

Contact: Aaron Wilder  
4056795710, awilder@sisuyouth.org



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Oklahoma City Invests \$1.9 Million in Sisu Youth Services Programs with Federal Funds**

**Oklahoma City** - Today the Oklahoma City Council unanimously voted to award Sisu Youth Services \$1,987,502 over two years with Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project funds to expand and implement three programs. The programs funded include a drop-in center, host homes program, and transitional living and rapid rehousing program.

The City of Oklahoma City was recently selected by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to participate in the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP), which awarded the City more than \$3 million in community funding over two years. YHDP is one of the first dedicated federal initiatives that funds permanent housing programs for youth and focuses on building local coordinated systems for responding to youth homelessness. This funding program is only available to up to 25 communities nationwide, and OKC was the first city in Oklahoma to receive funding.

Rachel Bradley, Executive Director of Sisu Youth Services, addressed the Oklahoma City Council meeting to express Sisu's gratitude and emphasize the importance and timeliness of this investment in solving the youth homelessness crisis in Oklahoma City.

"Our most recent point in time count of the unhoused population revealed that the number of young people experiencing homelessness jumped 35% over the past 2 years - that is a crisis," she said. "This historic investment - and it is historic - in youth services will be life changing for so many young people and we are excited to expand our programs with this funding."

According to the 2022 Point in Time Count, an annual one-day homelessness census in Oklahoma City, the number of unaccompanied youth jumped approximately 34.4% from the last count in 2020. The Point in Time report defines unaccompanied youth as people under age 25 who aren't presenting or sleeping in the same place as their parent or legal guardian, including single people, couples, and groups.

This funding would not have been possible without the generous support of other community organizations and companies providing required matching funds including Arnall Family Foundation, Oklahoma Department of Mental Health, Stonewall Security, Mental Health Association of Oklahoma, and Trader Joe's.

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*Sisu Youth Services is a low-barrier, identity-affirming space in our community where unhoused transition-age youth find the shelter and support they need to pursue the life they want. We offer overnight emergency shelter, a drop-in center, case management services, and transitional housing programs for unhoused or at-risk youth between the ages of 15-24.*