As COVID-19 continues to impact people across the country, all communities are struggling to handle the swift changes and challenges. Many rural communities are underresourced to tackle these issues and must rely on collaboration and innovation during this time. Many rural and tribal areas are seeing more need as frontline and essential workers continue to go to their jobs, social services close, transportation is limited, healthcare resources are exhausted, and housing options are strained. Service providers have had to find ways to integrate digital services, mutual aid, and lean into alternative models of care specifically tailored to the youth they serve.

**Q + A**

**What are ways rural communities can stay in touch with clients and keep their programs moving forward?**

Move to a virtual platform. It will be messy, but it’ll go better than you expect. We felt it was important to do so for rural areas prior, but we've transitioned quicker simply out of necessity.

**From a CoC perspective, what are the issues and how can we tackle them?**

The issue right now is a lot of providers don’t have the cash flow or are worried about spending money until they know it will be replaced. It’s important for CoCs to create easy applications for CARES Act money so we can get it out to them. If there are things you’ve been thinking of trying, try them now since restrictions have been limited.

**What are you seeing around service delivery in rural communities?**

Some youth are staying with support systems we may not have known about because they were outside of the community. Families are doubling up in housing that would typically be more unstable, but with eviction freezes, they currently have stable housing.

---

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

One of the biggest strengths in rural areas is their tight knit communities. Utilize those relationships to build better programming for youth. Now is the time to take advantage of waivers, new funding, telehealth options, and room for innovation.

---

**POINT SOURCE YOUTH PRESENTS:**

**COVID-19 & YOUTH HOMELESSNESS: HOW RURAL COMMUNITIES ARE RESPONDING**

- Julia Terry, Director of Programming, Choosing Our Roots, Anchorage Alaska
- April Woods, CoC Program Coordinator, Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Rural Georgia
- Kayleigh Cunningham, LMSW, Assistant Director, The Cove, Waco, Texas
- Kelly Atkinson, LMSW, Executive Director, The Cove, Waco, Texas

---

facebook.com/Pointsourceyouth @PSYyouth vimeo.com/pointsourceyouth @pointsourceyouth
IN-DEPTH

Many providers are continuing to work during the COVID-19 pandemic in rural areas because the need has increased. This includes host homes, rapid re-housing, drop-in centers, shelters, hotels, and supportive services. When looking at putting youth in housing and safer spaces, it’s important to make sure you are not only taking safety precautions, but tailoring the process to the needs of each young person. Here are some innovative, youth-centered ideas from our providers:

- Make sure you are well informed on COVID-19 and the latest public health recommendations such as 2-week quarantines before shared housing placements, washing hands thoroughly, using PPEs, and adhering to shelter in place. This must inform your communication with youth, providers, volunteers, and staff.

- Match youth with the right housing. If you are running a host home program, match grocery store workers with healthcare workers who both have to go to work, or match immunocompromised youth with immunocompromised hosts so they are supporting one another through a similar experience.

- When running a RRH program, use digital services as much as you can and listen to HUD’s newest protocols around FMR, HQS, and other waivers to get youth housed quickly.

MUTUAL AID IS SAVING LIVES. NOW WE ARE ALL WORKING TO LOVE EACH OTHER AND SHARE RESOURCES. WE HAVE TO REFRAKE HOW TO MOVE THROUGH THE WORLD AND CONTINUE TO REDISTRIBUTE RESOURCES FOR FOLKS LIKE WE ARE RIGHT NOW FOR COVID-19.

- JULIA TERRY

ACTIONS TO TAKE NOW

1. Make sure youth can stay connected. Utilize funding to get phones, internet, and other digital ways for youth to stay connected to their support systems and resources they need.

2. Go digital. Many rural programs have thought about digital service expansion to transcend large geographies. Now is the time to experiment and implement Telehealth.

3. Coordinate mutual aid and lean into partnerships. We cannot do this alone.

Learn more at pointsourceyouth.org/covid19resources
IF YOU HAVE NATIVE AMERICAN AND TRIBAL COMMUNITIES IN YOUR AREA, BRING THEM TO THE TABLE. TRIBAL COMMUNITIES HAVE SUCCESSFULLY CREATED MUTUAL AID EFFORTS FOR SOME TIME THAT MANY COULD LEARN FROM. THEY MAY ALSO BE LACKING VITAL RESOURCES FOR SURVIVAL DURING THIS PANDEMIC BY BEING IN MORE REMOTE AND INSULAR COMMUNITIES. -JULIA TERRY

RESOURCES & LINKS

- Rural Responses to Coronavirus
- Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions – Federal Office of Rural Health Policy
- Tribal Resources for Rural Areas during COVID-19
- USDA Rural Development COVID-19 Response
- HRSA Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions – Federal Office of Rural Health Policy
- National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health COVID-19 Response
- NYT Coronavirus in the U.S.: Latest Map and Case Count by County
- Telehealth Policy Factsheet

IN-DEPTH (CONTINUED)

- **Support youth where they’re at.** Many youth are in natural supports and kinship-matched host homes with friends or extended family for shelter in place. Bring these homes into your program in order to support them and make it a long term and positive placement. Train potential kinship-matched host homes digitally, provide stipends, and offer case management support they otherwise may not have had.
- If you have **youth in encampments** that would like to stay, talk to outdoor retail stores to see if you can get supplies for cleaning, tents, and other needs to keep youth healthy. Talk to forestry services to utilize camping spots in order to keep 12 feet distances between tents. Find ways to make it work for young people outside.
- **Work with large hotel chains** to place youth for lower prices per night. Many larger organizations have hotels and motels in rural areas and will have a lot of stock to offer for a discounted rate. When placing youth in hotels, ensure they are able to keep in contact with supportive staff who can assist with needs throughout the placement.
- **Use community partnerships.** Many providers are relying on their CoCs, schools, churches, other providers, and state and local agencies from many different systems to create mutual aid and streamlined services to respond to needs quickly.

Learn more at pointsourceyouth.org/covid19resources