



TAG in Action: A Place 4 Me

As part of its national call to action, **Adolescent Health: Think, Act, Grow**® (TAG), the Office of Adolescent Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has identified a number of successful strategies for improving adolescent health throughout the country.

The Goal

The A Place 4 Me initiative is working to prevent and end homelessness among youth and young adults (ages 15 to 24), with special emphasis on youth leaving foster care without the material and emotional support of a family.

The Game Plan

A Place 4 Me – named and inspired by youth – is a public-private collaboration devoted to supporting youth experiencing homelessness and housing instability throughout Cuyahoga County, Ohio. A steering committee guides A Place 4 Me, with the YWCA of Greater Cleveland as the lead organization and more than 30 partners including the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland, the Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services, the Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS), and the national Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative.

To begin the effort, the Sisters of Charity Foundation brought together diverse partners – especially young adults who had experienced homelessness – to envision an ideal system of supports for homeless and unstably housed youth. Working from their vision, partners spent ten months developing a comprehensive plan to address youth homelessness. The approach includes a focus on youth leaving the foster care system, a subpopulation that is particularly vulnerable for housing instability. A Place 4 Me utilizes two national models: the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative’s that focuses on child welfare reform; and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness’, which works to improve homeless services. Both frameworks seek the same outcomes for youth: stable housing; permanent connections; education and employment; and social, emotional and physical well-being.

The Winning Plays

In 2016, A Place 4 Me was selected to participate in A Way Home America’s 100-Day Challenge and set an ambitious goal to house 100 homeless youth in 100 days. In the end, A Place 4 Me housed 105 youth in 100 days. The effort did not stop and, to date, has housed 170 young people. Kate Lodge, Project Director, shares her thoughts on why they have been successful: “We met the challenge because, with the Sisters of Charity Foundation’s support, we had already sat side-by-side with young people, dreamed big and then created a realistic plan. We had also brought the right partners to the table. As a result, DCFS was able to create a firewall, ensuring that every youth that left foster care had a rock-solid housing plan. But most importantly, we’ve always understood the importance of relationships. Rather than just focusing on housing, we work very hard to reconnect youth with their family and friends. In the end, that’s how they find a stable place to live and also a place to dream.”

Learn More

A Place 4 Me
www.ywcaofcleveland.org/aplace4me

