

Youth Homelessness in America: The Current Status and The Way Forward

A NATIONAL NETWORK FOR YOUTH RESOURCE



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NATIONAL NETWORK FOR YOUTH

The National Network for Youth (NN4Y) is a membership organization of service providers, state agencies, coalitions, advocates and individuals who work towards our vision of a world where vulnerable and homeless youth can escape the dangers of the streets and access safety, youth-appropriate services, hope, and healing.

As the nation's leading organization advocating at the federal level to educate the public and policymakers about the needs of homeless and disconnected youth, we build relationships with policymakers and government agencies in order to champion the diverse needs of homeless and disconnected youth.

For questions about this document or anything else related to the substance of the content, please contact Darla Bardine at darla.bardine@nn4youth.org.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACA	Affordable Care Act
AHAR	Annual Homeless Assessment Report
BCP	Basic Center Programs
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CoC	Continuum of Care
DOJ	U.S. Department of Justice
DOL	U.S. Department of Labor
ED	U.S. Department of Education
EHCY	Education for Homeless Children and Youth
FYSB	Family and Youth Services Bureau
FUP	Family Unification Program
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning
PIT	Point-in-Time
RHY	Runaway and Homeless Youth
RHYA	Runaway and Homeless Youth Act
SOP	Street Outreach Program
TLP	Transitional Living Program
USICH	United States Interagency Council on Homelessness
WIA	Workforce Investment Act
YRBS	Youth Risk Behavior Survey

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OVERVIEW

No child in the United States should face a night on the streets or become a victim of abuse or human trafficking. The Federal Government currently allocates \$114 million for shelters, housing, and services for homeless youth, but local communities still often lack the capacity to serve them.

The National Network for Youth has solutions to address youth homelessness and human trafficking of youth; however, greater federal support is necessary to reach all vulnerable youth with needed prevention and intervention services.

With costs for providing services being less than half the costs of incarceration, greater investments in the key policy priorities outlined in this White Paper are essential.

There is no plausible excuse for any child in America to experience homelessness.

On any given night, more than 46,000 youth can be found living on the streets. Each year, nearly 2 million youth experience at least one night of homelessness. Many are victims of abuse, neglect, trauma, sexual exploitation, and poverty.

\$114M
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A TIME FOR ACTION TO PROTECT AMERICA'S MOST VULNERABLE YOUTH

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

These statistics with human faces are not from a third-world country, but rather the United States of America.

Despite America's great wealth and prosperity, less than 5,000 youth receive access to stable housing each year according to HUD. The longer youth remain homeless, the risks of experiencing physical assault, rape, human trafficking, and mental health disabilities are greatly amplified.

America can do better.

The Federal Government currently allocates \$114 million for shelters, housing, and services for homeless youth, but local communities still often lack the capacity to serve them. According to HUD, less than 4,200 beds exist nationally that are dedicated to this population, allowing less than 10% of the youth found in HUD's point-in-time surveys (46,000) to receive care.

With costs for providing services being less than half the costs of incarceration, greater investments in the following key policy priorities are required:

- A new, national investment in 'homeless youth intervention models' (implementing and evaluating community-based services and housing).
- Increased appropriations for safety net programs under HHS's Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs (street outreach, shelter, maternity group homes, and transitional housing).
- Realigned investments by HUD in youth housing models – both transitional and permanent supportive housing (McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance).
- Increased funding for school district homeless liaisons (McKinney-Vento Homeless

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Student services) to bolster partnerships between schools and nonprofits to serve the 1.17 million homeless children.

- Better data through national study and evidence-based research.

The network of service providers throughout the United States has seen that these priorities produce positive outcomes for participating youth.

There is no plausible excuse for any child in America to experience homelessness. The National Network for Youth has solutions to address youth homelessness and human trafficking of youth; however, greater federal support is necessary to reach all vulnerable youth with needed prevention and intervention services. No child in the United States should face a night on the streets or become a victim of abuse or human trafficking.

America can do better.

The National Network for Youth is a membership organization of service providers, state agencies, coalitions, advocates and individuals who work towards our vision of a world where vulnerable and homeless youth can escape the dangers of the streets and access safety, youth-appropriate services, hope and healing. www.nn4youth.org

INTRODUCTION

Local, community-based, nonprofit organizations are leading a national movement that focuses public funding toward innovative solutions to end youth homelessness.¹ By recognizing the inability of child welfare and juvenile justice systems to effectively serve youth facing homelessness, human trafficking², and sexual exploitation, nonprofit organizations are focusing on evidence-informed interventions that achieve appropriate family reunification, housing stability, and improvements in youth health and functioning. This research and practice-informed strategy for preventing and ending youth homelessness includes:

- Outreach and prevention
- Early intervention and stabilization
- Family counseling and reunification
- Connection to education and workforce development
- Service-rich housing models (transitional and permanent)
- Data-driven outcomes framework

Why Are Youth Homeless?

Runaway and homeless youth flee conflict, abuse, neglect, or, increasingly, poverty in their homes. They have become disconnected from educational systems and the workforce and do not have

¹ The definition of homeless youth can vary, for the purposes of this paper a “homeless youth” or “unaccompanied homeless youth” is an individual, 12 - 24 years of age, who is living on their own, without a parent or guardian, and is without a safe, stable living arrangement.

² According to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), current U.S. law, “human trafficking” or “trafficking in persons” or “modern day slavery” includes both labor and sex trafficking and are defined as: Sex trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age, (22 USC § 7102; 8 CFR § 214.11(a)). Labor trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purposes of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery, (22 USC § 7102).

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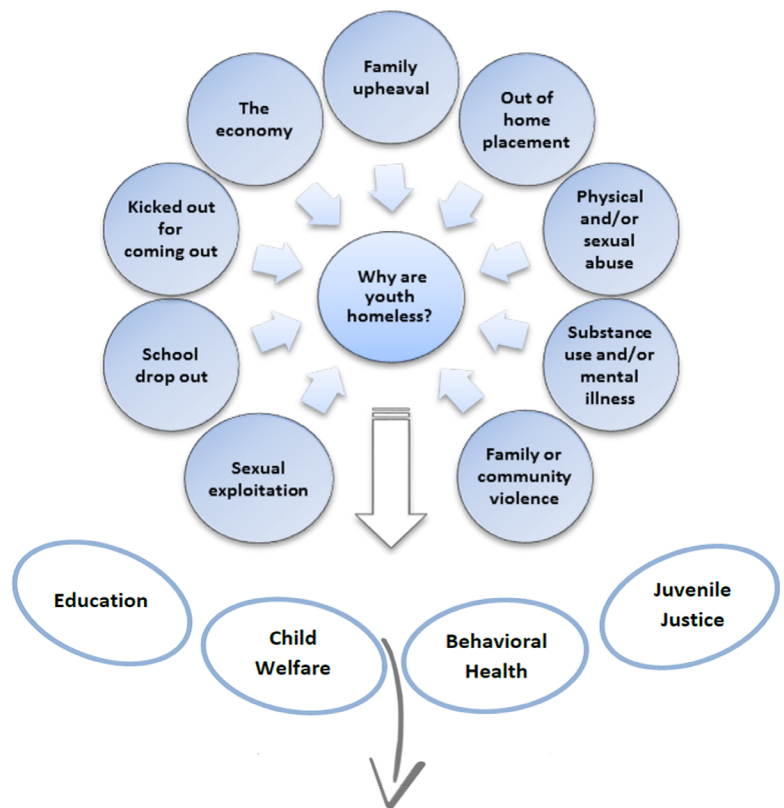
the skills and financial resources to live on their own.

Abuse: Research finds that 40 to 60 percent of all homeless youth have experienced physical abuse, and between 17 and 35 percent have experienced sexual abuse.¹

Child Welfare Involvement: Up to one-third of youth aging out of foster care experience homelessness.²

Racial Disparities: Unaccompanied homeless youth come from every race and ethnicity.³ However, studies in three regions have noted over-representation of African Americans in urban areas and American Indians in rural areas.⁴

Economy: The recent recession has had a significant negative impact on youth employment which impacts levels of homelessness. Just over half of youth ages 18-24 are currently employed, the lowest it has been since the government began collecting data in 1948.⁵



Youth slip through the cracks of these systems and remain homeless or become homeless

If available, these homeless youth are served by a runaway and homeless youth program

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Disconnection from Schools: Approximately half of homeless youth have not completed high school.⁶

Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity: There is an overrepresentation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth in the runaway population due in part to family rejection because of their sexual orientation or gender identification.⁷

Effects and Consequences of Youth Homelessness

Without safety, love and a place to call home, homeless youth are sexually exploited, trafficked, victimized, and often ensnared in the criminal justice system. Trafficked and exploited youth are often mislabeled by first responders, which inherently affects the progression of their case and determines which system(s) they enter (i.e., social services, juvenile detention, and child welfare). Too many times youth are labeled and treated as criminal offenders, resulting in incarceration rather than assistance.

The U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention reports, of 13,000 juveniles arrested for sex offenses in 2010, 48% were under the age of 15. Despite the regulations outlined in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), which protect trafficked youth from being legally responsible for crimes committed as a result of their being trafficked, these youth are still criminalized and placed in the juvenile justice system.

Homeless youth are more likely to fall victim to sexual exploitation when compared to young people who are not living on the streets. In a recent study done by Covenant House, a homeless youth service provider, of the 700 youth in New York City who reported being victims of sex trafficking, 48% said that their first experience was due to seeking shelter.⁸ LGBT homeless youth are victims

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of 7.4 more acts of sexual violence during their lifetime than their heterosexual homeless peers. LGBT homeless youth are more likely to report being asked by someone on the streets to exchange sex for money, food, drugs, shelter, and clothing than heterosexual homeless youth.⁹

Without a safety net, these youth suffer from a wide range of physical, mental, emotional and behavioral issues, which are preventable.

How Many Youth Experience Homelessness Every Year?

Using data from the National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway and Throwaway Children and HUD's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), the National Alliance to End Homelessness find that each year there are over 1.9 million youth (ages 12-24) who experience homelessness. Of these, 1.3 million will return home within a week. However, the Alliance also found that over a half a million (530,000) will be homeless for more than week, of which 60,000 are young parents with children on their own and 24,000 are under 18 years of age and experiencing long-term homelessness coupled with mental health and substance abuse issues.¹⁰

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Found Over 46,000 Homeless Youth in One Night

HUD's 2013 Point-in-Time, which included unaccompanied homeless children and youth for the first time, counted on a single night in January 2013:

- 6,197 unaccompanied homeless minors (under 18 years old) - 59.3% were unsheltered.
- 40,727 unaccompanied homeless youth (18-24 years old) - 48.6% were unsheltered.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PREVENT AND END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN AMERICA?

OVERVIEW OF YOUTH-APPROPRIATE INTERVENTIONS

For over 40 years, the federal government has offered public funding to a spectrum of safety net programs in all 50 states through the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) programs - outreach, shelter, and transitional housing to support homeless youth. The RHYA supports a national network of effective organizations with dedicated, professional staff who offer youth development informed supports to homeless youth. Youth who enter these programs are provided the basic supportive services they need, skill development in areas they lack, and social support development which assist in reconnecting youth to their families whenever safe and possible.

The federal plan to end homelessness (Opening Doors), the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, the National Alliance to End Homelessness, and the National Network for Youth all call for the expansion of youth-focused intervention models to end youth homelessness. Congress must expand funding for collaborative efforts to plan, implement, and evaluate new methodologies to serve and ameliorate youth homelessness. Nonprofit organizations are focusing on evidence-informed interventions

that achieve appropriate family reunification, housing stability, and improvements in youth health and functioning. This research and practice-informed strategy for preventing and ending youth homelessness includes:

- Outreach and prevention
- Early intervention and stabilization
- Family counseling and reunification
- Connection to education and workforce development
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WHAT WORKS TO END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS?

There is considerable research and data on intervention methodologies, programmatic approaches, and service models that offer positive outcomes for homeless youth. Homeless and runaway youth need a safety net and system of care that is distinct from homeless adults. Providing appropriate, relevant and readily accessible services is critical to addressing episodic or longer-term homelessness among youth, and is an essential component of any housing intervention, including family reconnection. Successfully addressing youth homelessness helps create self-sufficient young

adults who can contribute positively to their communities. Significantly, it also reduces the number of youth who get caught up in the criminal justice system, are trafficked, or become chronically homeless adults. The basic building blocks of an effective safety net for runaway and homeless youth include:

1. Outreach to reach and connect youth to services
2. Drop-in centers to engage youth and link to community resources
3. Shelter to provide an important first step off the street
4. Youth appropriate housing programs to build independent living skills
5. Case management to improve wellness and decision-making
6. Connection to education to increase future income earning capability
7. Workforce development to enable youth to compete in the job market
8. Services that respond to survivors of human trafficking
9. Services that are culturally competent and responsive to LGBTQ youth

Many Communities Want to Serve Homeless Youth, but Have No Support for Services

Our greatest challenge to ending youth homelessness is the lack of resources to ‘go to scale’ with effective programming. (Appendix A shows the current federal spending on homeless assistance.)

The number of communities and organizations that acknowledge the need to provide appropriate services and interventions for runaway and homeless youth and their families, far surpasses the current available federal resources. In FY 2013:

- 223 applications were submitted for a RHYA Street Outreach Program grant and only 50 grants were awarded.
- 223 applications were submitted for a RHYA Transitional Living Program grant and only 10 grants were awarded.
- 185 applications were submitted for a RHYA Basic Center Program grant and only 97 grants were awarded.

WHAT PRIORITY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS: MOVING YOUTH FORWARD TO END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS AND SERVE TRAFFICKED YOUTH

FEDERAL PLANS

The Federal Plan to End Youth Homelessness by 2020 (Opening Doors)

In 2010, the federal government adopted a plan to end homelessness (**Opening Doors – U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness¹¹**) that set the goal of ending youth homelessness within 10 years. The federal plan also called the nation to advance the health and housing stability of homeless youth through a signature initiative that would focus on:

- Improved discharge planning from child welfare, mental health, and juvenile justice institutions;
- Improved access to health care and housing; and
- Promotion of targeted outreach strategies.

In 2012, the federal plan was amended to improve the educational outcomes of children experiencing homelessness and added specific steps to bolster responses to homelessness among unaccompanied homeless youth. Specifically the 2012 amendments stated:

- **“Obtain more comprehensive information on the scope of youth homelessness** by improving counting methods; better coordination and

dissemination of the information collected by different programs and systems; and conducting new research to expand and improve our understanding of the problem.”

- **Build an evidence base of the most effective interventions for the different subsets of youth experiencing homelessness.** Refine the preliminary intervention model (discussed below), and conduct additional research on effective interventions.
- **Improve access to emergency assistance, housing, and supports for historically underserved groups of youth.** Such groups include youth who have been involved in the juvenile justice and/or child welfare systems; sexually exploited youth; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) and gender non-conforming youth; pregnant or parenting youth; [minority youth;] and youth with mental health needs.”¹²

The Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking in the U.S. 2013-2017

The Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking in the United



Photo: Mark Weeks

States identified runaway and homeless youth programs as key partners on the frontlines in both identifying victims of human trafficking and providing critical services to survivors of human trafficking.¹³ Currently, there are over 400 runaway and homeless youth programs across the United States. These programs are poised to have a significant impact in the coordinated effort to both prevent human trafficking and appropriately serve survivors of human trafficking. Increasing resources to runaway and homeless youth programs has the potential to dramatically impact the human trafficking of children and youth in the United States.

GATHER BETTER DATA

National Study (Incidence and Demographics)

1. Periodic National Studies on the Prevalence, Needs, and Characteristics of Runaway and Homeless Youth

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act first authorized periodic estimates of the incidence and prevalence of youth homelessness in America in 2008 and called for a periodic estimate to be conducted every five years. This study has never been conducted because U.S. Congress never appropriated any money towards this research.

U.S. Congress should appropriate \$3 million dollars to HHS every five years so that this periodic study can be conducted to determine the scale of the need and the most effective interventions, housing models, and services to direct to America's homeless youth population.

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2. Two Additional Mandatory Questions on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

In addition to a periodic national study of the incidence, prevalence, and characteristics of homeless youth in America, additional mandatory questions on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)¹⁴ would capture more data about the number of children and youth experiencing homelessness every year who are still attending school. The YRBS specifically targets youth in grades 9-12 enrolled in high school and was developed by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to assess categories of health risk behaviors among youth. In fact, 81% of homeless students identified and enrolled by public schools in the 2011-12 school year were not considered homeless by HUD's definition.

3. HUD's Point in Time (PIT) Count Should Implement Promising Practices for Counting Homeless Youth

The HUD Point in Time (PIT) count has yielded an under-count for homeless youth populations. Implementing the promising practices identified in the Youth Count! Process Study conducted by the Urban Institute is likely to expand the number of youth who are surveyed to go beyond just youth found on the street.¹⁵ Some of the promising practices include engaging youth service providers and LGBTQ partners, involving youth in counts, conducting magnet events, and using social media to raise awareness.

EXPAND THE SAFETY NET FOR HOMELESS AND HUMAN TRAFFICKED YOUTH

Increase Youth-Appropriate Housing and Services

1. Invest in Incremental Increases in Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) Programs

Even assuming the lowest estimate available of 46,000 homeless youth found under HUD’s 2013 point-in-time survey or the 58,000 unaccompanied homeless youth documented by the U.S. Department of Education, we currently have less than 4,200 bed spaces available for homeless youth in the entire nation. The federal investment through the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) has proven to be a cost-effective safety net for young people who run away, are thrown out, or are exiting other systems of care and become disconnected from families.

Triple RHYA’s Investment to \$345 Million by 2020

ACTUAL	TO MEET 2020 GOAL: INVEST \$38.5 MILLION EVERY YEAR					
FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
\$114 M	\$152.5 M	\$191 M	\$229.5 M	\$268 M	\$306.5 M	\$345 M

2. HUD Should Implement New Strategies to Increase Youth-Appropriate Housing Opportunities for Homeless Youth

While the focus on chronic and veteran homelessness is vital, and working to meet the goal to end chronic and veteran homelessness by 2015 is laudable, HUD has failed to offer housing opportunities to youth facing a future of chronic homelessness. Less than 1% of all federal funding for affordable housing is targeted to vulnerable, homeless youth (\$44 million out of \$38 billion). In 2012, 633,782 people were counted as homeless by HUD. Over 46,000 youth were counted in 2013—which represents over 7 percent of the homeless population captured in the count. HUD must begin to ensure that its grants are appropriately distributed to all populations experiencing homelessness. Programs offering youth-focused shelter, services, and supportive housing are the last barrier standing between a youth in crisis and homelessness, human trafficking, sexual exploitation, victimization, criminal justice involvement, chronic homelessness, and death.

Increase Education and Employment Success

1. Invest in Incremental Increases in McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Act Program

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act requires school districts to remove barriers to the enrollment, attendance, and opportunity to succeed in school for homeless children and youth. All school districts are required to designate a homeless liaison, pro-actively identify homeless children and youth, and provide transportation to stabilize the educational experiences of homeless students.

Homelessness is associated with a higher likelihood of multiple school transfers, missing school, dropping out, and/or lower standardized test scores. Homeless students often require additional supports if they are to be able to participate in any educational program. Indeed, the most promising instructional strategy or academic program will be of little benefit to youth who have not been identified, cannot get to school, or who are constantly changing schools due to the instability of their homeless situation.

Due to the low funding levels fewer than one in five school districts in the United

Deliberate efforts are needed to re-engage these youth with education. High school reform and dropout prevention and recovery activities at the federal and state levels should be required to implement strategies specifically targeted at homeless youth... [[S]]chools and homeless youth providers must collaborate in engaging homeless youth in school.



Photo:Sasha Bruce Youthwork

States are touched by EHCY money. A significant funding increase would bolster implementation and services to homeless youth across the country.

Triple EHCY's Investment to \$195 Million by 2020

ACTUAL	TO MEET 2020 GOAL: \$21.6 MILLION INVESTMENT EVERY YEAR					
FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
\$65 M	\$86.6 M	\$108.3 M	\$130 M	\$151.6 M	\$173.3 M	\$195 M

2. Re-engage Homeless Youth with Education

Research shows that approximately half of homeless youth do not finish high school.¹⁶ Deliberate efforts are needed to re-engage these youth with education. High school reform and dropout prevention and recovery activities at the federal and state levels should be required to implement strategies specifically

targeted at homeless youth. Such strategies should include resources to provide youth with housing, mentorship and other intensive services to support their educational success.

Homeless youth must be afforded opportunities to recover credits lost during periods of homelessness. Access to credit recovery programs must be facilitated. By allowing youth to work at their own pace and outside typical school hours, credit recovery programs can greatly accelerate students' graduation. Further investment in credit recovery and other alternative education programs will provide many unaccompanied youth the opportunity to meet their educational and professional goals.

Finally, schools and homeless youth providers must collaborate in engaging homeless youth in school. McKinney-Vento State Coordinators and local liaisons should be required to collaborate with runaway and homeless youth providers specifically. Formal collaborative agreements between local school districts and runaway and homeless youth providers should be encouraged in every community with an RHY provider. Such agreements, including Memoranda of Understanding, intake and enrollment cooperation, joint trainings and outreach, and collaborative efforts to facilitate access to shelter and housing, should be part of the scoring of McKinney-Vento EHCY grants and RHY grants.

3. Enable Unaccompanied Homeless Youth to Access Higher Education and Succeed

Amend Regulatory FAFSA Definition of Homeless Youth: The U.S. Department of Education has imposed a definition of “youth” for the FAFSA that creates barriers to financial aid for unaccompanied homeless youth who are 22 and 23 years old. The Application and Verification Guide (AVG), and the notes for FAFSA questions 55-57, define “youth” as being 21 years of age or younger or currently enrolled in high school. However, youth must be 24 years old in order to be considered an independent student. Thus, according to the FAFSA, unaccompanied homeless youth who are 22 or 23 years old are not considered independent students.

In order to fulfill the statutory language and to ensure that all unaccompanied homeless youth under 24 can benefit from the new independent student

definition and are therefore able to pursue postsecondary education, we recommend either deleting the definition of “youth” from the FAFSA guidelines, or defining youth as 23 years of age or younger, aligning it with the statute’s clear intention to ensure access to financial aid for all unaccompanied homeless youth and those who are self-supporting and at risk of homelessness.

House homeless youth and former foster youth while they are attending colleges and universities-even during breaks in the school year: RHYA programs regularly assist youth in attaining higher education, including attending 4-year colleges and universities. An issue faced by many of these young coeds is the lack of housing options during breaks and holidays. Returning to a shelter for a winter break is disruptive for the student and there is no guarantee of bed availability. Summer breaks pose an even greater obstacle and many homeless youth find themselves with few options.

Additionally, many homeless and foster youth attend higher education institutions that do not offer on-campus housing. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Education should collaborate to provide housing for youth who are attending higher education institutions and have nowhere safe to live and no resources to pay for housing.

Increase Prevention and Early Intervention

Intervening early after a runaway episode or after a youth has been homeless for a short period of time minimizes the negative impacts from living on the streets. Provision of early intervention services is crucial not only for reunification of youth with their families, but to decrease the chance of later crises that could result in additional homelessness episodes.

1. Family Intervention

With family conflict being the number one cause of youth homelessness, providing relevant and appropriate family intervention services for youth and their families is vital. Additionally, preventing family homelessness can help reduce the number of children and youth who become homeless. Programs in schools targeting families who are at-risk or already homeless with case management services is critical. Keeping families together through family preservation services can prevent the generational cycle of homelessness.

2. Increase Residential Mental Health Beds

Many communities across the country have seen a drastic reduction in the number of residential mental health beds for adolescents. While the movement to increase supports in the home and in the community are important and a blessing for families that can keep their child in the home, the loss of residential beds has meant that youth with significant mental health needs who are unable to remain in their homes are now accessing runaway and homeless youth programs and when those beds are unavailable, or the program cannot safely serve them, spend more time on the streets while their mental health needs remain unmet.

3. Basic Center Program - Emergency Shelter for Minors as Prevention and Early Intervention

Runaway and homeless youth shelters for minors are, by definition, short term and emergency-based. Much like a domestic violence shelter, the unstable housing is often due to safety concerns. When a minor accesses a runaway and homeless youth Basic Center Program (BCP), it may be the first time the youth has stepped forward to say something is wrong in the home. BCPs seek to find immediate counseling and support services for the entire family in order for the minor to return home or to live with other trusted family members. This intervention signals a need for increased services within the family, and when responded to appropriately, can prevent future episodes of running away or being kicked out by parents. These supports and family interventions can also prevent a youth from entering the more costly foster care or juvenile justice systems.

Increase Support for Homeless Young Families

Homeless youth are at particularly high risk for teen pregnancy; research indicates as many as 20% of homeless youth become pregnant and many of these youth go on to become parents.¹⁷ In addition, many young parents become homeless when the additional financial responsibilities of caring for a child are too much to bear.

1. Prevent Homeless Young Families from Entering the Child Welfare System

The inherent instability in their living situations can lead to child welfare involvement. However, research shows that involvement in the child welfare system often leads to dismal outcomes and homelessness later in life. Nationally, 26% of homeless adults and 34% of homeless young people aged 20-24 spent time in the care of the child welfare system.¹⁸ Rather than bring young homeless families into the child welfare system, resources should be targeted at helping them find housing, employment, child care and early education, and other supports needed to keep the family safe and together.

2. Ensure Homeless Young Families Have Access to Child Care and Early Childhood Education

Parenting young people have increased difficulty attending school or work regularly. Without access to child care and early childhood education, it is extremely difficult for homeless parenting youth to secure stable housing. Researchers examining welfare recipients' entrance into the workforce have found that access to child care facilitates this transition and that regular child care arrangements are associated with greater job stability and retention.¹⁹

Early childhood education can also prevent homelessness among the children of homeless teens. High quality preschool education and early learning have been shown to increase high school graduation rates, lead to greater employment and wages as adults, and lower rates of teen pregnancy. Eliminating barriers to child care and early childhood education, and prioritizing young homeless families for access to these programs, helps prevent homelessness.

INCREASE STATE CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT INTERVENTION MODELS

The Federal Plan to End Youth Homelessness by 2020 (Opening Doors)

The National Network estimates that at least \$50 million should be appropriated by U.S. Congress each year for five years to seed and implement research-driven intervention models in every state to offer adequate development and allow for longitudinal research efforts. Results from these preliminary projects will inform national policy and allow the U.S. to 'go to scale' to get to better outcomes for homeless youth in the areas of stable housing, permanent connections, education or employment, and individual health and well-being. These demonstration projects are not intended to result in creating state-administered runaway and homeless youth programs, but for states to serve as the coordinator of developing 'research-informed intervention models'.



CONCLUSION

In 2010, the federal government adopted a plan to end homelessness (Opening Doors – U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness) that set the goal of ending youth homelessness within 10 years. Four years in and despite the increased need, we are faced with a lack of coordination and stagnant (and at times decreased) funding which threatens to undermine this goal. We all agree that no child in the United States should face a night on the streets or become a victim of human trafficking or sexual exploitation because they lack a safe and stable home. However we must take steps to ensure that this does not happen. **We need critical federal investments in housing and services for homeless youth now:**

- Invest in collaborative efforts to plan, implement, and evaluate new methodologies to serve and ameliorate youth homelessness.
- Increase the capacity of the existing runaway and homeless youth housing, education, and social service programs.
- Remove existing administrative barriers and facilitate greater collaboration between existing programs and funding streams to enhance programs' effectiveness in serving homeless youth.
- Increase investment in youth-appropriate data collection models to inform interventions.

Successfully addressing youth homelessness requires everyone's participation. Local, community nonprofit organizations are leading a national movement that focuses public funding toward innovative solutions to end youth homelessness. We invite everyone to join this national movement to provide safety and opportunity that allows youth to develop into self-sufficient young adults who can contribute positively to their communities.

APPENDIX A

FEDERAL SPENDING ON HOMELESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Federal Spending on Homeless Assistance Programs

Federal Agency	Federal Program	FY2014 Appropriation Levels
HUD	McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Programs	\$2,105,000,000
VA	Supportive Housing	\$75,000,000
	Veteran's Homeless Program	\$1,400,000,000
	Supportive Services for Veteran Families	\$300,000,000
	Grant & Per Diem Program	\$250,000,000
	HUD-VASH	\$278,000,000
	Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program	\$38,000,000
HHS	Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS	\$330,000,000
	Health Care for the Homeless	\$317,000,000
	Runaway and Homeless Youth Program	\$114,000,000
	PATH	\$65,000,000
	SAMHSA Homeless Programs	\$74,000,000
	Homeland Security Emergency Food and Shelter	\$120,000,000
DEPT. OF EDUCATION	Education for Homeless Children	\$65,000,000
TOTAL Appropriations		\$5,556,000,000

Over \$5.5 billion appropriated annually by Congress for homeless services. Only 2% (\$114 million) is targeted to homeless youth. Homeless and human trafficked youth deserve greater equity in funding.

APPENDIX A

Federal Appropriations for Affordable Housing FY 2014

Federal Agency	Federal Program	FY2014 Appropriation Levels
HUD	McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Programs (Supportive Housing)	\$2,105,000,000
	Tenant Based Rental Assistance	\$19,177,000,000
	Section 811 (Disability)	\$107,000,000
	Project Based Rental Assistance	\$9,917,000,000
	Capital	\$1,875,000,000
	Operating Subsidies	\$4,400,000,000
	Choice Neighborhoods	\$9,000,000
	Section 202	\$384,000,000
	Section 811 Housing PWD	\$126,000,000
HHS	Runaway and Homeless Youth Transition Housing	\$44,000,000
TOTAL Appropriations		\$38,144,000,000

Over \$38 billion for affordable housing programs in FY 2014. Homeless Youth Housing receive less than 1% (\$44 million) in youth-focused housing models. Where is the investment in youth housing?

APPENDIX B

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POLICY BRIEF

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