

My name is Kelsea Young, and I am a young mother who experienced homelessness after leaving a domestic violence relationship.

I was living in New Hampshire in an unsafe relationship, and making the decision to leave was one of the hardest things I've ever had to do. I was leaving everything; my favorite job, my best friends, my whole family, my pets, the only city and state my daughter ever knew. I moved around my entire life, never stayed anywhere long. I restarted my life in Vermont, I started at a confidential domestic violence shelter, and 3 months later, I was moved to a more "home based" homeless shelter through Interaction Youth Services. This housing is called Joint Transitional Housing, which is within the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project (YHDP) where I work with Michaela. During that time, I had found faith and strength, but I also was dealing with fear, guilt, disappointment, and uncertainty, and trying to figure out how to rebuild my life while staying safe.

Today, I am in Vermont and working toward more permanent stability. The programs I have found have made me become a better person and mother. With the support I received, I am able to earn my high school diploma and begin to get better at budgeting and financial responsibility. Counseling has made huge progress with my overall well-being and my relationships in my life, and with myself. What helped me the most was having access to a safe place to go and people who listened and didn't judge. The programs I have found gave me a chance to rebuild and feel like we weren't alone.

However, there are still gaps. Young people leaving unstable homes don't have enough safe and stable housing options, and navigating resources can feel overwhelming, especially while dealing with trauma. More support is needed for mental health services, life skill development, and long-term stability.

I ask legislators to continue funding and expanding programs that support youth homelessness and those leaving unsafe situations. We need more safe housing options, more accessible resources, and continued investment in programs that help young people build independence and stability.

My story is one of many. With the right support, young people like me can stay safe, heal, and build a better future.

Thank you for the time you took to read my story.