



## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS AT GREAT RISK AMID CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

April 2020

4.2 million young people between the ages of 13 and 25 experience homelessness in America every year. They need connections to caring adults and access to housing, basic life needs, supportive services, access to employment and education support, legal services, health and dental care.

Congress recently passed the \$2 trillion coronavirus relief legislation, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). Yet lawmakers already are at work on a fourth major legislative package (“Phase Four”) to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak. The CARES Act provided significant new resources for education, early care, housing, nutrition, and services. However, the resources targeted specifically to young people experiencing homelessness were insufficient and lacked the report language we requested.

Youth and young adults (YYA) experiencing homelessness are at high-risk of infectious diseases<sup>1</sup>, and their mobility places them at a higher risk for both contracting and spreading COVID-19. This population is also not able to self-isolate or self-quarantine in their

tenuous, transient, crowded, and unstable situations. Due to increasing unemployment and the difficulty youth experiencing homelessness face in accessing housing and public or tax benefits, significant funding and targeted policy changes are needed.

To prevent our youth from being forgotten and ignored in our national response to COVID-19 - and to prevent them from becoming chronically homeless adults - National Network for Youth urges Congress to include the following provisions in the “Phase Four” coronavirus response package:

- **Runaway and Homeless Youth:** \$300 million for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) program:
  - \$150 million to current RHYA grantees
  - \$150 million in new RHYA grant awards to previously unsuccessful applications
  - Expand allowable uses of funding, including extending lengths of stays, signing new leases, temporary accommodations, and health and mental health care
- **Unaccompanied Youth’s Access to Economic Impact Payments:** Provisions to remove barriers to Recovery Rebates for unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness.
- **Foster Care:** Fully endorse the [Children Defense Fund](#) recommendations to Congress.
- **Juvenile Justice:** Fully endorse the [Justice Roundtable recommendations](#) to protect incarcerated youth and young adults during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **K-12 Education:** \$500 million to support identification, outreach, and removal of barriers to services and education through the Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program.
- **Higher Education:** New funding and requirements to target outreach to youth experiencing homelessness, prioritize them for emergency aid, provide them with assistance in FAFSA completion, and waive SNAP work requirements for college students.
- **HUD Homeless Assistance Program:** Require in law that any funds appropriated be explicitly targeted and accessible to young adults and families experiencing any form or definition of homelessness.

Policies must be explicitly targeted to YYA experiencing homelessness. Otherwise these young people face many barriers in trying to access the help they need.

<sup>1</sup> Rice, E., Stein, J. A., & Milburn, N. (2008). Countervailing social network influences on problem behaviors among homeless youth. *Journal of Adolescence*, 31(5), 625-639. Talks about HIV; Beech, B. M., Myers, L., & Beech, D. J. (2002). Hepatitis B and C infections among homeless adolescents. *Family & Community Health*, 25(2), 28-36. Kulik, D. M., Gaetz, S., Crowe, C., & Ford-Jones, E. (2011). Homeless youth’s overwhelming health burden: A review of the literature. *Pediatrics & child health*, 16(6), e43-e47.