and board training on ethical handling of participant data.



YEAR 2 (2025–2026)

Goal: Increased awareness and funding

6. Expand Qualitative Storytelling and Youth Voice

- Recruit 2 new youth voices (as outlined in the Strategic Plan) to tell their story publicly or anonymously.
- Use stakeholder quotes like: “We need a safe place where youth don’t feel judged” to shape messaging.
- Work with schools or community mentors to recruit and support youth interested in advocacy or storytelling.

7. Establish Clear Referral Pathways with Key Partners

- Build interagency referral protocols with schools, public health, law enforcement, and county social services.
- Start by formalizing agreements with top partners, those who were frequently named or who completed interviews.
- Use data from this report to demonstrate how referral systems would fill identified service gaps (e.g., emergency housing, transportation).

8. Host a Cross-Sector Collaboration Summit

- Use the list of stakeholders and organizations referenced in this report to invite participants.
- Focus on addressing the top three collaboration barriers identified in the survey:
 - Lack of communication
 - Funding limitations
 - Lack of awareness of existing efforts
- The summit can serve as the first phase of the broader collaboration outlined in the strategic plan.

9. Build Internal Systems for Ongoing Community Engagement

- Develop a database of interested stakeholders (based on survey contacts, listening session attendees, and community stakeholders).
- Create a bi-monthly newsletter with updates, needs, volunteer roles, and progress.
- Continue gathering feedback through anonymous suggestion boxes or informal interviews.



- Show community members and stakeholders how supporting youth locally leads to stronger, safer communities. Emphasize that keeping youth in their home community, rather than sending them elsewhere, not only improves outcomes for young people but also strengthens local partnerships, preserves valuable community connections, and helps keep resources and funding within Hubbard County.
- Revisit potential funding partnerships and collaborations using new communication protocols. Seet to meet the needs of partnering organizations through implementing YESS’s organizational strategic action plans.

YEAR 3 (2026–2027)

Goal: Sustainable funding has been established and building plans are moving forward

10. Use Data to Demonstrate Impact and Guide Donor Messaging

- Update funders annually using metrics derived from this report (e.g., number of referrals, housing nights provided; new collaborations formed).
- Translate the success of applying report findings into outcome-based funding proposals.
- Develop donor messaging around key community values such as “keeping youth local”, which 70% of respondents supported.

11. Launch a Public Marketing Plan Anchored in Data

- Celebrate youth success stories, collaborative wins, and new services that were created due to community feedback.
- Use the finalized version of this report to support the launch of YESS’s capital campaign (if applicable).

12. Ensure Data-Driven Strategic Adjustments Continue

- Continue annual surveys and stakeholder feedback cycles.
- Update the strategic plan based on new data and emerging community needs.
- Consider forming a Community Advisory Council to guide ongoing feedback integration.



Final Reflections and Closing Statement

In July 2025, a final review meeting was held with YESS Executive Director (Kori), Board President (Amanda), and consultants from Creating Community Consulting (Rachael and Shelly). Together, the team reviewed the full survey data, stakeholder feedback, and key findings of the assessment. The YESS team noted that the community data was both valuable and reflective of the local needs in Hubbard County. It was also acknowledged that the insights from this report will guide strategic decisions, communication improvements, and targeted collaboration.

Additionally, the YESS team identified internal strengths and areas for growth—particularly around external communications, ensuring ethical data use, and broadening future outreach to school staff and youth. This kind of honest self-reflection speaks to the organization's readiness for its next stage of development.

Closing Statement

With the completion of this report and final engagement between Creating Community Consulting (CCC) and Youth Emergency Shelter & Supports (YESS), the foundational data collection and assessment phase is now complete.

YESS is now equipped with community-informed feedback, stakeholder priorities, and structured recommendations, aligned to its strategic plan. This report can serve as a guidepost for building trust, pursuing grant funding, creating sustainable partnerships, and improving services that directly respond to what the community has asked for. If the YESS board chooses to implement these strategies and build on this assessment, it will be well-positioned to move forward with confidence, credibility, and clarity of mission, ultimately advancing the success and sustainability of the YESS program in Hubbard County.

Appendix A: Stakeholder Interview & Survey Materials

- **YESS One-Page Overview:** A summary document provided to all interviewees and survey participants. This one-pager described YESS’s mission (“to provide safe, stable housing and support for homeless youth in Hubbard County”), the vision of a comprehensive approach (access to resources, life skills, safe housing), and the three-year strategic plan for opening the shelter. It also outlined why YESS is needed, noting the lack of local resources and the goal of keeping youth in their community. (Source: YESS One Pager, 2025)

YESS One-Pager

- **Interview Guide Questions:** The following questions were used in stakeholder interviews (and formed the basis of the survey questionnaire):
 1. “What do you see as critical needs for youth in crisis and homeless situations in our community?” (Probe: shelter, mental health, etc.)
 2. “What do you understand about the YESS program and its mission?” (Gauge awareness and correct any misconceptions)
 3. “What impact do you think YESS will have on youth, families, and the county if it’s successful?”
 4. “Do you think it’s important for youth to be able to stay in their own community (Hubbard County) while dealing with a crisis and learning to live independently? Why or why not?”
 5. “What existing resources or support systems are you aware of for youth facing homelessness or crisis in Hubbard County or nearby?”
 6. “Where do you see gaps in these services, and how could YESS help fill them?”
 7. “Are there any specific challenges or barriers you foresee to YESS collaborating with agencies, organizations, schools, or others?” (Examples might include funding, communication, policies, stigma)
 8. “How might these concerns be addressed to ensure community support for YESS?” (Solutions to barriers)
 9. “What do you feel is our community’s responsibility to support youth in need?”
 10. “How can local systems (county, schools, medical providers, etc.) collaborate to support YESS?” (e.g., referrals, joint programs, data sharing)
 11. “What role do you think you or your organization could play in helping YESS achieve its goals?” (Referral partner, volunteer, funding, etc.)
 12. “Do you know of any existing partnerships, networks, or programs that YESS should connect with or learn from?” (Other nonprofits, regional networks, etc.)
 13. “Is there anything else you think would be helpful for YESS to know as we move forward?” (Catch-all for additional feedback)

Each interview began with an introduction and the privacy disclaimer (no names would be used without permission). The FAQ was on hand to answer common questions stakeholders had (see below).



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Provided: During interviews, stakeholders sometimes asked questions about YESS. A FAQ sheet was prepared with concise answers, including: [YESS Stakeholder Interview Guide and FAQ 4-29-2025-Revised.pdf](#)

These FAQ answers were used to provide consistent information and build credibility when talking with stakeholders.

- **Survey Link and Distribution:** The survey was hosted on Microsoft Forms (link: <https://forms.office.com/r/UjETd9yGLt>). Initially, it was emailed to about 30 individuals along with a brief introduction and the one-pager attached (see “YESS Email Request for Interview” template below). Later, the link was shared publicly via YESS’s Facebook page and through partners’ newsletters. The survey was open from May 9, 2025, to July 23, 2025. We received 46 responses. The first part of the survey mirrored the interview questions above. The last part asked for optional contact info and partnership interest.
- **Email Template for Stakeholder Outreach:** (provided by CCC and sent by YESS ED to invite stakeholders to interview or to take the survey)

Subject: **Invitation – Share Your Input on Youth Emergency Shelter & Supports (YESS)**

Dear [Name],

We hope this message finds you well. We are reaching out on behalf of Youth Emergency Shelter & Supports (YESS) in Hubbard County. YESS is committed to providing emergency shelter and supportive services for youth experiencing homelessness or crisis. As part of our planning process, we are conducting key stakeholder interviews and surveys. Because of your role in the community, we value your perspective on the needs of youth in crisis, existing resources and gaps, opportunities for collaboration, and any concerns we should be aware of.

We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to speak with you. An interview takes about 20–30 minutes and can be in-person, phone, or virtual – whatever is best for you. If you’re willing, please reply to this email to set up a time. If an interview isn’t convenient, we welcome you to complete our online survey at this link: <https://forms.office.com/r/UjETd9yGLt>

Attached for your review is a one-page summary of the YESS project so you have background information. Your input will play an important role in shaping YESS to reflect our community’s needs and values. Thank you for considering this request – we truly appreciate your time and commitment to supporting youth in Hubbard County.

Warm regards,

[Your Name], Executive Director (or Title)

Youth Emergency Shelter & Supports (YESS)

[Contact Information]

(The attachment referred to the YESS One Pager PDF- Link provided above. This template ensured consistency in messaging and that stakeholders understood the purpose and privacy aspects of the interview.)

Appendix B: Community Data Highlights

This appendix provides key data points from the Community Data Profile for Hubbard County that were referenced in the report.

- **Youth Population & Demographics:** Hubbard County has ~21,700 residents (2023). Youth aged 10–24 make up about 16–18% (~3,600 individuals). The county’s population is older on average (median age 48 vs. 38 statewide). Approximately 90% of residents are White non-Hispanic; about 3% are American Indian and 2.5% Hispanic/multiracial. The youth population is less diverse than Minnesota overall, but Native American youth are a significant minority and often face higher risks of poverty and homelessness.
- **Homelessness Definition:** Under the federal McKinney-Vento Act, “homeless youth” includes those who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence – which covers couch-hopping, motels, camping, etc., not just literal street homelessness. This broad definition is important in rural areas.
- **Prevalence of Youth Homelessness:** On a single night in 2023, an official count found 1,315 homeless unaccompanied youth (under 25) in Minnesota, but this is considered an undercount. Wilder Research estimates thousands more youth experience some form of homelessness over the year. In Northwest Minnesota (our region), a 2019 student survey found the highest rates in the state of youth exchanging sex for basic needs (a sign of housing desperation). In 2022, 4,600 students in NW MN reported they had ever traded sex for something like shelter, food, or money – a startling number indicating survival behavior. Locally, MAHUBE-OTWA data (circa 2023) suggested at least “14% of Hubbard County youth identify as homeless” (roughly 150 youth). School district records show the number of K-12 students identified as homeless in Hubbard County rose from 16 in 2015 to 104 in 2020 – about 4% of all students by 2020. Almost all of these were “hidden” homeless (couch-hopping or doubled up), as Hubbard has no shelter.
- **Contributing Factors:** Common causes for youth homelessness include family conflict or breakdown, parental substance abuse, poverty, and abuse/neglect. Statewide, 50% of homeless youth fled an abusive situation, and 43% were told to leave by a parent. Locally, anecdotal evidence from schools includes teens kicked out for reasons such as the youth’s sexual orientation or family drug problems. Hubbard County also saw an increase in children in foster care from 2019 to 2021 (from 20.2 to 20.6 per 1,000 children). Youth aging out of or running away from foster care often becomes homeless, indicating system gaps.

- **Education & Outcomes:** Historically, Hubbard County lagged in high school graduation. The four-year graduation rate was 76% (Class of 2017), improving to 84% by Class of 2022, now on par with the state. Still, 15–20% of students are not graduating on time, highlighting the need for alternative education and support. Over 52% of students qualify for free/reduced lunch (2021), well above the state average 37%, indicating high child poverty. About 18% receive special education (vs 16% state). Schools have limited support staff (often 1 counselor or social worker per few hundred students), which is stretched thin for addressing issues like homelessness. Student homelessness (104 students in 2020) was roughly 4% of enrollment. Ensuring these students can stay in school (transportation, tutoring, etc.) is a challenge schools face.
- **Housing & Cost of Living:** Hubbard County has high homeownership (82% of households) and a limited rental market (25% of housing rentals). Fewer rentals mean fewer options for youth or low-income families. Median rent/housing costs are somewhat lower than urban areas, but incomes are also lower, so cost burden exists. Roughly 5–6% of families with children are officially cost-burdened by housing (spending >30% income on housing), but this likely undercount those doubled up or in substandard housing. As of 2019, 122 households in Hubbard were on the waiting list for Section 8 housing vouchers with a 4–6 month wait. There are no emergency youth shelter in-county and no transitional housing program for young adults. The nearest youth shelter is 50 miles away in Bemidji. Lack of local options forces youth to either leave the area or remain in risky situations. Statewide data showed 46% of the total homeless population are youth/children, and unsheltered homelessness (including rural doubling-up) rose sharply in recent years. Hubbard’s child poverty rate is 13.5% (higher than MN’s 10%), which contributes to housing instability.
- **Income & Employment for Youth:** Median household income in Hubbard (\$70,600) is 80% of the MN median. The poverty rate is 9.7% overall (slightly above the state of 9.2%), and about 14% of children live in poverty. Youth (16–24) employment is often seasonal/tourism-based with low wages. Many young people face barriers like lack of transportation, no childcare (for those with young children), and limited job opportunities beyond retail or food service. About 752 children were on SNAP food assistance and 196 on MFIP cash assistance in 2021, indicating many families rely on public aid. Lower education attainment (only 30.5% of adults in Hubbard have a bachelor’s vs 38.8% MN average) limits higher-wage job prospects. This economic backdrop means youth may struggle to afford housing or college, and some leave the area for better opportunities, while those who stay might lack support to advance.



- **Mental Health & Behavioral Health:** Hubbard County is designated a Mental Health Professional Shortage Area. There may be only a handful of licensed mental health providers in the whole county (ratio as high as 6,500:1 population to provider). No local psychiatric hospital; limited counseling, through Sanford or private counselors, often with waitlists. Youth mental health needs are high: on the 2019 MN Student Survey, 56% of 9th graders in Hubbard reported long-term mental health or emotional problems vs 30% statewide – a very high figure. Also, 76% of Hubbard 9th graders had at least one Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) by 2020, such as abuse or domestic violence at home, up from 62% a few years earlier. High ACEs correlate with greater risk of homelessness. Statewide, 64% of homeless youth have a diagnosed serious mental illness. Lack of local services means youth in crisis often can't get timely help. The nearest youth crisis stabilization might be an hour or more away. Transportation barriers further hinder accessing whatever few services exist.
- **Transportation:** As a rural area, Hubbard County has no county-wide public transit or fixed bus routes; over 90% of residents drive themselves. Youth under 16 cannot drive, and older youth may lack a car or license. It's common to have 15–30-mile distances between home, school, jobs, and services. A volunteer driver program exists for medical appointments, but it's limited. Transportation, or the lack of it, was cited by youth as a top challenge: "It's hard to get to school, work, or appointments without a car.". Consequences: if a youth moves to a friend's couch out of the school bus zone, they might drop out because they can't get to school. If a car breaks down, a young person can lose their job. If a service is 30 miles away, youth often go without it. This isolation also keeps youth homelessness less visible. Potential solutions discussed include gas cards, volunteer ride pools, helping youth through the licensing process, and possibly establishing a weekly shuttle van between major towns. The YHDP (Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project) plan for our region emphasizes individual transportation plans for youth, noting "transportation is imperative" in rural areas.
- **Broadband & Connectivity:** About 98% of Hubbard residents had basic broadband by 2019, but only 74% had high-speed (100 Mbps) at that time. Improvements are ongoing (likely 85-90% high-speed by 2023 due to new fiber projects). Still, some remote areas lack robust internet, and many low-income families can't afford service or devices. During COVID remote learning, some students struggled with internet access, highlighting a digital divide. For homeless youth, internet and phone connectivity are crucial for accessing resources, online schooling, telehealth, and staying in contact. Libraries and schools offer Wi-Fi, and YESS's drop-in center will provide internet access. Efforts like the Line Extension Program are trying to reach remaining gaps. Ensuring youth have at least a basic phone or way to get online for things like job applications and resources is an often-overlooked need.

(These data points support the narrative of needs and will be useful for grant writing and program design. All data is drawn from sources like the U.S. Census ACS, MN Department of Education, Wilder Research 2018 Homeless Study, Minnesota Student Survey 2019/2020, and local agency records as compiled in the Community Data Profile document.)



Appendix C: Letters of Support and Endorsements

- City of Park Rapids – Letter of Support (January 2024): The Park Rapids City Council expressed formal support for the development of a youth shelter (YESS), recognizing the rising number of homeless youth in the schools and the benefits of addressing the issue locally. The letter (signed by the mayor) notes, “Providing a safe space for youth in crisis will improve public safety and youth outcomes in our city.”
- City of Akeley – Letter of Support (March 2024): Akeley’s City Council wrote that they heard a presentation from YESS and support its mission. They specifically pointed out that even small communities like Akeley have youth who could benefit, and keeping youth in the area for services is preferable to sending them far away.
- City of Nevis – Acknowledgment (April 2024): The Nevis City Council stopped short of a full endorsement but provided a letter recognizing YESS’s efforts and encouraging continued communication. They cited a need to monitor outcomes but were generally positive about collaborating.
- Downtown Business Association (Park Rapids) – Letter of Support (2024): The Park Rapids DBA wrote in support of YESS, indicating local businesses see the need to support youth. They mentioned that helping youth in crisis can reduce loitering or petty crimes that sometimes affect businesses, and that it’s simply “the right thing to do.”
- Hubbard County Sheriff and Local Police: (Note: As of the assessment, we did not have a formal letter from law enforcement, but YESS has reached out to these offices. The Sheriff indicated via email an understanding of the need and willingness to collaborate on safety protocols. The Park Rapids Police Chief has not formally responded yet; engaging law enforcement remains a to-do, given their role in identifying runaway or homeless youth.)
- School Districts: The superintendent of Laporte Public School (Laporte, MN) has been a key influencer supportive of YESS (having a representative on YESS’s board). Laporte School’s administration informally endorsed the concept of YESS as a much-needed resource for students. The Park Rapids school superintendent initially took a cautious stance (hence the board not moving forward with endorsement in Feb 2024), citing desire for more data – which this report now provides. We anticipate renewed discussions with the school board armed with this data.
- Nonprofit Organizations: Several local and regional nonprofits have provided letters or emails of support, including the Northwest Minnesota Foundation (which oversees regional Continuum of Care funding and viewed YESS favorably as a new partner) and the Headwaters Regional Development Commission (noting alignment with their regional plans to combat homelessness). The Community Resource Connections in Park Rapids (which coordinates social services information) also wrote a letter indicating they would collaborate closely with YESS.

(These letters are on file with YESS and can be included in funding applications. They demonstrate local government and civic support.)



Appendix D: References

1. Youth Emergency Shelter & Supports (YESS) – Official Website and Documents (2023–2025): YESS and CCC provided internal documents including the One Pager and Strategic Plan summary. The YESS website (yesshubbard.org) is a source for mission, vision, and values.
2. Park Rapids Enterprise News Articles:
 - “Efforts underway for youth homeless shelter in Hubbard County,” by Shannon Geisen, Park Rapids Enterprise, Nov 14, 2023 – Provided context on YESS’s founding, mission quote, need statistics (6,000 homeless youth in MN, 14% Hubbard youth homeless), and plans (goal to house 8–10 youth, etc.).
 - “Youth shelter seeks dialogue with Hubbard County,” Shannon Geisen, Park Rapids Enterprise, Mar 10, 2025 – Quoted YESS ED requesting open communication with county, noted lack of data issues and officials’ responses. Provided anecdotal evidence of community leader engagement (or lack thereof) and the quote about data collection “sucks” (hence needed for Youth Outreach).
3. Community Data Profile (2025) – Hubbard County: A compiled document of data from Minnesota state agencies and local sources (unpublished, created for this report). Key data drawn from:
 - *Minnesota Department of Education*: McKinney-Vento Homeless Student Counts 2015–2020.
 - *Minnesota Student Survey 2019/2020*: mental health, ACEs, and exploitation data.
 - *Wilder Research – 2018 Statewide Homelessness Study*: rural youth homelessness undercount info and reasons youth are homeless (abuse, told to leave).
 - *U.S. Census Bureau (ACS 2018–2022)*: demographics, poverty rates, housing stats.
 - *Minnesota Housing Partnership, County Profiles*: housing cost burden, homeownership, Section 8 waitlist (2019).
 - *Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)*: local income and employment data for youth (NEET rates anecdotal, no direct stat but used context).
 - *Headwaters Regional Development Commission – reports*: noted transportation gaps (general knowledge, not a specific report).
 - *Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS)*: foster care rates (from county data, 20 per 1,000 children), designation of mental health shortage area.
 - *Blandin Foundation Broadband County Rank*: (improvement from 45th to 21st in broadband access).
4. Stakeholder Survey Data (2025): Unpublished raw data from the YESS Stakeholder Survey (collected via MS Forms). We used aggregated results in this report:
 - Critical needs frequencies (All of the above, shelter, mental health, life skills, etc.).
 - Understanding of YESS mission (majority knew emergency services, life skills; 6 said unfamiliar)
 - Perceived impact (qualitative responses, e.g. “safe place... resources” etc.).
 - Importance of staying local (Likert responses: mostly agree or neutral; none disagree – as noted in analysis).



- Existing resources listed (e.g. “Stellher, Youth Mobile Crisis, MAHUBE, Evergreen” etc.).
 - Gaps and how YESS can fill them (quotes like “no place for youth to go... need actual facility”).
 - Barriers to collaboration (lack of funding, awareness, stigma, communication all around 17–23 responses).
 - How to address concerns (e.g. “education at all levels, focus groups...”).
 - Community responsibility (quotes like “Everything. We are stewards for the next generation.”).
 - Collaboration actions count (refer youth – 39, case coordination – 35, etc.).
 - Role people will play (referrals – 14, advocacy – 12, volunteer – 5, etc.).
 - Other suggestions (partnerships with Evergreen, Unite Us, etc.).
5. YESS Internal Communications (2025): Meeting notes and emails during the project (e.g., April 30 and July 8 meetings) documenting decisions: setting interview targets, contacting Continuum of Care for data, planning social media pushes. Also, the “Client Links Document” email confirmed the readiness of materials and approach for interviews/survey.
 6. General Contract Agreement between YESS and Creating Community Consulting (March 2025): Outlined project deliverables and timeline. Used to ensure we met contracted goals (15 interviews, data profile, final report) and timeline references (project start 3/19/2025, end 9/30/2025).
 7. Community and Stakeholder Engagement Theory: While not explicitly cited, the approach was informed by best practices in community needs assessments (e.g., engaging stakeholders, ensuring anonymity for honest feedback, and triangulating data). Resources like HUD’s Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) toolkit were referenced for ideas on transportation planning and youth involvement (mentioned conceptually in report).

These references and sources back up the assertions and data used throughout the report. They range from local anecdotal evidence to state-level research, ensuring that the community assessment is grounded in both lived experience and quantitative data. All in all, the combination of local stakeholder input and verified data provides a compelling, credible foundation for the recommendations and the YESS initiative moving forward.

