

Boston CoC Youth Council's Truths



The Boston CoC Youth Council (BCYC) is a group of young adults who have experienced or are currently experiencing homelessness. The City of Boston funds the project to engage young adults experiencing homelessness by providing feedback and education to improve the services and systems designed to support them.

As a part of our mission to educate about the realities of experiencing homelessness, we put together a list of some things we know to be true.

1. **Housing is a right** - Regardless of how an individual became homeless, what they did to survive while experiencing homelessness, or where they came from, they have a right to safe housing; above all else, we believe everyone deserves a home. The "Housing First" model is a model that puts people directly into housing, without pre-conditions or expectations (such as sobriety or mental health stability). We believe that it is the best model for ending homelessness and making it as brief as possible.
2. **Homelessness is a Symptom of Oppression** - We define oppression as treating people unfairly, especially with the overuse of government power. It is not a coincidence that the system favors some people over others. Minority groups make up a disproportionately large percentage of people experiencing homelessness compared to the rest of the population. This is in direct relation to the oppression experienced by these communities

and is especially significant for LGBTQ+, Black/POC, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders.

3. **Invisible Disabilities are real** - It's important to recognize that a person's abilities cannot be accurately guessed by appearance. Appearances may suggest that an individual has the ability to work effectively. Our commitment to fairness includes fostering an inclusive environment where everyone's capabilities are valued and respected.
4. **Coping Strategies are Valid** - We recognize that individuals employ various strategies to navigate difficulties, whether it is for financial or mental stability. We acknowledge that each person's approach serves a purpose in their unique circumstances. That being said, we believe in respecting these coping mechanisms without condoning harmful behaviors.
5. **We are deserving of enjoyment-** We deserve to have fun and enjoy ourselves as experiencing homelessness is stressful. Self-care is extremely important while experiencing homelessness. Things that may seem frivolous or "a waste of money" are sometimes the things that get us through.
6. **We Are Entitled to Privacy and Boundaries** - No one is required to explain themselves or explain their choices to someone else. Accessing our services doesn't necessarily mean that someone may have unlimited access to our story. "No" is a respectable and legitimate response, as we can occasionally choose not to disclose our experiences and enforce boundaries when needed for personal safety.
7. **Respect and Trust must be earned** - These are not automatically granted based on someone's position of authority. Also, these qualities are reciprocal. It is important to be respectful to one another at all times.

Collaboration Agreement - Boston Coc Youth Council and City of Boston CoC

Boston CoC Youth Council's Values

Below are the pillars that every organization must be mindful of to partner with the Boston Youth Council. These standards are incredibly important in being able to authentically engage with our group:

- **A Safe Affirming Environment**

- As we collaborate, we ask that you participate in our routines and standard operating procedures alongside us as peers and collaborators. Our members come from different backgrounds, each bringing unique expertise gained from their lived experiences. We extend the opportunity to collaborate with those who align with our values. That being said, this partnership is an opportunity to contribute to and benefit from mutual respect and growth.
- **Respectful Language**
 - The members of the BCYC have gone to great lengths to advocate for themselves in terms of how they would like to be referred to. Language is a vital part of showing respect and validating someone's lived experience and an important part of professionalism. Respectful language includes the proper use of pronouns, rather than assuming.
- **Authentic Transparent Process**
 - Our members are invested in collaborating with you. We seek to have a clear understanding of the purpose of the work we are doing. For instance, we would like to know the destination as to where this information is going and how it is being used. We kindly ask that you keep us informed of what has been done with the information and feedback we gave you. In addition, our confidentiality needs to be respected.
- **Working with us is about mutual appreciation and collaboration**
 - We have professionally valuable insight to share and are here to help to improve youth programs and services. While we appreciate your understanding and support for our current circumstances, we ask that you don't feel bad for us. We expect to be valued for our insight, resilience, and resourcefulness.

Thank you in advance for your commitment to including and understanding the perspectives of young adults who have experienced homelessness. We look forward to working with you.

Signatures:

Arlenny Ramirez

Christian Ecker

Darlene Santana

Alexandra rojas

Fenallely Lopez

