



City of Austin

Recommendation for Action

File #: 25-1667, **Agenda Item #:** 58.

8/28/2025

Posting Language

Authorize negotiation and execution of an agreement with the Youth and Family Alliance d/b/a LifeWorks to provide emergency shelter to youth experiencing homelessness, for a 13-month term, beginning September 1, 2025, in an amount not to exceed \$200,000. Funding: \$200,000 is available in the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Homeless Strategy Office Social Services Contracts Budget.

Lead Department

Homeless Strategy Office.

Fiscal Note

Funding in the amount of \$200,000 is available in the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Homeless Strategy Office Social Services Contracts Budget.

For More Information:

David Gray, Homeless Strategy Officer, 512-972-7836; Kelechukwu Anyanwu Jr, Program Manager III, 512-972-5136; Estella Kirscht, Department Executive Assistant, 512-972-4423.

Additional Backup Information:

Youth homelessness has surged sharply in recent years. According to Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data, the number of unaccompanied individuals under 25 experiencing homelessness in Travis County has nearly quadrupled since 2020—from just 247 to approximately 934 as of late 2024. These young people often remain hidden, couch-surfing, sleeping in vehicles, or spending time in public spaces—making outreach and support especially challenging. Additionally, two-thirds of these youth are connected to foster care or juvenile justice systems, indicating high vulnerability and trauma exposure.

Youth-specific emergency shelters serve as a critical first point of entry for vulnerable young people, offering trauma-informed support tailored to their unique developmental, educational, and emotional needs. Youth-focused environments are designed to foster safety, trust, and stability—providing low-barrier access to necessities like food, hygiene, and a safe place to sleep. Just as important, they create a foundation for long-term stability by connecting youth to housing navigation, mental health care, education and employment support, and caring adult relationships. This targeted approach not only addresses immediate survival needs but also interrupts the cycle of chronic homelessness by helping young people build a pathway toward independence.

LifeWorks currently operates a youth emergency shelter that has been temporarily closed due to limited resources. Approval of this item will authorize the Homeless Strategy Office to execute an agreement with LifeWorks to increase youth-focused shelter bed capacity by reopening this critical facility. LifeWorks plans to leverage the City's one-time investment by drawing down ongoing state operational funding at a rate of approximately \$300 per bed per night—representing a significant return on the City's contribution. Reopening the shelter will not only expand immediate access to safe, trauma-informed care for vulnerable young people, but also unlock sustainable funding to support ongoing operations and long-term outcomes.

LifeWorks is a leading nonprofit organization in Austin dedicated to supporting youth and young adults on their

path to self-sufficiency. With a focus on housing, education, workforce development, and mental health, LifeWorks provides a comprehensive array of services to youths experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The organization is nationally recognized for its evidence-based, trauma-informed approach and its commitment to positive youth development. Through its continuum of care, LifeWorks helps young people achieve stability, build skills, and create a foundation for long-term success.