



Formalizing Engagement of People with Lived Expertise

Homes Within
Reach
Conference

Thursday, December 7th
1:45pm-3:00pm



Chester County
PARTNERSHIP
TO END HOMELESSNESS

Chester County at a glance

436

Individuals are experiencing homelessness in Chester County, Pennsylvania on any given night

29 Adults and children are unsheltered, living in places not designed for human habitation or sleeping

Adults and children are sheltered, living in emergency shelters or transitional housing **407**



2020 Census Population:

534,413

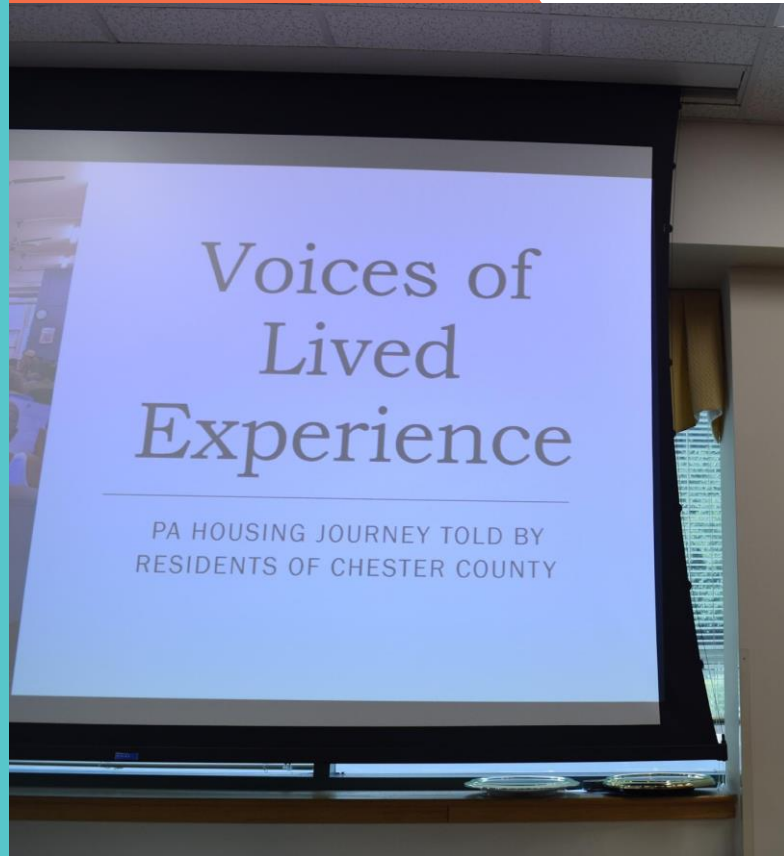
Partnership Mission



The Partnership is the only community-based collaborative—bringing together community-based agencies, local government, private and public organizations, nonprofits, philanthropic foundations, people with lived homelessness experience, faith communities, and the greater community—committed to ending and preventing homelessness in Chester County.

Our mission is to ensure that homelessness is a rare, brief, and one-time only experience for all residents of Chester County, Pennsylvania.

About the Board



Lived Experience Advisory Board (LEAB)

- Recruitment and training began in 2020 and continued through 2021
- Training on how to advocate, sharing your story, Coordinated Entry, and Introduction to the Partnership
- First official meeting: March 2021
 - Created a board charter
 - Monthly meetings on Zoom

Board Projects

- Involvement with events that raise awareness and engagement (Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week, Homeless Persons Memorial, Legislative Advocacy, etc.)
- Involvement with Built for Zero Cohort



Members Making a difference in the community



-LEAB members work outside of board (Peer Specialists, Stages Arts initiative, volunteering, etc.)

-Community Integration

-Employees, board members, and founders of local Non-Profits serving the community (Gap Coalition of Chester County)

Homeless Persons' Memorial Day 2023



Paper Crane Project



Lessons Learned

- 1) Asking people to volunteer time and expertise didn't work
- 2) Need for frequent recruitment
- 3) Trainings and Resources
- 4) Peer to Peer engagement
- 5) Timely payments are important
- 6) "Let it grow"; patience & persistence



Successes

- Provided invaluable feedback on operational plan, program exit survey, and numerous policies
- Power sharing: People with lived experience make up ~10% of voting members on CoC Governance Board
- People are compensated for their time and expertise
- Advocacy at public events, with legislators, at conditional use hearing
- Leadership training (United Way Leadership Chester Co.)
- Involvement in CoC application process



Where we're going



- Increased impact & independence (independent consultant or non-profit?)

- Fundraising

- More professional development opportunities, trainings for members, and by members

- Expansion of roles for people with lived experience (employees, managers, board members)

What Members are saying about the board...



“I have something meaningful to offer”

“(we are) breaking the stigma with our lived experience advisory board”

“It really boosts our self confidence, when you’re homeless it’s really hard on your confidence”

“I believe I can help people because of all the experiences I have been through.”

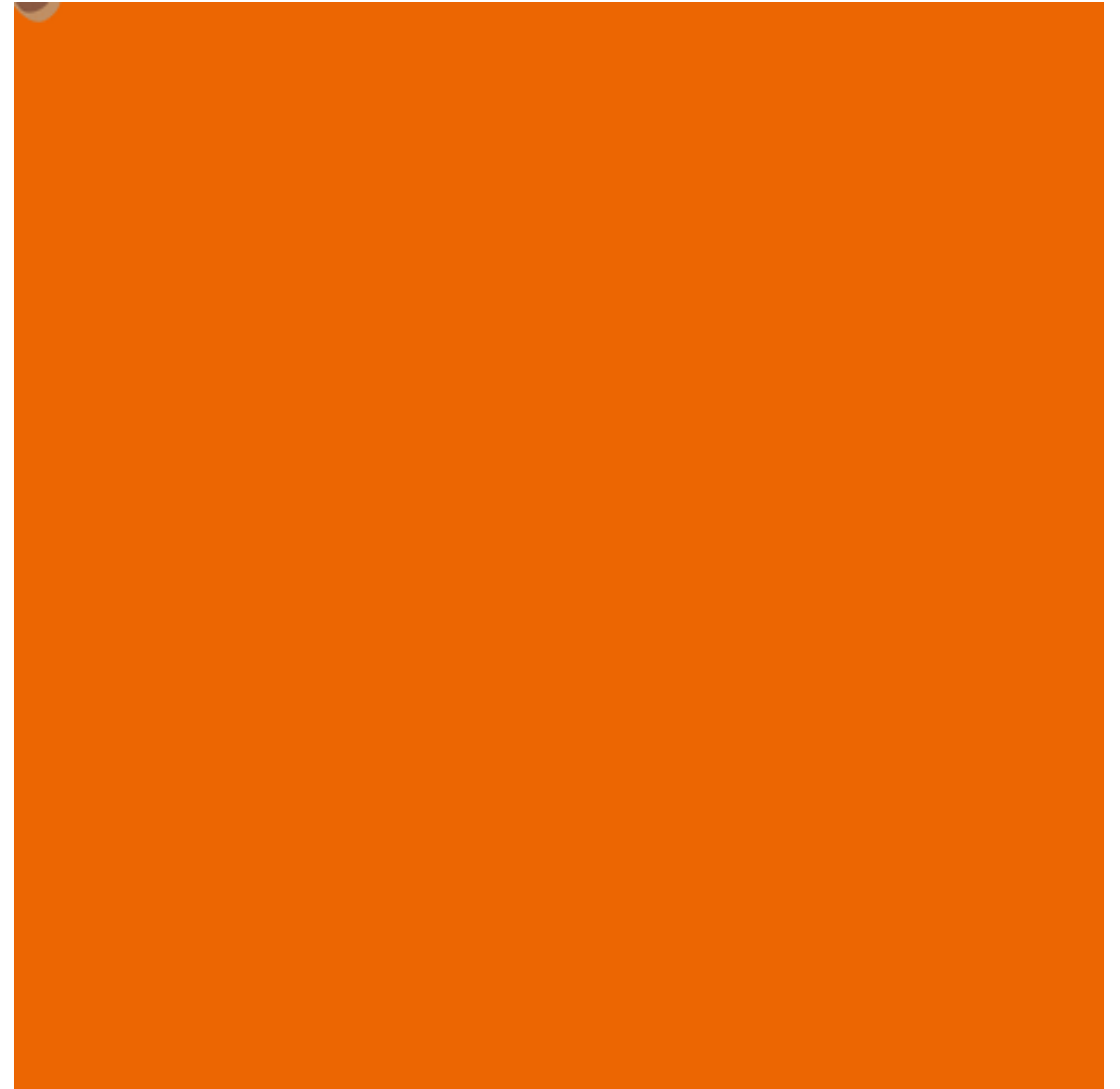


What is a Continuum of
Care?

Continuums of Care

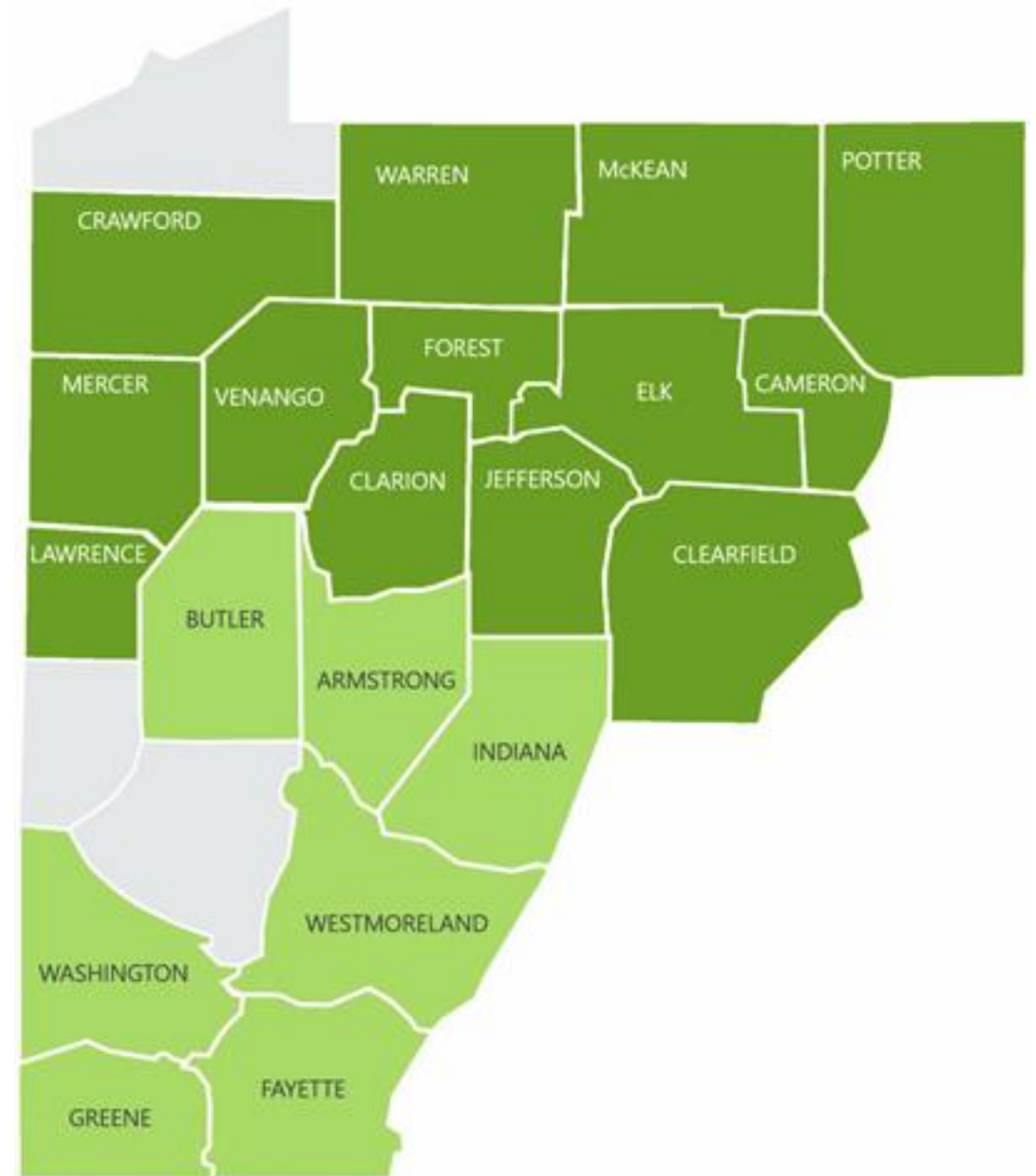
A group of organizations and individuals working together to:

- Promote a community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness;
- Provide funding for efforts to quickly re-house individuals and families who are homeless.



Western PA CoC

Our mission is to end homelessness through a socially just, coordinated, community-based process of identifying needs and building an open, integrated, and inclusive system of housing and services that address those needs.



Why the Western CoC engages PWLE

The CoC believes that ending homelessness is only possible when the voices of people with lived experience are utilizing their expertise to change systems. We believe that ending homelessness is possible, that housing is essential to ending homelessness and homelessness should not define those who experience it.



What is a Youth Action Board?

Youth Action Board

A Youth Action Board (YAB) is a group of youth/young adults (YYA) aged 16-25 who have lived experience, past or present, with housing instability, homelessness, involvement with youth serving systems and or youth allies who are committed to ending youth homelessness.



Advocates for Change

Mission

Advocates for Change expands services for youth, creating and maintaining support systems that can meet youth where they are, reducing housing instability.

Vision

Advocates for Change empowers youth to end homelessness through access to diverse and effective resources.




What is authentic
engagement?

Authentic Youth Engagement

Authentic engagement is characterized by meaningful youth-adult partnerships in which youth and young adults (YYA) feel respected, valued and trusted. Youth will have the opportunities to lead, learn, make decisions and to work to implement their ideas and help shape their communities.





Audience examples of
authentic engagement

Examples of Authentic Engagement

- Inviting YYA to your agency to discuss gaps in the system and share their expertise around solutions and working alongside them to implement those solutions.
- Supporting a YYA in their development by offering training opportunities, helping them to goal plan and then helping them in their personal and/or professional development.
- Hiring YYA at your agency and counting their lived experience as expertise/education.



How to engage PWLE

Positive Youth Development Model

The YAB utilizes a Positive Youth Development (PYD) model. PYD focuses on protective factors or the assets of youth and adolescents (Scales et al. 2005; Schwartz et al. 2007; Lerner et al. 2005; Theokas et al. 2005). The model embraces the concept that youth and young adults (YYA) have the capacity to thrive, defined as “fulfilling one’s potential and contributing positively to one’s community” (Edberg 2008). This model shifts away from other conceptualizations of youth as broken, dangerous, and problems to be managed, as well as a shift away from a “deficit model” that understood positive development as the absence of negative or risk behaviors (such as drug use, truancy, delinquency) (Lerner 2005; Lerner et al. 2013). The current model considers the person-context relationship, which is a multilayered web of family, school and community in which a youth is embedded (Development Services Group Inc. 2013; Lerner et al. 2013).

Positive Youth Development cont'd



CONNECTION



CONFIDENCE



COMPETENCE



CONTRIBUTION



CARING



CHARACTER

Recruitment, applications, interviews and onboarding

1. Recruitment
2. [Youth Action Board](#) and [Homeless Action Board](#) applications
3. How are applications reviewed?
4. How are members appointed?
5. Onboarding



Personal and Professional Development



Reach out!

Anthony Taylor: ataylor@theunionmission.org, 724-691-5728

Kiara Adams: 25.kiaraadams@gmail.com

Rob Henry (Chester County): rhenry@chesco.org

Website: endhomelessnesschesco.org or on Social Media @ChescoPartnership