Boston campaign aims to end youth homelessness

Kathleen McKiernan  Tuesday, October 10, 2017

Credit: Boston Herald

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The Walsh administration is launching a campaign to end youth homelessness in Boston, the city is expected to announce today.

“One young person who lives without a stable home is one too many,” Mayor Martin J. Walsh is expected to announce in a statement today. “As we continue to make strides, Boston's youth are not forgotten. Youth services are a patchwork of programs across city, state and private lines, and this means there needs to be a coordinated plan in place.”

The city is expected to release a request for proposals today in search for a consultant who can help the city gather data on homeless youth, understand the system's capacity, identify the needs and design a plan to address the gaps. The city hopes to have an action plan in place within six months.

The new push comes as the city is grappling with close to 4,000 homeless students in Boston Public Schools, a Herald investigation last year found. Many homeless young people, the Herald reported, resort to couch surfing and hiding out on the streets.

The city's plan is aimed at unaccompanied teens and minors and 18- to 24-year-olds — not families, whose care the state oversees.

While there are myriad nonprofits in the city working to support homeless youth, often services are not designed for the needs of young people and many agencies do not work in a coordinated system to lift the youth out of poverty, city officials say. Some areas may need to be strengthened including job training, alternative education options and shelter beds.

THE TIME IS RIGHT, Sheila Dillon, chief of housing and director of neighborhood development, told the Herald. “We want to address the gaps.”

Kelly Turley, associate director of the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, agreed: “We know that thousands of young people across Boston and the commonwealth are experiencing homelessness, housing instability and related problems.”

trauma. By thoughtfully engaging young people, providers, advocates, community members and government officials, Mayor Walsh and Boston can serve as leaders in getting to the root causes of youth and young adult homelessness and in bringing the needed housing resources and supports to scale to end the crisis."

The effort comes after the city has targeted the issues of homeless veterans and those who are chronically homeless. The city will borrow some of what it learned in creating a coordinated system for adults as it tries to tackle youth homelessness, officials said.
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