



To apply for this fellowship, please go to www.stoneleighfoundation.org and complete the Individual Application. Send the application to Gianna Karapelou at giannakarapelou@projecthome.org. For questions, call **215-280-2067**.

Identifying System Gaps Contributing to Youth Homelessness

Partnering Organization and its Mission: The mission of Project HOME is to empower people to break the cycle of homelessness and poverty, to address structural causes of poverty, and to enable individuals to attain their fullest potential as individuals and as members of the broader society. In this mission, Project HOME aims to not just provide supportive housing and services for those who are already long-term street homeless, but to prevent future long-term street homelessness for young adults experiencing temporary displacement or aging out of the child welfare system.

The Problem: Recent research shows that vulnerable young adults and youth, especially those transitioning from foster care, juvenile justice, and residential treatment services, comprise one of the largest groups in homelessness demographics. Unless early interventions are made to stabilize, educate, employ, and empower these young adults, this segment will become a steady stream into the homeless system. Every year, close to 1,000 young adults age out of the foster care system in Pennsylvania, and research has shown that they face a number of challenges during the transition to adulthood, and housing stability may be among the greatest. We also know that LGBTQ identified young adults are experiencing homelessness at an alarmingly disproportionate rate – as much as 40%. Despite these realities, little is understood about which young adults are most at risk of becoming homeless after foster care discharge. Federal research suggests that persistent gaps in the support services young adults receive to transition successfully are contributing to this pressing issue. In response to the growing crisis of young adult homelessness, Project HOME introduced a young adult pilot program in 2013 for eight transition-age (18-25) young adults experiencing homelessness or aging out of foster care and intends to expand to include a new site allocating an additional 12 units for formerly homeless young adults with at least 6 units to be designated for young adults who identify as LGBTQ.

Solution: Project HOME's Stoneleigh Emerging Leader Fellow will conduct a study of existing support service gaps which correlate to a greater risk of homelessness, as well as the perceptions of homeless young adults on the public systems they have encountered, in order to inform necessary systems change, appropriate intervention strategies, and supportive housing services. The year-long Stoneleigh project would entail in-depth interviewing: 1) young adults who are 6 months (or less) away from aging out of foster care with no place live at that time; 2) young adults who have aged out of foster care in the last 1-2 years and who immediately became homeless following discharge; 3) non-foster care young adults of transitional age who have had a connection with the child welfare system; and, 4) non-foster care young adults who have had a connection with the child welfare system, are recently past transitional age and have experienced an episode of homelessness. To gain access to interview subjects, we would work with youth/young adult providers in the City.

Outcomes: Once this information is gathered, the Fellow would analyze correlations between the services young adults have received and subsequent homelessness – as well as perceived systems failures and suggested ways to remediate. The study would also examine specific correlations which are unique to interview subjects who self-identified as LGBTQ. Once these correlations have been identified, the Fellow would develop recommendations for systems change and the elements of a responsive supportive housing model. The Fellow would also work closely with the Strategic Initiatives and Residential departments at Project HOME to ensure these strategies are in-line with and clinically appropriate for the organization's next phases of housing for young adults who have experienced homelessness. These findings would be disseminated to our youth partners and submitted for presentation at local, state and national meetings and conferences.

Desired Candidate Qualifications: Candidates for this Fellowship must have completed a master's-level degree program between May 2012 and May 2015 at an accredited college or university in the social or behavioral sciences, education, health, or a related field. Ideally, the Fellow would have a recognized commitment to issues involving at-risk young adults and homelessness. The Fellow should have excellent communication skills, be highly inquisitive, self-motivated, detail oriented, and adept at establishing trust with others.