



Youth Engagement Services

The Youth Outreach Team and The Crib



The Night Ministry's Youth Engagement Services Program meets and builds relationships with young people experiencing homelessness on the streets, in schools, at drop-in programs, and other locations across Chicago. The Youth Outreach Team (YOT) identifies young people living on the streets and helps them meet their basic needs through resources and referrals. Many of YOT's clients are among the young adults who access emergency overnight shelter at The Crib, one of The Night Ministry's Youth Housing Programs.

Background

One out of every ten adults age 18 to 25, about 3.5 million people, experience homelessness a year in America.¹ In Chicago, nearly 16,000 unaccompanied people between the ages of 14 and 24 struggle with homelessness a year.² Many of them face complex challenges, including those rejected because of sexual orientation or gender identity. Young people who identify as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender) are more than twice as likely to report being homeless than their non-LGBT peers.³ Addressing the diverse needs of homeless youth with comprehensive services is critical to breaking the cycle of homelessness.

The Programs

For many young people experiencing homelessness, the first opportunity to interact with The Night Ministry comes through the Youth Outreach Team (YOT). YOT's Outreach Case Managers connect with clients across the city and link them with safe housing, education, employment, and other resources as well as providing compassionate support. In addition to making a regular stop with the Youth Outreach Van in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood every Thursday evening, Team members visit libraries, court houses, coffee shops, and other locations where young people experiencing homelessness often congregate.

YOT has evolved its outreach methods to bolster its engagement with Chicago's homeless youth, including utilizing social media to communicate with clients and calling or texting with them, in addition to meeting in person. Meanwhile, The Night Ministry has hired Peer Outreach Professionals whose personal experiences and knowledge have further expanded YOT's reach.



Opened in 2011, The Crib provides safe overnight shelter for up to 21 young adults ages 18 to 24. Dinner and breakfast are served and guests have access to showers and laundry facilities. Group and recreational activities are also available. In extreme weather, The City of Chicago asks The Crib to extend its hours and increase capacity to 25.

YOT's Outreach Case Managers work closely with guests of The Crib to help connect them to stable housing, including The Night Ministry's other Youth Housing Programs, while The Crib's staff provide support and encouragement toward the achievement of goals. Life skills counseling, referrals, HIV testing, and health education are also provided. As a significant percentage of guests at The Crib identify as LGBT, The Crib prides itself on offering services that are affirming and creating a welcoming and inclusive environment.

Partnerships

The Crib staff and YOT members help clients connect with resources in the community, including the health care and supportive services available at the Broadway Youth Center and The Center on Halsted, both of which are LGBT safe and inclusive. A partnership with Chicago Adventure Therapy exposes clients of both programs to confidence and trust building activities like camping, rock climbing, and kayaking.

The Crib is participating in a shelter bed reservation system through the smartphone app, StreetLight Chicago, allowing young people to reserve a bed for the coming night.



Program Achievements and Outcomes in Fiscal Year 2019

- The Crib served 244 homeless young adults, who stayed a total of 5,440 nights
- 155 clients engaged in case management with YOT
- YOT helped 95 clients obtain more safe and stable housing
- 82% of young people who developed a service plan with YOT made progress on a self-identified goal

¹ Morton, M. H., A. Dworsky, & G. M. Samuels. *Missed opportunities: Youth homelessness in America. National estimates*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, 2017.

² Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. *2017 Estimate of Homeless People in Chicago*, 2019.

³ Morton, M. H., Samuels, G. M., Dworsky, A., & Patel, S. *Missed opportunities: LGBTQ youth homelessness in America*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, 2018.

The Night Ministry is a Chicago-based nonprofit that provides housing, health care, and human connection to individuals experiencing homeless or poverty. For more information, please visit www.thenightministry.org or call (773) 784-9000.