



Legal Services Partnership for Youth

Final Evaluation Report

Prepared by MEMconsultants, LLC
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Executive Summary

Legal Counsel for Youth and Children (LCYC)

was founded in 2010 to provide comprehensive legal services to young people involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

The **Legal Services Partnership for Youth (LSPY)** is a pilot project with the goal of preventing, or shortening the duration of, homelessness for youth and young adults in King County. For this project, LCYC partnered with YouthCare, Nexus Youth and Families, Tukwila Schools, probation counselors, and other homeless youth service providers and schools to provide on-site and timely legal services for youth.

About the Evaluation

The goal of the evaluation of the Legal Services Partnership for Youth (LSPY) project is to understand the effect of legal services youth and young adults at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Evaluation design and data collection strategies were established to gather short-term outcomes that could potentially indicate long-term effects on housing stability, educational attainment, and income generation for clients and to document lessons learned for the purposes of program improvement and replication.

Findings

LCYC’s legal advocacy had an immediate, positive impact on clients.

After working with a client and closing the case, attorneys report being able to **resolve a client’s legal issue and/or remove a barrier for 100% of clients.**

Attorneys report **resolving a client’s legal issue in 76%** of cases.

Attorneys report **removing a barrier to housing, income, employment or education in 92%** of cases.

65% clients reported safe and stable housing after working with an LCYC attorney, compared to 39% at intake. LCYC advocacy improved housing stability for 70% of minors served.

Legal services are a cost-effective intervention for homeless youth.

Compared with the immediate costs of homelessness for youth and the potential long-term costs of chronic homelessness, legal services provide the opportunity to resolve barriers to stability at a much lower cost.

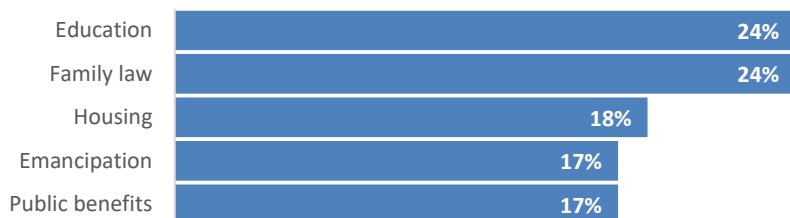
\$870 legal services, per referred youth	\$36,150 annual societal cost, per homeless youth	\$30,000 - \$50,000 annual societal cost, per chronically homeless adult
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LCYC attorneys worked with clients from populations that are over-represented in youth experiencing homelessness.

- 67% of youth referred to LSPY were youth of color.
- 21% of referred youth identified as LGBTQ.
- At least 45% of referred youth were previously or currently involved with child welfare.
- At least 41% of referred youth had prior or current justice system involvement.

Youth clients had multiple and varied legal needs.

Attorneys report that they worked with clients on **an average of 2.4 legal issues**. The most common legal issues were education, family law, housing, emancipation, and public benefits.



Introduction

About Legal Counsel for Youth and Children (LCYC)

Legal Counsel for Youth and Children (LCYC) was founded in 2010 to provide comprehensive legal services to young people involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. LCYC works collaboratively with other legal service providers and partners in the community to meet the needs of the youth they serve.

Legal Services Partnership for Youth (LSPY)

The Legal Services Partnership for Youth (LSPY) is a pilot project with the goal of preventing, or shortening the duration of, homelessness for youth and young adults in King County. The pilot period began in June 2016 and extended through December 2017. For this project, LCYC partnered with YouthCare, Nexus Youth and Families, Tukwila Schools, probation counselors, and other homeless youth service providers and schools to provide on-site and timely legal services for youth. Youth receiving services through this project must be under the age of 25 and either be homeless or at risk of homelessness.

About the Evaluation

The goal of the evaluation of the Legal Services Partnership for Youth (LSPY) project is to understand the effect of legal services for youth and young adults at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Given the short length of this pilot project, evaluation design and data collection strategies were established to gather short-term outcomes that could potentially indicate long-term effects on housing stability, educational attainment, and income generation for clients. The evaluation is also designed to document lessons learned for the purposes of program improvement, as well as serving as a resource for other communities or organizations interested in replicating LSPY.

The Raikes Foundation and the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, the primary funders for LSPY, contracted with MEMconsultants, LLC to complete an evaluation of LSPY. MEMconsultants worked in partnership with LCYC and the funders to design the evaluation.

Data Sources

The primary data source for this evaluation is client and case progress data, which attorneys gathered and entered into LCYC's internal case management database, *Clio*. MEMconsultants and LCYC worked together to determine outcome metrics to track and developed standardized intake and closing forms for LSPY clients. This report includes data regarding all LSPY cases opened between June 2016 and January 2018.

The secondary data source for this evaluation is key stakeholder interviews. In fall 2017 MEMconsultants conducted phone interviews with four LCYC staff attorneys and eight community, school and legal partners, including staff of YouthCare, Tukwila Schools, REST and Northwest Immigrant Rights Project. These interviews provide context to the client data.

Limitations to the Evaluation

As with any services to a vulnerable population such as homeless youth, outcome tracking and data collection is challenged by the frequently changing life circumstances of program participants. The experiences of homeless youth, whether engaged in services or not, are rarely linear and progression towards stability commonly has many ups and downs. During this evaluation, LCYC attorneys continued to work with clients through these fluctuations, but sometimes lost touch with a client prior to completing casework or completing data collection regarding their current housing, school enrollment or other indicators of stability.

Additionally, partner interviews suggested that there may have been project benefits to the youth beyond those tracked in *Clio*, such as increased confidence or improved decision-making resulting from having an informed, caring attorney on their team. Since the evaluators were not able to collect data directly from the youth, this evaluation does not capture program benefits beyond those anticipated and tracked by attorneys.

Findings: Who Was Referred

Community organizations referred youth with complex histories to LSPY.

The primary goal of the Legal Services Partnership for Youth (LSPY) is to prevent or shorten the duration of homelessness for youth and young adults in King County. LCYC partnered with service providers and schools to receive referrals for youth and young adults who were at-risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Referrals (n = 205)

63% of referrals came from partner organizations.

This suggests that partnerships with community organizations serving youth is a strength of LSPY.



Justice system connections included probation officers, prosecutors, public defenders, or someone connected to the court system. Other sources included friends, posters, or online.

Point-in-Time Count

The King County Point-in-Time Count, conducted annually, includes a visual street count, as well as surveys with unaccompanied youth under the age of 25. Data from this count is used in this evaluation as a comparison to help determine if LSPY clients are similar to the overall population of homeless youth in King County. Point-in-time counts serve as useful benchmarks at a community level, but do not represent the full scope of individuals who may experience homelessness.

Youth Demographics (n = 205, all youth referred to LCYC from June 2016 to January 2018)

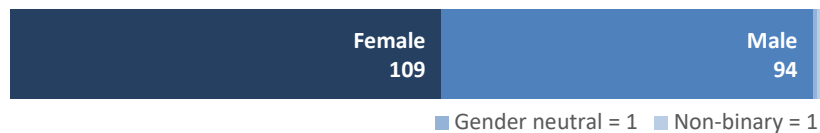
LCYC attorneys received referrals for a total of 205 youth.

47% of clients referred were minors under age 18, and the other 53% were between 18 and 24 years old (young adults) at the time of referral.



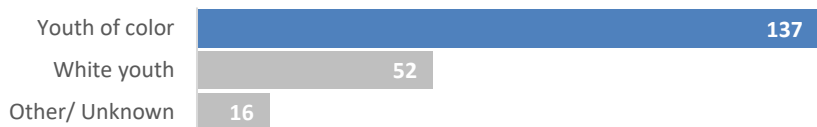
53% of referred youth were female.

40% of youth in King County's 2017 Point-in-Time Count were female.¹



67% of youth referred to LSPY were youth of color.

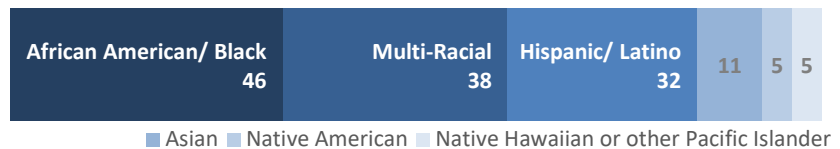
57% of youth in the Point-in-Time Count did not identify as white.



A variety of races and ethnicities make up the clients of color.

22% of youth identify as African American/Black, 19% Multi-Racial, 16% Hispanic/Latino, 5% Asian, and 2% each Native American and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander.

26% of youth in the Point-in-Time Count were African American/Black, 19% Multi-Racial, 17% Hispanic/Latino, 1% Asian, 8% Native American, and 4% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander.



17% (34) of referred youth reported that English is not their first language.

21% (43) of referred youth identified as LGBTQ.

28% of youth the Point-in-Time Count identified as LGBTQ.

¹ <http://allhomekc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/2017-King-PIT-Count-Comprehensive-Report-FINAL-DRAFT-5.31.17.pdf>



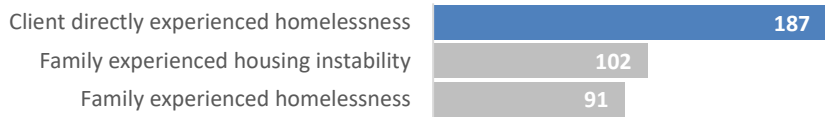
“These are youth that **don’t have anyone that they trust** – any adult that can help them in their life.”
– *Legal partner*

“Our students who have legal issues, such as warrants – they’re just afraid of the system, so they end up dodging all this legal stuff, and it starts racking up and can cause some serious problems. It’s just such a helpful bridge for them – **to deal with those issues and not have them become something that holds them back their entire life.**”
– *School counselor*

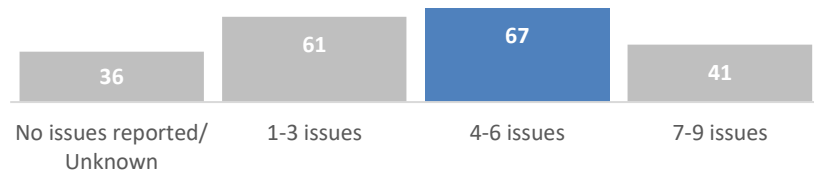
“**It’s really frustrating to see how difficult the system can be at times** and to think if I was a 16-year-old dealing with it, I would have given up a long time ago.” – *LCYC staff attorney*

Youth Histories (n = 205, all youth referred to LCYC)

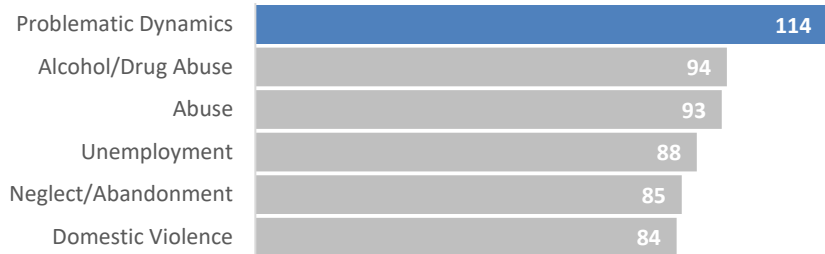
At least **91%** of referred youth **experienced homelessness on their own at some point before engaging with LCYC**. 50% experienced homelessness with their families.



Referred youth typically come from homes with many family challenges. Clients reported an **average of 4.5 issues** in the family home (of clients who reported any issues).

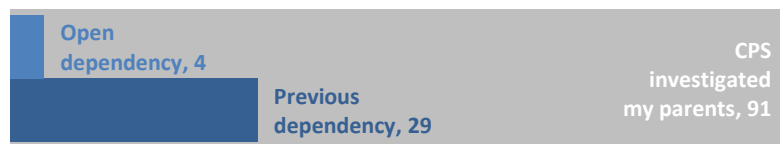


In addition to the homeless history described above, other issues included alcohol/drug abuse and abuse. **56%** of youth reported **problematic dynamics**.



Of the 43 youth who **identified as LGBTQ**, **42%** (18) reported that **conflict over their LGBTQ identity was an issue**. An additional 3 youth who did not identify as LGBTQ also reported that conflict over LGBTQ identity was an issue.

At least **16%** of referred youth had a **current or previous dependency**. **29%** of youth in the *Point-in-Time Count* reported ever being in foster care.



Of those with a previous dependency, 14 are minors and 15 are young adults.

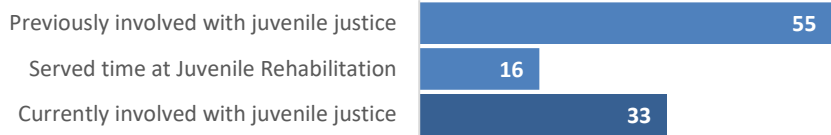
At intake, youth listed, on average,

fewer than 3 people in their support network.

Referred youth typically did not have large support networks. People in their support network often included a close family member or two or a case manager at a social services organization.

At least 41% of referred youth had previous or current justice system involvement.

48% of youth in King County's 2017 Point-in-Time Count reported ever being in jail or juvenile detention. 17% reported currently being on probation or parole.

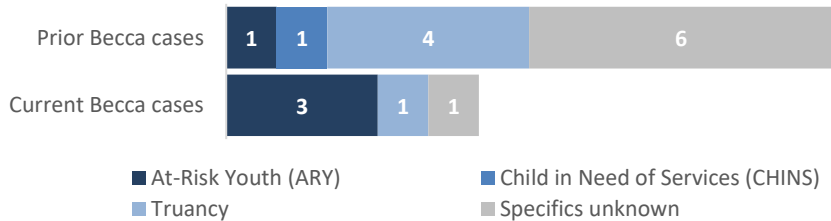


14% (28) of youth reported an immediate threat to safety at the time of referral.

Of those with a safety threat, 17 reported having a safety plan. Attorneys created a safety plan at intake with another 10 youth.

12% (24) of referred youth were parenting or pregnant (or their partner was pregnant).

8% (17) of referred youth reported a current or previous Becca case.²



² Washington State's Becca Bill is legislation that enables parents and youth to file petitions in Juvenile Court under either At-Risk Youth cases or Child in Need of Services cases. RCW 13.32A.010: <http://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=13.32a.010>

Findings: Services Provided

LCYC attorneys completed work with half of referred youth; work is ongoing with many.

LCYC services are voluntary and client-driven; attorneys communicate information and options to the youth they work with, and youth determine whether they want to engage in legal services and to what degree. Each youth referred to LSPY had a unique experience, ability, and desire to engage productively in legal services.



“In social services, it’s really easy for stuff to take forever. Everyone is so inundated and overwhelmed. LCYC has been able to avoid that. **They get back to youth really quickly.** They recognize that youth need them to be responsive and time-sensitive.”

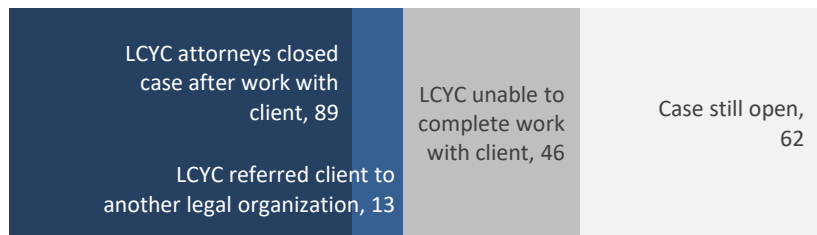
– *Service provider*

“LCYC’s **engagement level is superior** to other agencies I’ve dealt with.” – *Legal partner*

Client Engagement and Cases

Each time LCYC received a referral or met with a new potential client, a new case was opened. Five clients returned for more help after their first case was closed, resulting in a total of **210 cases**.

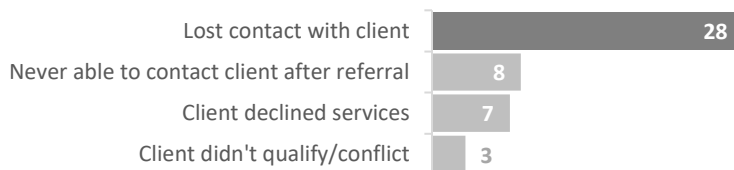
70% (148) of cases have closed while 62 remain open. After working with the client, **attorneys closed 42% (89) of the cases.** Cases were generally closed when a legal issue was resolved, there was no further work the attorney could do with the client, or the client chose not to continue work on their legal issues.



6% (13) of cases were closed after referral to another legal organization.

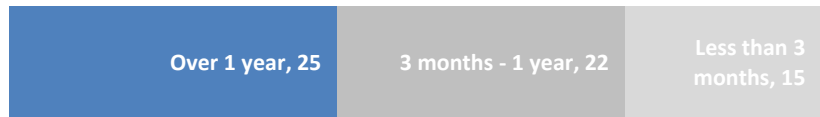
Referrals were made to a variety of other legal providers, including to attorneys in other counties where LCYC does not practice, to immigration-specific attorneys, or to public defenders. When making referrals, LCYC attorneys take steps to ensure a “warm” hand-off. They connect the client directly with another attorney, after determining that the attorney will be able to help address the needs of the client.

LCYC was unable to complete work with clients in 22% (46) of cases.



Of the 46 youth with which LCYC was not able to complete their work, most **disengaged from services and dropped contact**, despite attempts by LCYC attorneys to maintain a connection. Given the transient nature of people experiencing homelessness, and the multitude of challenges they face day-to-day, it's not surprising that some youth fell out of touch. These 46 cases represent a range of engagement: from youth who never connected with an LCYC attorney when the initial referral was made by a service provider, to youth who met with an attorney once or twice but chose not to continue services.

40% of open cases have been open for over one year.



According to LCYC, cases may remain open for extended periods of time for several reasons. Youth may only be interested in addressing one legal issue at a time, or may need time to work through other issues, such as finding a stable place to sleep, before addressing their more long-term legal issues. Additionally, emancipation and other family law issues tend to take a long time to resolve due to the involvement of multiple parties, notice and service requirements, and various pre-requisites for filing. Public benefits appeals also tend to take a long time. (Due to the fact that LCYC attorneys do not record the types of legal issues they worked on with a client until a case is closed, it is not possible to report on the types of legal issues present in the currently open cases.)

Clients had multiple legal needs and LCYC attorneys provided a range of services.

LCYC attorneys provide holistic legal representation for their clients – working on a range of legal issues, as well as simply helping clients to find a safe place to stay or provide a warm handoff to another type of non-legal service provider if that was needed.

Attorneys worked with clients on an average of

2.4 legal issues



“They are **filling a gap** that there were no resources for before.” – *Legal partner*

“The youth working with LCYC are getting personalized attention, **catered to exactly what that youth needs.**” – *Legal partner*

“Coming in to this I was really skeptical about how many legal needs youth really had. I thought that what they needed were social services. That has changed. There are social service needs, but **I’ve been amazed by how many legal needs youth have.**” – *LCYC staff attorney*

“The clients that we work with have a **lot of legal advocacy needs that I don’t know enough about.** Having that support and knowledge base is really useful.” – *Service provider*

“I know they put an extraordinary amount of work in. From all aspects of things. **Doing the holistic kind of representation they do is important** – looking at a child’s needs from all sides.” – *Legal partner*

Legal Issues

(n = 89, all cases in which attorneys were able to complete work with the client)

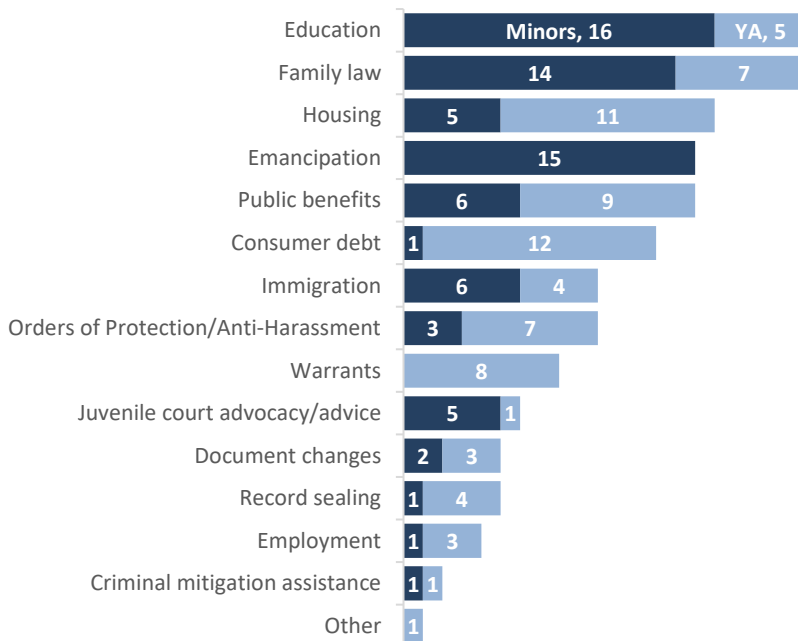
Clients typically sought attorney support for multiple legal issues.

Attorneys report that they **worked with clients** on an average of **2.4 legal issues.**



This does not represent all of the legal issues that clients may be facing, but rather reflects the legal issues youth selected to address with LCYC.

Clients brought a wide range of legal issues to their attorneys. The three most common legal issues are: **education, family law, and housing**, across both minors and young adults (YA). However, young adults more often requested help with consumer debt than any other legal issue.



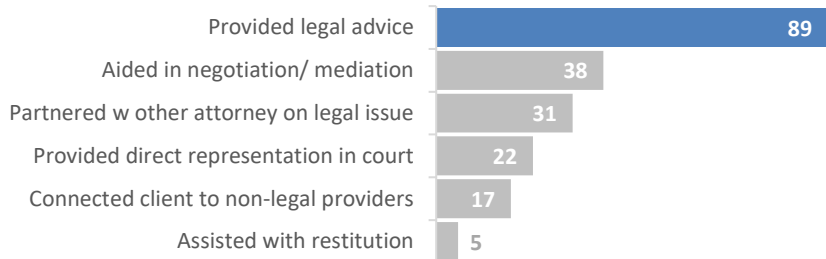
Though youth may have had dependency or criminal justice issues, LCYC attorneys are not permitted to work with LSPY clients on these issues because youth already have attorneys assigned to work with them in those cases. Youth with current criminal justice or dependency issues work with a public defender.

Legal Services

(n = 89, all cases in which attorneys were able to complete work with the client)

Legal advice was the most common service provided by LCYC attorneys

Legal advice (provided in one or more meetings) could have included a range of work such as completing an application for benefits or legal paperwork, investigation into warrants or open cases, gathering information from collateral contacts, legal research, and a thorough discussion of options. Additionally, attorneys provided a number of other legal services.



Certain legal services were tracked only for minor clients. For minors, **attorneys most often provided advocacy in court.** (n = 40, minors with closed cases)



Findings: Impact on Youth

LCYC’s legal advocacy had an immediate, positive impact for all clients.

While much of the work done by LCYC attorneys contributed to immediate stability or safety for clients, their services were also designed to help youth to thrive in the future, such as addressing custody or enabling students to enroll in school. All LCYC services are client-driven – the client determines which legal issues they want to address.

After completing work with a client and closing the case, attorneys report being able to **resolve a client’s legal issue** and/or **remove a barrier** for **100%** of clients.



“[Youth got help with] cleaning up the mess. **Making it less complicated.** Making it far easier to navigate. Having someone do the translation work: here’s what this large 60-page document says in two sentences.” – *Service provider*

“What most kids have trouble accessing is long-term help. That is where we provided some benefit. [The community] has systems in place that are supposed to help with that, but they don’t for whatever reason. We’re able to come in and help them **figure out the legal structure to put in to place for more long-term stability.**” – *LCYC staff attorney*

“[Youth get] a confidential space to problem solve. Every other adult is a mandated reporter. [Youth] don’t know where to go because they could get in trouble or the people putting a roof over their heads could get in trouble. **They want to extract themselves, but need a safe place to problem solve without the authorities coming down.**” – *LCYC staff attorney*

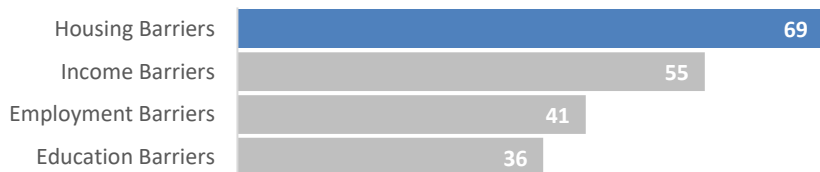
Case Resolutions

(n = 88, all cases in which attorneys were able to complete work with the client)

Attorneys report **resolving a client’s legal issue** in **76%** of cases.

Attorneys report **removing a barrier to housing, income, employment or education** in **92%** of cases.

Attorneys were most frequently able to help clients **remove barriers to stable housing.**

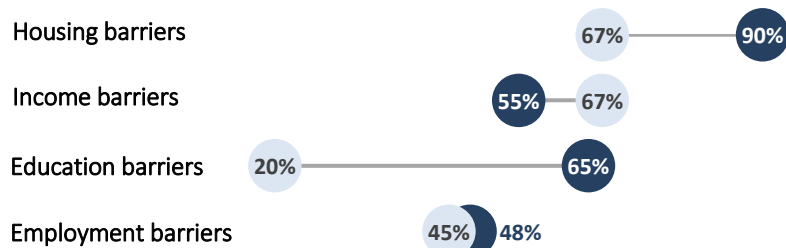


Some youth declined advocacy around certain issues, such as education, and for younger youth, employment may not have been relevant.

Often a single legal intervention removed several barriers for a youth.

	Housing	Income	Employment	Education
Obtaining consent from guardian for youth to stay in a shelter or other safe place	✓			✓
Emancipating a minor youth	✓	✓	✓	✓
Removing arrest warrants	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reducing consumer debt	✓	✓		

Attorneys removed barriers for a larger percentage of **minors**, than **young adults**, in all areas except for income. Attorneys removed barriers to housing for 90% of minors and 67% of young adults.





“LCYC attorneys have been instrumental in getting consent [from guardian for youth to stay in safe place]. **That consent piece has prevented runaway status, which is, of course, related to homelessness.**” – *Service provider*

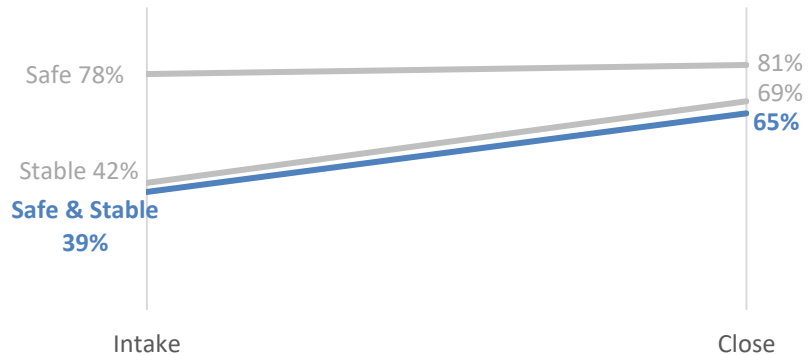
“If a youth doesn’t have a place to stay or is in an unhealthy situation, just being able to explain what their other options are is important. It’s two-fold: One, meet in crisis moment and explain housing options for them. Two, follow-up for more long-term.” – *LCYC staff attorney*

“Youth don’t realize that [they] can live with someone else – that it can be a permanent legal situation. There may be tension with their parents, or they are not available. There is an actual process that will make it possible to stop worrying about where [their] parents are at to sign this paperwork. This is an incredible life changer.” – *LCYC staff attorney*

Housing-related Outcomes

Though the evaluation did not allow for collection of long-term impacts on housing stability, the majority of clients showed improvements in their immediate housing status after working with an attorney.

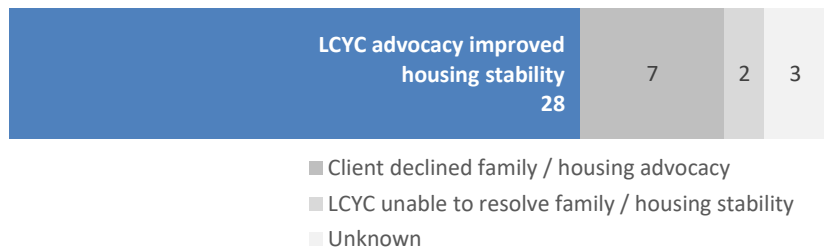
Clients report increases in safe and stable housing after working with an LCYC attorney. (n = 89, all closed cases in which the client maintained contact)



As the above information is self-report by clients, it is up to clients to define safety and stability. Based on their experience clients may report living situations such as staying outdoors with a group of other homeless youth as safe or staying in a time-limited shelter as stable, when those situations would not be considered safe or stable by others.

By comparison, according to All Home King County’s System Performance Dashboard, only 17% of homeless youth and young adults leaving emergency shelter go to permanent destinations such as market rate housing, housing with a rental subsidy, or to stay with friends or family.³

LCYC advocacy improved housing stability for 70% of minors, as reported by attorneys. (n = 40, minors with closed cases who worked with LCYC)



³ <http://allhomekc.org/system-performance/>



“The attorneys were really comfortable working with teenagers. **They have some understanding of the school system.** That for me was really comforting.” – *School partner*

“In certain situations, a youth may feel like they can’t be out in public with a warrant. They get stressed about having to go to jail or detention. So they won’t seek out services, won’t go to the doctor, **won’t go to school.** Being able to help quash warrants is a huge benefit.” – *LCYC staff attorney*

“If a kid’s homeless, **if a youth has to worry about where I’m going to sleep tonight, they can’t focus on school.** LCYC is helping fulfill those fundamental needs for youth.” – *Legal partner*

Education-related Outcomes

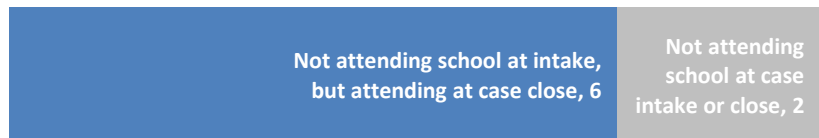
Only 10 clients specifically requested help with educational advocacy.

LCYC attorneys reported providing **educational advocacy** to all 10 of the clients who requested educational advocacy. Attorneys report **removing barriers to education** in all 10 cases.

- Another five indicated that there were no perceived issues with school at intake, but LCYC attorneys reported they provided educational advocacy.
- Seven clients identified problems at school but declined advocacy on the issue.
- Attorneys reported removing barriers to education for 23 youth with no perceived school issues at initial intake.

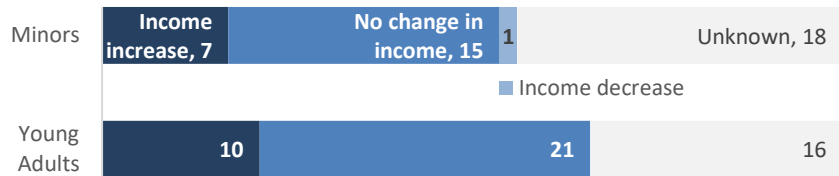
In some instances, attorneys may not have provided educational advocacy, but were still able to remove a barrier to education by taking actions such as removing a warrant or helping a client find a stable place to stay closer to their school.

Eight minors were not attending school at the time of intake. Six of them were attending school at the time of case closing. (n = 40, minors with closed cases who worked with LCYC)

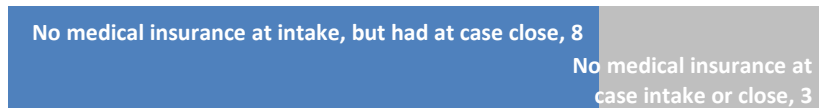


Benefits and Income-related Outcomes

Most clients reported **no change in income** between case intake and closing, with 19% overall reporting an increase in income.



Eleven clients did not have medical insurance as of intake. Of those 11, **eight had medical insurance at the time of closing.**



Evidence suggests youth who lost contact nonetheless accrued program benefits.

Though attorneys worked hard to maintain contact with clients through multiple means of communication such as text messaging or talking to a client’s case manager, some youth chose not to engage in services. As described in case notes, common reasons for youth losing contact were because they chose to return home or moved out of King County.



“I’ve gotten to meet them at school, but then they don’t decide to do anything for a little bit. When they do, it’s quick.

“I need to get out of my house now. Where do I go? How do I stay safe?”

Having a prior conversation lets them move quickly when they need to.” – LCYC staff attorney

“[Attorneys are] a power house team member. They are able to really do what we can’t and communicate in a system in a way that we can’t. It cuts around the corners that we get stuck at a lot.

Youth feel really empowered when they have a lawyer on their side.”

– Service provider

Characteristics

Youth in 46 of the 210 cases lost contact with LCYC attorneys or declined services. Demographic data does not elucidate any distinction between the population of youth who remained engaged in legal services, compared to those who did not, in age, gender, or race, or living situation.

It is not possible for this evaluation to assess if youth who engaged in services had greater legal needs than those who did not, since attorneys did not report on the type and number of legal issues until a case closed and based the information on what assistance was requested by youth (which may under-report legal needs).

Youth in 13 of the 210 cases were referred to a different legal organization. English as a Second Language (ESL) youth were more likely to be referred to another legal services organization (often an organization that specializes in immigration law). 18% of ESL youth were referred to another legal services organization, whereas only 7% of non-ESL were referred to another legal services organization.

Services Provided

Attorneys provided legal advice in many cases where they did not, or were not able to, continue their work with the client.



Attorneys describe **legal advice** as a service they can provide even if they meet with a client just once. Before, or in the process of, referring clients to other legal services, LCYC attorneys provided legal advice to 31% of those 13 clients. Of the 46 clients who did not maintain contact with LCYC, attorneys were able to provide legal advice to 43% of them before closing the case.

Legal advice to these clients may have included completing an application for benefits or court-related paperwork, investigating warrants or open cases, providing legal research, and discussion options with the youth.



“Sometimes youth don’t want to do anything in the moment. With those youth, I always want them to know that there are options. **Youth decline services and then call in moment of crisis when they need help.** If they find themselves in a dangerous or unhealthy situation, they know they do have options.” – *LCYC staff attorney*

Other Benefits

Youth who met with an LCYC attorney even once may have benefited from the connection in ways that were not measured, or ways that had not manifested during the timeframe of the evaluation. Attorneys described that in some instances, they would meet with a referred youth once for an intake and then not hear from them for several weeks or months. However, the youth would eventually reach out if they felt unsafe in their current living situation or felt ready to address the legal issues they were facing, because the initial meeting informed them of the available legal services. Attorneys also report seeing youth they consulted with at a later date and hearing from the youth that they felt empowered to resolve their issue on their own based on the information they received from the attorney.

Findings: Lessons Learned for Program Replication

Cases vary in length, based on client needs and outcomes achieved.

Attorneys worked with clients for as long as necessary to address their legal issues, or as long as clients were able and willing to engage. This resulted in no one typical length of engagement.

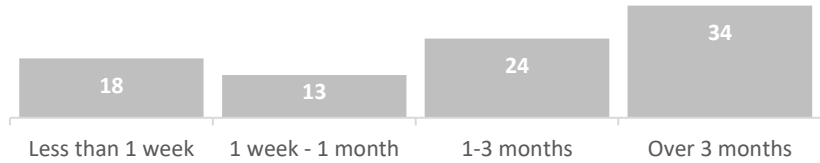
Minor cases, on average, tend to take more time for attorneys.

19 hours	12 hours
Average hours for cases with minors	Average hours for cases with young adults

Even when attorneys referred cases to other legal organizations or were unable to maintain contact with a client they spent time working on the case.

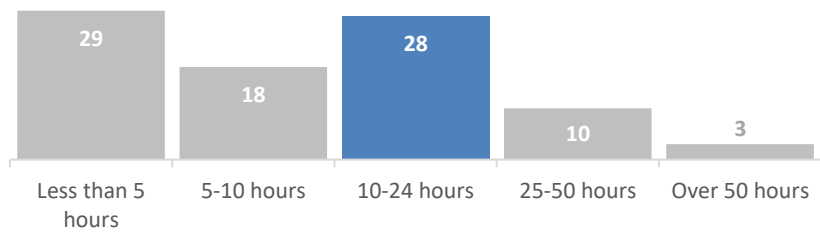
Average length of time on a case	
LCYC referred client to other legal services	5 hours
Client did not maintain contact	4 hours

Length of engagement on cases varied, based on client need.



Attorneys worked on cases for an average of 15 hours.

Total hours per case ranged from less than an hour to 128 hours.

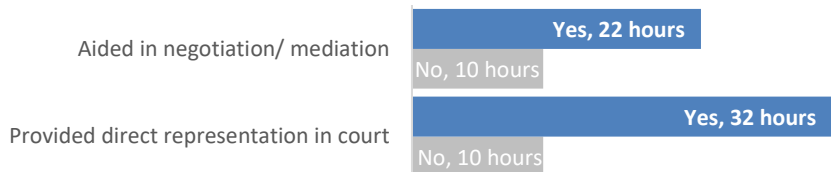


The majority of cases required less than 24 hours of work; the average was increased by the few cases that required over 50 hours of time. Removing the cases over 50 hours brought the average to 13 hours.

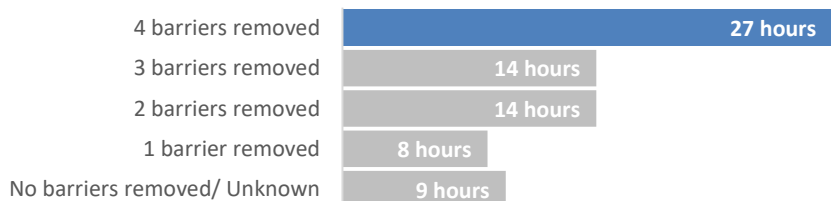
Cases with more legal issues require more hours, on average.



Cases in which attorneys provided direct representation in court or aided in negotiation or mediation took longer, on average.



The more barriers an attorney was able to remove for a client, the more hours attorneys spent on a case, on average.



For all charts on this page: n = 89, all closed cases in which client maintained contact with LCYC

A flexible program model allows for responsiveness to youth needs at a low cost.

As a pilot program in a high-cost location, LCYC has operated in a lean and flexible manner to maximize their availability to serve youth and meet client needs.



“Legal services are expensive and there is no coverage for them anywhere. To have that kind of quality service for young people is phenomenal. **It is a partnership I would do just about anything to keep.**” – *Service provider*

“We’re responding to crisis moments. We’re only able to do that because of how much we support each other. **When we get a call at 5 o’clock on Friday, amongst the five of us we will figure out someone to go out there.**” – *LCYC staff attorney*

“**I’m always so impressed with how responsive they are.** They are responsive and willing to meet wherever.” – *Service provider*

“**Initially it was difficult to reach out to people,** there are so many different people in so many different areas that we could work with. Something just sent over email or a flyer going around isn’t going to cut it. We went to meetings [at partner offices] to explain what we could do and provide examples.” – *LCYC staff attorney*

“Attorneys have always come to our office. Clients already feel comfortable there.” – *Service provider*

“**Having attorneys be able to come to clients is huge.**” – *Service provider*

Program Budget

The overall expenses for the Legal Services Partnership for Youth program for 2 years were \$178,300. Given this figure, the average cost of services per referral (205 referrals) was \$870. During the pilot period from June 2016 to January 2018, attorneys report providing a total of 2,600 hours of services; averaging to \$70 per hour of services to youth. Included in the total program cost are expenses for travel to clients, creation of a report about systemic barriers, and legal supervision and program management by LCYC’s Executive Director and the LSPY Supervisor.

There are a few key factors that lowered the cost of LSPY legal services:

- LCYC does not have office space. Attorneys work from home and meet with clients out in the community.
- LCYC attorney wages, as with other non-profit or public attorneys, are lower than those at private firms. LCYC attorneys are paid hourly.

Other factors that might influence the cost and amount of staff time required to provide comparable services in another community include:

- Transportation costs: King County is over 2,000 square miles. In larger geographic areas, attorneys may accrue large amounts of mileage to meet clients where they are at. Additionally, travel takes up time and wages that are not spent directly working on legal issues for clients.
- Strength of community partnerships: LCYC was able to quickly get referrals for LSPY from some service providers due to previously established relationships, but connections with other partners, such as schools, took longer to develop.

Program Structure

The LSPY team is made up of five attorneys who work part-time on the LSPY program, spending their other time on other LCYC programs. According to LCYC, one of the key benefits of having a larger team (rather than fewer full-time attorneys dedicated to the project) is the increased ability to immediately respond to referrals for clients. Among the five attorneys on the team, one can typically make themselves available to meet with a client when emergencies arise, providing timely legal advice and advocacy.

LCYC is structured in a unique manner for a legal services organization. The organization has no office space; attorneys work from home and meet clients literally where they are at, often at other social services organizations such as drop-in centers or at schools. This is an intentional choice to keep program costs low and facilitate easier connection with clients.

Homelessness and systems-involvement are expensive when compared with LSPY legal services.

This evaluation shows evidence that LSPY's legal services successfully address clients' current needs. There is reason to believe these efforts may also be able to prevent further systems involvement, either the justice system or, for minors, the child welfare system, in ways that prevent a spiral into chronic homelessness and on-going systems-involvement.

Each homeless youth imposes a fiscal and societal cost of **\$36,150** per year.

One person experiencing chronic homelessness costs taxpayers **\$30,000 - \$50,000** per year.

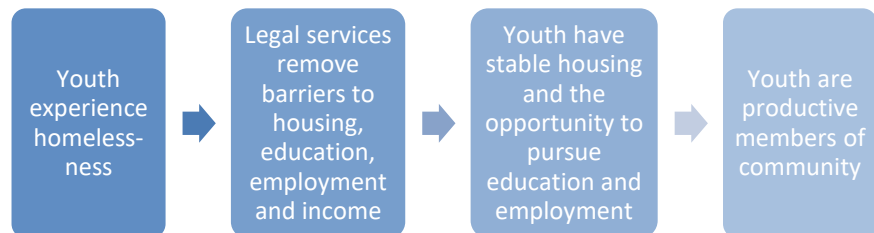
50% of chronically homeless adults report first experiencing homelessness before age 24.

Legal services to prevent or shorten the length of homelessness cost **\$870** per referred youth.

A study based on a 2011 cohort of youth who accessed services at the Minneapolis provider YouthLink estimated that each homeless youth imposes a fiscal cost of \$17,152 and a social cost of \$18,638 each year they remain homeless. The largest costs to taxpayers (fiscal cost) were public expenditures for the criminal justice system and welfare transfer payments. The social costs included the costs of crimes to victims and lost earning.⁴

According to the US Interagency Council on Homelessness, a person experiencing chronic homelessness may cost taxpayers \$30,000 - \$50,000 per year.⁵ This includes the potential costs of hospital emergency departments and inpatient beds, detox programs, jails, prisons, and psychiatric institutions.

According to King County's 2017 Point-in-Time Count (Count Us In), 50% of adults experiencing chronic homelessness report first experiencing homelessness before the age of 24.⁶ **Addressing barriers to stability at a young age has the potential to prevent chronic homelessness later in life.**



Many homeless youth are also considered *opportunity youth* – youth between the ages of 16-24 who are not engaged in school or work. A report from Civic Enterprises estimates that opportunity youth have an immediate cost of \$37,450 per year, and a potential lifetime burden of \$704,020.⁷

LSPY's goals of providing legal services to youth experiencing homelessness, or at risk of homelessness, are to address immediate legal needs while simultaneously mitigating the potential negative long-term consequences. For example, a youth client with a juvenile offender record may prevent a young person from obtaining a lease, even with rent supports, in the short term, and is likely to also impact their ability to find employment in the future.

⁴ <http://www.youthlinkmn.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/the-economic-burden-of-homeless-youth-in-hennepin-county.pdf>

⁵ https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Ending_Chronic_Homelessness_in_2017.pdf

⁶ <http://allhomekc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/2017-King-PIT-Count-Comprehensive-Report-FINAL-DRAFT-5.31.17.pdf>

⁷ http://www.civicerprises.net/MediaLibrary/Docs/econ_value_opportunity_youth.pdf

Recommendations and Opportunities

The LSPY model is worthy of consideration for replication in other communities.

The following recommendations are written with the intention of use by LCYC and other legal services organizations interested in replicating this type of model.

Continue the flexible and supportive model

As demonstrated by the positive outcomes in this report, the LSPY model is one that provides benefits to homeless youth.

- **Be present:** Service provider partners report that one of the key reasons for LSPY attorneys' success with clients is that the attorneys are able to meet with a youth almost immediately after they express interest in learning about legal services, whether that is 10am on a Saturday or 5pm on a Friday.
- **Provide trauma-informed services:** Continue to hire attorneys who are familiar with the homeless youth population and are willing and able to work with clients where they are at, both physically and emotionally. Ensure that attorneys have training in trauma-informed care.
- **Consider adding a case worker:** Attorneys report providing basic case management services for clients, such as helping to find a safe place to stay for a night or figuring out how to get transportation to a meeting. While the LSPY attorneys report having learned a great deal about the availability of social services for homeless youth while working on this project, it may be beneficial to add a case worker to the team to help with this aspect of the work.

Explore other opportunities for youth engagement

- **Meet with all minors entering shelter:** Any minor entering a shelter has legal issues, because unless they have been emancipated, an adult is responsible for taking care of them. However, many minors have other legal needs and attorneys are better able to assist when they are involved quickly. Having an attorney meet with all minors entering shelter would enable them to catch issues as soon as possible.
- **Host legal clinics for youth and families:** School partners expressed gratitude for the legal clinics LCYC provided. Events such as these are useful for families and will continue to raise awareness about the availability of LCYC's services.

Simplify and streamline data collection for on-going outcome tracking

Through *Clio*, LCYC has the ability to track client outcomes moving forward.

- **Confirm appropriate outcomes:** LCYC should have further internal conversations about how to define a positive outcome. For the sake of this report, outcomes were determined by whether a client's legal issue was resolved or if a barrier to stability was removed. LCYC should re-visit whether these are the appropriate

outcomes by which to determine if they are providing effective legal services to homeless youth.

- **Clarifying accountability:** One challenge with program evaluation is determining which outcomes a program could be held accountable for. With LCYC, there is not a clear line delineating which youth received enough services from an LSPY attorney to be considered as part of an outcomes cohort. LCYC could consider several potential metrics for which cases to include:
 - Cases on which attorneys work more than a certain number of hours
 - Cases in which attorneys provide a certain type of service, such as legal advice
- **Narrow fields of data collection:** One of the challenges of using a case management database as an evaluation data source is that the primary purpose for data collection is not measurement. Attorneys frequently use text fields to make notes about cases, but those notes are difficult to use when attempting to categorize cases in order to look for trends in outcomes. Additionally, the more unique pieces of information the system collects, the more likely it is that data quality will suffer. After determining which outcomes to focus on, LCYC should also review all data fields in Clio and determine which are providing useful information to attorneys while working on the cases, as well as valuable information for measurement purposes. Clear directions about how to complete all fields should be provided to all attorneys.

Learn more about client retention

- **Determine a baseline:** After clarifying accountability as described above, LCYC should review their data and set a baseline goal for the number of clients they work with, following an intake. It is not reasonable for any program to assume that all clients will be retained, but it is important to ensure that LCYC is doing what it can to keep as many clients as possible who need help. Determining a baseline percentage will enable LCYC to track changes over time and re-assess their success with retention.
- **Deepen understanding:** LCYC could sit down with service partners more regularly to discuss opportunities to improve long-term engagement with clients and remove logistical barriers to maintaining contact. Are there different strategies that LCYC attorneys could employ that would enable further work with these youth? Is there a role that other service providers could play in encouraging continued engagement? The more LCYC can understand about the reasons that youth feel they are unable to continue engaging with their attorney, the better able LCYC will be able to meet their needs.

Conclusion



“What LCYC is doing is so unique and so specialized, we couldn’t ask for a better partner.” – *Service provider*

“I thought there was a need [for legal services for homeless youth], but **I didn’t realize how much of a need.**” – *LCYC staff attorney*

“Word is out that we cover these cases. **And no one else does it.** If we don’t have further funding it’s just going to go back to these kids falling through the cracks.” – *LCYC staff attorney*

LCYC has created a strong program model that produces positive outcomes for youth who engage in legal services. Their team of attorneys has the ability and resources to respond to immediate client needs, and support youth in making informed choices about their future.

In the short-term, attorneys were able to help youth access safe and stable housing and increase engagement with school. For the long-term, attorneys helped youth remove barriers such as prior records or take steps forward, such as emancipation, to increase youth opportunity to find employment and steady income, or live in a stable place and enroll in school.

The partnerships that LCYC has developed in the community will continue to generate numerous referrals for legal services. Service providers have positive relationships with LCYC and want the opportunity for more of the youth they serve to have access to the legal services LCYC can provide. As more of the community has learned about the positive effects of legal services, they are interested in helping youth get greater access to such services.

While legal services alone may not entirely address a young person’s homelessness, removing their legal barriers to stability is a service that requires an attorney. With an average cost of \$870 per youth, legal services are a cost-effective tool to have available for youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness.