



Valley Youth House

Advocacy Platforms

ValleyYouthHouse.org

Valley Youth House's first program, an emergency shelter in Bethlehem, PA, opened in 1973, ensuring that vulnerable, abused, and homeless young people had access to shelter and counseling. VYH has expanded to serve more than 16 Northeastern, Southeastern, and Central Pennsylvania counties and over 17,000 children, youth, and parents annually. VYH provides housing, prevention, intervention services as well as experiential learning at our camp.

Vision: We envision a world where every young person belongs to a nurturing community. Our programs prioritize youth and family voice, leadership, community collaboration, and innovative programming. VYH employs more than 500 team members and has an annual operating budget of \$50 million. Our funding is diverse, including local, state, and federal governments, private foundations, donations, and other gifts.

Platforms: VYH focuses on helping youth where they are through four platforms.

- 1. Housing and Homelessness:** Homelessness among youth and families is a growing crisis across the country. In 2024, overall homelessness in the U.S. increased by 18%, including nearly 150,000 children under 18 and 38,170 transition-age youth between 18-24, representing a 33% and 10% increase year over year, respectively. In Pennsylvania, the situation is equally alarming, with 46,714 students identified as experiencing homelessness or unstable housing during the 2022-23 school year. VYH offers housing and services to support youth in achieving and maintaining their own housing stability.
- 2. Behavioral Health and School-Based Counseling:** Youth with behavioral health issues continues to climb. According to the 2023 Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS), 37.3% of PA students reported that they felt sad or depressed on most days in the past 12 months and less than half who require mental health services actually receive them. VYH provides in-home, in-community, and school-based behavioral health programs, which are significantly more effective and less costly than residential based services.
- 3. Human Trafficking:** Youth survivors of trafficking have been underserved or ignored in Pennsylvania and across the nation. Without intervention, issues of substance abuse, mental health, domestic violence, and exploitation will continue into adulthood. VYH has responded by providing a home and services for health, education, & employment, reducing recidivism, increased permanency resources, and improved youth survivors' connections with treatment.
- 4. Youth in Child Welfare:** Older youth transitioning out of foster care face substantial barriers to achieving a stable and independent adulthood. National studies show that youth who age out of foster care without adequate support are at significantly higher risk for homelessness, unemployment, and low educational attainment (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020). These challenges are compounded by the effects of trauma and instability. Each year VYH prepares thousands of youth aging out of foster care by investing in their futures, offering stable housing, education support, preparation for employment, and teaching life skills. VYH invests in these young people to give them the comprehensive life skills they need to thrive and transition to independence.