

Ending a Lifetime of Homelessness

When you're a homeless young adult, each and every day is unpredictable.

You've likely been awake all night, moving from place to place for your own safety. You're sleeping on the couches of friends or family. Sometimes sleeping in your car or roaming the halls of a building that's open all night.

You may go days without a hot meal, a shower or the ability to wash your clothes. You may sleep through your alarm, causing you to be late for school or your job, which is now at risk. You may find yourself a target of violence and have nowhere safe to go. And you feel incredibly alone.

For unhoused young adults, a home is *everything*. It is safety, warmth, privacy, security. It's a place where you can find – maybe for the first time – a sense of self-worth, of having value.

It often takes young people weeks or months to feel safe enough to identify goals or dream about what their life could look like. In fact, young people often say, **“This is the first time I don't want to kill myself”** when experiencing the relief of no longer having to expend all of their energy simply to survive.

The statistics also tell a very human story. **In Milwaukee county, an estimated nearly 12,000 youth and young adults aged 10-24 experience homelessness annually.** Young people of color and/or those who identify as LGBTQ+ disproportionately experience homelessness. Research also shows that young people who experience homelessness have lifelong high rates of mental illness, suicide attempts and substance abuse. Plus, the likelihood of continued homelessness throughout adulthood.

Milwaukee has a youth housing crisis. Hundreds of young adults aged 18-25 are on housing waitlists. They're waiting and waiting for safe, stable housing to become available.

IT'S TIME TO END THE WAIT.

Our Plan

Building on the success of United Way working to end family homelessness, with your support, **Pathfinders will end youth homelessness in Milwaukee.**

Pathfinders will address this issue from multiple fronts. **First, we will eliminate Milwaukee’s young adult housing waitlist** – ending the wait for hundreds and moving them into stable housing for up to three years. They will receive academic, employment and parenting support, along with intensive case management to address their trauma and mental health, which will allow them create a future **without a need for lifelong support**.

Once the waitlist is eliminated, episodes of homelessness will be short, infrequent and more quickly resolved through existing community resources, including those available at Pathfinders.

Second, we will increase our housing prevention efforts to end episodic homelessness before it happens. Hundreds of additional young adults are on the verge of homelessness. By providing emergency basic needs assistance for a winter energy bill or car repair, we can ensure they won’t lose their current housing when an emergency arises.

Lastly, we will increase Pathfinders’ overall capacity to meet the wide variety of needs that housing insecure young people face: sexual exploitation and trafficking, mental health and substance abuse needs and complex trauma.

\$13.5 Million to End Youth Homelessness

How will funding be used?

From 2025-2029 Pathfinders will continue to do our effective and evidence-based work, and we will increase our current capacity to end the youth housing waiting list and expand upstream homelessness prevention efforts. Pathfinders will bring the organization back to its current size once this effort is completed. Here’s a snapshot of what’s included.

- HOUSING: direct rent, utilities, moving and home set-up expenses
- HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION: basic needs, emergency housing and systems advocacy
- DIRECT SERVICE: case managers, life skills staff and advocates working directly with young people, plus housing staff to expand our network of landlords and meet the housing need
- INFRASTRUCTURE: Pathfinders’ overall infrastructure will meet the needs of a diverse team of leaders and we will advocate for systems change on critical issues

Project Component	Investment
Direct Housing Needs (rent, utilities, moving costs, home set up)	\$6,360,000
Homelessness Prevention (basic needs, emergency housing/utilities, crisis)	\$1,150,836
Intensive Case Management, Life Skills and Housing Staff	\$4,108,519
Pathfinders’ Overall Infrastructure & Systems Change	\$1,880,645
Total	\$13,500,000

Who is Pathfinders?

For nearly 55 years, Pathfinders has provided mental health support, intensive case management and basic needs resources to young people who've experienced homelessness, sexual exploitation and violence, crisis and their associated traumas. About 1,000 young people access our intensive case management services and another 5,000 engage with our street outreach team annually.

Pathfinders provides a depth and breadth of services in response to the complex trauma needs of Milwaukee's most vulnerable youth and young adults. **We prioritize an invisible population who have often been turned away from, thrown out from or unwelcomed by their families, community services and/or systems as being too challenging to serve.**

**Pathfinders has a ZERO percent eviction rate
in 15 years of housing work.**

Our Expertise

Pathfinders has a proven record of accomplishment. For 15 years, we have provided housing to young adults aged 16-25 who are LGBTQ+, have high mental health needs, have exited the foster care system and find themselves homeless and who have experienced sexual exploitation and trafficking.

All of the young people in our housing program have remained eviction free, which ensures they begin their independence journey with a positive rental history, making future renting easier.

Two-thirds of Pathfinders' housing program participants successfully "graduated" from our program without the need for lifelong support. Some may need a lower level of support for a few years after graduating, while a small portion of those who have more significant mental health challenges may benefit from ongoing community resources.

**Two-thirds of Pathfinders' housing program
participants exit without the need for lifelong support.**

Pathfinders has been acknowledged by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a model organization embodying the Housing First approach, recognizing our unique supported housing work with LGBTQ+ identified youth. **Our President & CEO, Tim Baack, was named a White House Champion of Change.** And we are rated a United Way top tier agency annually for our outcomes.

Finally, federal and state evaluators regularly tout Pathfinders' service models and results as best-practice examples to other nonprofits throughout the state and across the nation.

Our campaign: Ending a Lifetime of Homelessness

With your help, **we will raise \$13.5 million by 2027** through individual, corporate and foundation donors and government funding. That investment will open doors – literally – to homes, to safety, to possibilities. It will create a future for young adults who now have nowhere else to turn. It will end a painful wait, both immediately and in the future, for young people who simply want a safe place to live and a chance to make their way forward. **It will make our community stronger and safer.**

We Can't Do This Work Alone. We Need You.

Return on Investment

When we prioritize the housing needs of Milwaukee's young adults, the entire community will benefit.

First, young adults will no longer experience the kind of homelessness that leads to a lifetime of housing instability, sexual exploitation, physical danger, substance dependency and suicide. Everyone deserves to feel safe, be sheltered and have the opportunity to thrive.

Second, **we will see savings in other systems when we reduce homelessness.** National Network for Youth research shows **the cost of youth homelessness** (lost earnings, crime and victim costs, excess tax burden, public housing, etc.) is an estimated **\$26,433/year/youth**, and **\$869,647 over the individual's lifetime.**

- Pathfinders' campaign will cost \$70.74/day to stably house each young adult.
- Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility cost is \$216/day.
- Milwaukee County Mental Health Complex cost is \$659/day.

Third, **we can decrease the need for lifelong housing resources.** If we strategically deploy resources to address youth homelessness, we can change the trajectory not only for those young people, but also for generations to come.

We can end the lifelong cycle of homelessness

Milwaukee is a vibrant community that cares deeply about its citizens. We want the best of everything for everyone who calls this city home.

By addressing the emergency housing needs of young adults, we will shorten the lifecycle of homelessness, which often results in a lifelong need for resources that stretches beyond generations.

Together, along with the young adults we serve, we can make a difference.

Together, we have the power to end a lifetime of homelessness for all young adults.