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COHHIO Launches Virtual Companion For Runaway and Homeless Youth

Runaway and homeless youth in Ohio now have a new online tool to help them successfully navigate the transition to adulthood, the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio announced Wednesday.

COHHIO's Youth Housing Initiative created Taking Charge to help young people who are living on their own figure out how to get help and learn about their basic legal rights and responsibilities.

"Young people dealing with domestic violence or neglect already have a lot of challenges. And when they suddenly find themselves on their own, figuring out how to secure a place to live, get health care, find a job, or continue their education can be overwhelming," said Douglas Argue, managing director of COHHIO. "Taking Charge gives youth the information they need to navigate the system."

The online resource guide covers 12 topics ranging from housing, community resources and foster care to LGBTQ issues, money management, and well-being. COHHIO collaborated with experts from a variety of fields to compile relevant information that is universally relatable and can be shared across platforms.

"Taking Charge is all about helping transition age youth build their confidence as a means to self-advocacy," said Arlene "Sam" Jones, COHHIO's Youth Initiative specialist. "For young people facing adversity, getting clarity about what you can control empowers them to take charge of their own lives. That's what Taking Charge is all about."

Youth that have experienced homelessness helped to vet the resource guide and provided feedback on content and style to ensure that Taking Charge is useful and authentic.

"We've been very intentional about using language that isn't cumbersome and making the technology is easy to use," said Jones. "Taking Charge is a sort of online FAQ that young people can access on their mobile phones. But we want it to grow and evolve into a broader, more interactive communications system as young people put it to test in the real world and provide feedback to each other about their experiences."

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