

Engaging Families Prevents Youth Homelessness

A frantic phone call first brought Anthony¹ to New Beginnings' shelter when he was just 14 years old. Anthony's parents died in a car accident when he was very young, and he'd been adopted and raised by an older relative. Anthony and his great-aunt were always fighting, to the point that his aunt called New Beginnings because she thought she'd have to give up custody of Anthony if things did not change.

Family conflict is the #1 reason why young people come to our emergency youth shelter. Many youth have experienced the trauma of disconnection from childhood caregivers and have not developed

the skills to appropriately address and resolve conflict. Research shows that ongoing family support can help young people reduce their risk for negative outcomes including suicide and homelessness.²

New Beginnings' shelter works to engage families and youth from the very first contact—staff work with each separately and together through mediation. Without learning and practicing positive communication skills, youth like Anthony and their caregivers will likely continue to respond to conflict the only way they know how—often in unhealthy, rejecting, destructive, or violent ways.



As part of building a trusting relationship, shelter staff explained the mediation process and goals to both Anthony and his aunt, acknowledging the struggles and hardships that they both were experiencing. Prior to mediation, both youth and adults often express that their feelings and expectations are not being heard or acknowledged by the other party.

Trained mediators can help participants work through these feelings, describe what is important to each person, and create plans for future change. Staff worked with Anthony to prepare for mediation by exploring potential positive outcomes, roadblocks, and ways he might respond.

At their first mediation meeting, Anthony and his aunt were very resistant. Anthony didn't want to

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FAMILY MEDIATION 20 years of success

Twenty years ago, most kids like Anthony who came to our shelter would complete a 3-week shelter stay, get referrals to community resources, and then go back to the same situations that brought them to the shelter in the first place. In most cases, things would fall apart again and the youth would return to the shelter or run away from home.

In 1999, New Beginnings' Shelter Program Director Marian Carney recognized that the shelter needed to be more than just a temporary respite period. She began exploring other ways to involve caregivers in strengthening family relationships, but very few families were willing to participate in counseling with outside agencies. However, Marian saw that once both youth and families were able to develop a rapport and trust with shelter staff, they were more willing to meet and try to resolve their conflicts.

MEDIATION Continued on Page 2 ►

¹Name has been changed to protect confidentiality.

²Ryan, Caitlyn (2009). *Supportive Families, Healthy Children*. Family Acceptance Project, San Francisco State University.

Meet the Newest Members of our Board of Directors

ASHLEY GAGNON *Northeast Bank*

If we truly want to end youth homelessness... We must invest in prevention... Implement youth as priority... Change is reality... Community collaboration is our strategy.



NANCY GRENIER, RN *Maine Community Health Options*

I am very interested in the mission of New Beginnings and the great work supporting our homeless teenagers.



STEVE LABONTE *Juvenile Corrections Officer*

I joined New Beginnings' board because I believe that youth are the future. We, as adults and society need to support and provide for them to flourish.



ALICIA MILLER *Androscoggin Bank*

I am proud to lend my time to an organization that helps support youth in our community during times of isolation, while preparing them with the life skills they need to establish their foundation on which to build a successful future.



Engaging Families

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leave the shelter for a planned visit with his aunt, which caused even more tension. The second mediation started out the same way—negative statements, hopelessness, and poor communication habits nearly took over. But staff gently redirected the conversation to what Anthony and his aunt liked to do together and what kind of relationship they would like to have.

Together, they were able to set solid expectations and consequences, and make a plan for handling their differences, including taking space and trying out positive communication skills. Even though they were apprehensive, Anthony and his aunt agreed to spend a weekend together after the meeting to try out their plan, with another mediation the following Monday to talk about how it went.

The visit was not perfect, but at the next mediation meeting both reported that the visit went better than they'd expected. Anthony and his aunt both expressed that they wanted to stay together and work things out. For the first time, they mutually expressed hope, acknowledged that their relationship mattered, and demonstrated a willingness to keep trying.

With the support of New Beginnings' family mediation, Anthony was discharged back to his aunt's care. Staff remained available for periodic check-ins, and the family has been able to continue functioning much better than before. Most importantly, Anthony did not end up hurt, in foster care, or homeless on the streets.

Over the past 20 years, our family mediation services have helped nearly 750 youth and their families. Young people have told us things like: "Finally I can talk to my father," "My dad and I don't usually talk when something is bothering us so it helped a lot," "It taught me coping skills and how to use them and where to use them," and "Things are easier now we are all on the same page."

Our Family Engagement Model has been gaining national recognition. In 2019, shelter staff were twice selected to present at national conferences – the National Network for Youth Summit on Youth Homelessness in March, and the Federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Grantees' Annual Conference in November.

Mediation is available to families with or without a shelter stay. For more information about youth shelter or family mediation services, call our 24-Hour Helpline at (207) 795-4070.

Mediation

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Marian secured a private Alford Foundation grant to develop innovative services to address intense family conflict. Those start-up funds allowed the shelter to implement staff training and a new family intervention model

based on promising research that at the time hadn't been utilized in the U.S. with runaway and homeless youth. Since then, our staff have been trained every few years by Debbie Mattson, LCSW, from Mediation and Facilitation Resources in family mediation techniques which incorporate New Beginnings' Model of Care.

The success of this approach has been demonstrated by improved outcomes for youth. **When the families of shelter youth participate in mediation, that young person is much less likely to require a repeat shelter stay or end up on the streets than youth from families who do not participate in mediation.**

NOVEMBER IS... RUNAWAY & HOMELESS YOUTH PREVENTION MONTH

DID YOU KNOW?

1 IN 30
YOUTH
ages 13–17

&

1 IN 10
YOUNG ADULTS
ages 18–24

... experience some form of homelessness within a 12-month period.

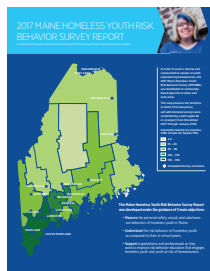
New analysis shows that these rates are consistent in rural parts of the country.

Rural youth are more likely to be “hidden” in their communities because they often rely on “couch surfing” at friends’ or strangers’ homes, sleeping in vehicles, or staying outdoors.

Source: Mortin, M.H., Dworsky, A., Samuels, G.M., & Patel, S. (2018). *Missed Opportunities: Youth homelessness in rural America*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

Report highlights youth challenges

New Beginnings is pleased to announce the release of the most recent *Maine Homeless Youth Risk Behavior Survey Report* based on data from 279 youth surveyed at more than a dozen locations across Maine in 2017. Results show that Maine’s homeless youth are at increased risk for HIV, abuse, violence, trauma, and engage in riskier behaviors than their typical public high school peers, and homeless young women and LGBTQ+ youth are at particular risk for negative health outcomes. Email prevention@newbeginmaine.org to request printed copies, or visit newbeginmaine.org/mhyrbs to view and download the report.



New Beginnings OPEN HOUSE

THURSDAY
November 21, 2019

11am–1pm | 134 College St., Lewiston

New Beginnings supporters, local providers, and community members are invited to come meet our board and staff members, including new Outreach Director Maura Moody. We hope you’ll stop by to learn more about New Beginnings while enjoying light refreshments **courtesy of Central Maine Credit Union**. For those wishing to make a donation, we will be collecting new warm winter socks and underwear during the Open House.

5 simple ways YOU can make a difference...

- 1. GIVE!** Join our holiday giving drive or start a donation drive at your school, workplace, or faith community!
- 2. WEAR GREEN!** Post a photo of yourself in green on social media to raise awareness #NRPM19
- 3. SPREAD THE WORD!** Tell parents & teens you know about our services—you never know who might need help!
- 4. ADVOCATE!** Talk to friends, colleagues, and local politicians. Post a special profile photo, or use a green porch light bulb.
- 5. DONATE!** Help our annual fund campaign by making a donation online on #GivingTuesday, December 3, 2019.

State receives \$3.5M grant to end youth homelessness

In August, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced that MaineHousing would receive a multi-year Youth Homeless Development Project (YHDP) grant—one of only eight awarded to rural sites across the nation. The grant is supporting the creation of a Coordinated Community Plan to end and prevent youth homelessness by identifying the strengths, gaps, and challenges in the existing youth homelessness response system and recommending strategies for improvement.

With initial support from the John T. Gorman Foundation, New Beginnings formed a Youth Action Board (YAB) in early 2019. The YAB currently has 35 members between the ages of 14 and 24, most of whom are currently based in Androscoggin county; recruitment is still open to young people from other regions of the state. The YAB members not only share the common thread of lived experience with homelessness, poverty, or interaction with mental health, foster/adoptive, juvenile justice, or mental health systems, but they also share a commitment to and passion for positively changing the experiences of other young people who may face similar life circumstances.

New Beginnings serves as the lead agency for the planning phase of

the YHDP grant, and on October 27 convened a leadership team of cross-sector experts from the Maine Departments of Corrections, Education, Health and Human Services, local municipalities, and nonprofit youth serving agencies to work with the YAB to begin creating Maine's Coordinated Community Plan (CCP).

The Youth Action Board ensures that youth with lived experience in homelessness have a voice in all decisions related to the grant; after the CCP is finalized, non-profit, faith-based, and government agencies will have an opportunity to apply for subgrants to create new and innovative programs to end and prevent youth homelessness.

“The YHDP grant presents new opportunities for vulnerable youth in Maine,” says New Beginnings Executive Director Chris Bicknell. “The partnerships this will create—and the voice that it will give youth who have been or who are homeless—is truly what we need to prevent and respond to youth homelessness.”

To learn more about YHDP planning, contact Chris Bicknell via email at: chris@newbeginmaine.org.

For more information about the Youth Action Board, text a message to (207) 402-9106.

middle of summer,
buried under 3 jackets,
outside a library,
it's 3AM.

numb,
except my hand are throbbing.
walked less than a mile,
but everything i own weighs me down.

this is new,
this didn't exist a year ago.
what happened?
I was a child a year ago.

A few months of torture,
everything is a blur,
a new state,
a new life,
hurry up and wait.

homeless.
this is my new identity.
it enters the room before i do.
go with the flow,
you'll be alright.

Everywhere i go
I'm met with contradictions
You're too old for this.
You're just a baby!
You're handling this so well!
You're being admitted,
Empty your pockets.

I'm here now.
What do i do?
There's too many choices.
What do you mean I'm supposed
to be independent?

just a few months ago,
I was selling my privacy,
to survive.
how do you move past that?

There's a roof over my head,
food in my fridge,
clothes on my back.
so why doesn't anything
feel different??

homelessness,
a stain on my identity.
it'll fade over time,
but it's there forever.

Written by a Youth Action Board participant for the October kick-off of the YHDP grant in Maine to, in their words, "help transform hardship into a stepping stone for progress."



SHARE YOUR STORY

New Beginnings is looking to connect with Alumni

No one can better describe how New Beginnings helps young people than someone who has utilized New Beginnings themselves. Your personal stories and experiences can help potential and current youth as well as interested members of the community understand how New Beginnings helped you face challenges and successes in your life.

If you are interested in reconnecting, sharing your stories, or joining us for alumni events, please contact us by calling (207) 795-4077 or emailing supporterengagement@newbeginmaine.org

Annual Dinner celebrates 30 years of Transitional Living Program

Thank you to all the community supporters, program alumni, volunteers and staff who came together to celebrate the 30th anniversary of New Beginnings' Transitional Living Program (TLP) at our 2019 Annual Dinner this past May. The evening marked our largest Annual Dinner yet, as over 250 attendees gathered over dinner at the Hilton in Auburn to honor the youth, alumni, volunteers, and dedicated staff of the TLP. The reception before the dinner featured a photo slideshow spanning the TLP's history and the dinner program included a moving video with interviews of TLP staff and participants about the importance of the program's housing and life skills support.

New Beginnings Board President Danylle Carson was joined by a panel of TLP alumni to celebrate the program's lasting positive impact on the more than 1,000 youth it has served since opening its doors in 1989. Chris Soucy, one of four alumni panelists, explained: "I definitely don't think I would have the drive to seek not only help when needed, but to just to

seek better opportunities for myself in life without the guidance I received from all the staff that were there when I was in the program."

The Board of Directors also honored volunteer Susan Lea with New Beginnings' 2019 Service Award. Susan has donated her time to New Beginnings' shelter longer than any other volunteer; since 2012, Susan has touched the lives of more than 700 young people. "It says a lot about somebody who takes time to come into a situation and connect with kids that a lot of people have forgotten about or don't care about," said Shelter staff member Chrissy Noble. Sarah Dostie of the Educational Support Program added, "[Susan] makes every encounter [with youth] count, so even though they may only be here a short time, they're lucky enough to have this special adult in their life planting the seeds that will carry them far into the future."

This event would not have been possible without our event sponsor, Northeast Bank, and all of the other sponsors listed below.

AGENCY NEWS BRIEFS

STAFF UPDATES

We're pleased to welcome Lisa Dumont as our new Director of Finance and Administration, replacing Financial Director Janet O'Connor, who is retiring after nearly 20 years of service. Inquiries that would have gone to Janet may now be directed to lisa@newbeginmaine.org. Prevention and Training Coordinator Kris Pitts and Outreach Program Director Maura Moody also began work this fall. In fact, so many new faces have joined our team since the last newsletter that we can't list them all here. Please visit newbeginmaine.org/staffnews for more updates!

DIGNITARIES VISIT

In March, U.S. Senator Susan Collins and HUD Secretary Ben Carson toured New Beginnings' Drop-in Center and met with staff and youth. "We must make sure our nation's homeless youth have the same opportunity to succeed as other youth," said Senator Collins.

OUTRIGHT LEWISTON-AUBURN

New Beginnings has been Outright L/A's fiscal sponsor since 2013. This summer, Chai Johnson became Outright L/A's new Program Director. The program now offers groups for LGBTQ+ youth in Oxford and Androscoggin Counties and will hold its annual Youth Summit in Lewiston on December 7, 2019. *More info at:* www.facebook.com/OutrightLA/

ADVOCACY

We continue to work for and with homeless youth on state and national levels, leading the statewide Homeless Youth Provider Group and participating in the ME Continuum of Care Board, ME Child Welfare Advisory Panel, and the National Network for Youth Policy Advisory Committee. We also supported the creation and passage of two state bills related to homeless youths' access to health care and college completion this year (LD866 & Statute 122:1503).

ANNUAL DINNER SPONSORS

EVENT SPONSOR



New Beginnings would like to thank our annual dinner sponsors for their generous support of our celebration.

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Mechanics Savings Bank

Maine Family FCU

Head to Toe

Physical Therapy



134 College Street
Lewiston, ME 04240

*New Beginnings
partners with youth to
create lasting change
so all youth have a
safe place to live
and opportunities
to grow.*



#GIVINGTUESDAY

DECEMBER 3, 2019

Make a difference! Kick off your annual giving at:

NEWBEGINMAINE.ORG



NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
US POSTAGE
PAID
AUBURN, ME
PERMIT NO. 80

Help make the holiday season brighter for homeless youth!

Thanks to the generosity of supporters like you, every December New Beginnings distributes holiday gifts to youth in our programs in Lewiston, Augusta, and Farmington. This year we need your support to make it possible for 100 youth to each get a care package containing gifts and winter necessities.

SIGN UP TO DONATE!

(207) 795-4077 or donations@newbeginmaine.org

See the full 2019 Holiday Wish List online:

NEWBEGINMAINE.ORG/HOLIDAY



SAVE THE DATE

Open House	11/21
Giving Tuesday	12/3
Outright L/A Youth Summit	12/7
Holiday Drive Drop-Off	12/11-12/13
Prevention Training: Welcoming Gender Diverse Youth . . .	12/12
Lewiston-Auburn Candlelight Vigil	12/20

L-A Candlelight Vigil

for National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2019

The first day of winter. The longest night of the year.



Co-Sponsored by
Lewiston-Auburn
Alliance for Services
to the Homeless