On November 15, TNOYS and Texas Appleseed released the most comprehensive study to date on youth homelessness in Texas. “Young, Alone and Homeless in the Lone Star State” provides insight into the situation of youth experiencing homelessness in our state and provides recommendations on policies that can help.

The key finding of the report is that the lack of a cohesive policy and funding approach to address the problem of youth homelessness in Texas has resulted in high levels of youth who are homeless and poor outcomes for these young people. The report reveals that youth homelessness doesn’t just affect youth who find themselves without homes, it also has broader implications for the communities in which they live because of the impact on the criminal justice systems, education, and other key institutions. These problems can be prevented with smart policy solutions.

The report has already received significant state and national attention, including media coverage in outlets such as the Texas Tribune, Houston Chronicle, and NPR. The attention is critical to raising awareness of and support for homeless youth services, which currently receive no appropriated funding in Texas.

TNOYS has already been working to affect policy change on this issue, lobbying successfully in 2015 for legislation that resulted in the first statewide look at youth homelessness, a study called “Youth Count Texas.” TNOYS was contracted to coordinate that study, which found that there are nearly 16,000 students in Texas schools who are homeless without a parent or guardian. The new report enhances this work by highlighting policy strategies for Texas to address the issue, and TNOYS will be lobbying for many of the recommendations in this report during the next legislative session.
An Update on Recovery Through Participation

Recovery Through Participation: Year 1
Many youth in foster care or other systems do not have opportunities to participate in decisions impacting their lives or their care. This is problematic because research indicates that opportunities to have a voice help youth in their recovery journey by increasing motivation for change. Recovery through Participation is a two-year project that provides training, technical assistance and other resources for youth services organizations in Central Texas as they develop or strengthen opportunities for youth voice in their work and promote recovery from past trauma. As we close in on the first year of the project, we are excited to share what we have accomplished so far:

- **5** research-informed and practice-based training sessions for Central Texas providers
- **68** organizations provided with resources, training, and opportunities
- **16** partnerships and advisory partnerships formed with Central Texas organizations
- **2** youth partners hired and integrated into planning, meetings and other activities

What’s to Come in Year 2?
As we enter the second year of Recovery Through Participation, TNOYS plans to:

- Expand our **research-based training materials** to support adult professionals and youth leaders
- Continue to offer **support, training, and technical assistance** to our partner organizations and their youth advisors as they make progress toward their youth voice and youth engagement goals
- Organize **events that allow for idea sharing** among Central Texas and Harris County organizations
- And much more!

Thanks to the St. David’s Foundation’s Opportunity Grants Initiative for the funding that makes this project possible.

TNOYS Brings Back Emergency Shelter Task Force

You may have seen headlines last year about children sleeping in state offices due to lack of foster care capacity. TNOYS is helping address this crisis by reconvening our Emergency Shelter Task Force. The group has met twice in 2017, giving emergency shelter providers opportunities for representation, networking, and support.

The first meeting was held in August at Jonathan’s Place. At the meeting, the Governor’s Office shared opportunities to serve victims of minor sex trafficking, after a recent University of Texas study found that 79,000 Texas children and youth are victims of this crime and many of them are in foster care. Dr. Wayne Carson, CEO of ACH Child and Family Services, advised on how shelters can adapt to the changing child welfare system.

In October, the task force met at SAFE in Austin to hear from leadership at Child Protective Services on its forecast for the demand for foster care services across Texas in upcoming years.

We can already see that these meetings are helping shelter leaders fill gaps in the child welfare system and plan for the future, and we are looking forward to more productive meetings with this group in 2018!
When Hurricane Harvey hit Texas’ Gulf Coast in late August, many youth service organizations in TNOYS’ membership were right in the path of the disaster. The Texas Department of Family Services, roughly 1,300 children in state foster care were in dangerous conditions due to the effects of Hurricane Harvey and about 3,000 caseworkers were also impacted.

TNOYS and our member organizations across the state quickly took action to help out. TNOYS assisted the state child welfare agency in finding placements for children in foster care who had to evacuate, and we coordinated updates on program evacuations and program needs on our website so that stakeholders across Texas knew what was happening and how they could help.

Meanwhile, TNOYS member organizations such as Roy Maas’ Youth Alternatives in San Antonio, ACH Child and Family Services in Fort Worth, and Connections Individual and Family Services in New Braunfels opened their doors to displaced foster kids from locations throughout South Texas.

Not all Houston organizations evacuated, and those that were able to continue operating during the storm did so to the best of their ability, knowing that in times of disaster youth and families who are already in crisis are some of the most vulnerable.

Harris County Protective Services (HCPS) reported that its staff worked throughout the hurricane, including personal deliveries to Guardianship wards, staying overnight in the HCPS shelter and setting up a shelter in the community. Covenant House Texas did not turn anyone away who needed access to their emergency shelter and their staff worked around the clock to keep the 70 youth under their roof safe. And Star of Hope Mission continued to care for over 1,000 homeless men, women and children in the Houston area throughout the devastation caused by the storm.

TNOYS is proud to work with our strong network of member organizations that truly came through for each other and the clients they serve in a time of need.
Upcoming Event Highlight: Expert Training Series

TNOYS is excited to be offering a series of training workshops across the state led by a variety of experts, including young people with lived experience. Upcoming workshops include:

- Dec. 6: Evidence-Based Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (San Antonio)
- Dec. 14: Promising Practices for Latina Youth (Virtual Webinar)
- Jan. 24: Evidence-Based Motivational Interviewing (Ft.Worth)
- Feb. 9: Ethical Decision-Making, featuring youth partner as co-presenter (Austin)
- Jan. 31: Trust-Based Relational Intervention (Austin)

To learn more and register, visit: tnoys.org/events

TNOYS’ Mission and Approach

Whether you are new to TNOYS or have been familiar with us for many years, we encourage you to take a look at our mission and approach, which provide our thinking on what motivates our work to support Texas’ youth and the service providers who support them:

**TNOYS’ Mission**

The mission of Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS) is to strengthen, support, and protect critical services for Texas youth and their families to ensure their success. TNOYS is the only organization that strengthens services across the full continuum of care for youth and families in Texas.

**TNOYS’ Approach**

TNOYS takes a unique comprehensive approach to our work that includes policy advocacy, training and program development, and working in partnership with young people:

- **Policy** – We advocate for public policies and priorities that benefit young people in at-risk situations and their families.
- **Practice** – Our training and program development services ensure providers are fully equipped to meet the needs of the youth and families they serve.
- **Participation** – We work in partnership with youth to demonstrate what they are capable of when people invest in them.

Experience the benefits of our network. Visit www.tnoys.org/members to join today.

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