

# Youth Drop-In Center **FAQs**



**A Place 4 Me has partnered with Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry, young adult leaders, local funders and service providers to introduce a drop-in center where young people seeking housing stability can find respite and safety.**

**Drop-in centers are critical elements of a systemic approach to prevent and end youth homelessness, yet Cuyahoga County remains the only major urban area in Ohio without one.**

## What happens in the youth drop-in center?

Young adult guests, staff, and volunteers will be welcomed at the center's reception desk by a receptionist and a trauma-informed safety officer. Guests will be greeted by staff who will offer them something to eat or drink. New guests will be offered a tour and/or orientation to the center. Guests of the center can access food in the kitchen, clothing and personal hygiene items, wash clothes in the laundry room, shower, and take a break in the living room, dining room, or library. A small computer lab will be available for guests, as well as multiple charging pods. There will be an area for guests' children to play. Staff will link guests to a variety of housing supports and services, including access to diversion and prevention assistance, family mediation and reunification support, emergency rental assistance, Rapid Re-Housing, and supportive housing.

## How is this different than a shelter?

The youth drop-in center is not a shelter and does not provide overnight bed capacity. Many young people who will visit the center already have places to stay overnight and will be using the center to access resources, do laundry, have a meal or seek respite from what may be a challenging situation. The center is intended to complement and provide coordinated access to the community's existing array of services for young people seeking housing stability.

## Will the center stay open overnight?

No. We will not implement a 24-hour model at this location. We have considered hours of operation as 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. and are amenable to adjustments within this framework to allow flexibility to meet the needs of young people.

## Why do we need the center?

Cleveland is the only major urban city in Ohio that does not have a much-needed youth drop-in center. Young people are often wary of traditional systems of care, which have not been designed to support the unique needs of young people. They may evade those systems altogether or quickly disengage from them, making them more likely to experience longer-term homelessness. The holistic, youth-centered approach of the drop-in center will allow service linkages to be tailored to the unique strengths and needs of each individual young person.

## Who will come?

The youth drop-in center will be available for youth and young adults ages 16 to 24 who are seeking stable housing in Cuyahoga County. Recognizing that about 25 percent of young people experiencing housing instability are parents, the center will also welcome guests' children.

Based on current services and experience of A Place 4 Me, it is anticipated that 12 to 15 young people would be using the center at any given time. Young people experiencing housing instability do not have a safe, secure, or permanent place to live. Many have college degrees and are dealing with debt or crisis situations. Young people often report severe family conflict as the primary reason for their homelessness. They may be couch-surfing; doubled-up with a relative or friend; staying in a hostel, hotel, shelter; or navigating the streets. Some may be rejected or abused by their families because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Nationally, 40 percent of young people experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ+.

Despite their resilience or tenacity, their housing challenges create greater deficits in their lives. The drop-in center partners

have decades of experience combined in working with young people striving for housing stability.

### Why the location of 4100 Franklin?

We are committed to the 4100 Franklin site as an accessible, safe resource point identified in partnership with young people. The exploration and vetting of sites for a youth drop-in center was a critical element of the planning process. With funding from The Cleveland Foundation and the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland, the drop-in center partners engaged Allegro Real Estate Brokers to support a site search and selection process. Criteria were defined in partnership with the youth-led planning team for the drop-in center. Criteria include safety; access to public transit; residential and walkable; access to amenities such as libraries, shops and cafes; near downtown but not in downtown in order to avoid being near large emergency shelters; appropriate in size and home to only the drop-in center. The 4100 Franklin location was one of several prospective properties, and it was the only one that met all criteria.

A Place 4 Me administered a survey to community providers and young people that explored how the drop-in center could operationalize five core values (racial and LGBTQ equity, safe/youth friendly, radical hospitality, highly relational, and low barrier). Location feedback on the survey specifically identified Ohio City as sharing many of the same core values. Additionally, data from Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services shows that nearly one-third of young people who visit coordinated intake have their last prior zip code in Ohio City or an adjacent neighborhood.

### What will staffing and security look like?

Staff include the center director, receptionist, youth advocates, safety officers, youth navigators, clinicians, maintenance, etc. In addition, professionals from other social service partners will be on site as needed. Safety personnel specially trained in trauma-informed, youth-centered de-escalation will be on site to both proactively monitor for and also be responsive to any conflicts or issues that may arise that impact safe participation in center activities. In most cases, safety personnel will be able to address the situation and will remove individuals if appropriate. The Cleveland

Police Department - 2nd District will be called in for support, if needed. We are building relationships with the Community Engagement Officers of the Community Services Unit of the CPD - 2nd District so we can partner on responses as well as identify proactive ways to ensure a safe and secure environment. The facilities will be secured at closing time, and safety features will be in place, including appropriate lighting and security monitoring systems. No loitering will be permitted.

### Where will young people go after hours?

Many young people who will visit the center already have places to stay overnight. They may be couch-surfing; doubled-up with a relative or friend; or staying in a hostel, hotel or shelter. Guests in need of sleeping arrangements will be assisted in finding suitable locations and services. We will have youth advocates and safety personnel on site to assist our guests in getting to their next location through public transit, ride shares or other transportation assistance. Young people will not be permitted to stay on the property after closing hours.

### How can community members support the center?

The partners at A Place 4 Me, Lutheran Metropolitan Ministries and other members of the movement to end youth homelessness are committed to being good neighborhood partners. We are grateful for general acceptance among community members, and we are dedicated to fostering a culture of hospitality and safety. We are committed to ongoing dialogue with this community. Please stay in touch with us to learn more about opportunities for volunteering, donations and community events.

### To whom can I direct questions or concerns?

**Please direct any questions or concerns to any of the following:**

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