

Manchester 10 Year Plan Homeless Youth Sub-Committee Report

This report and recommendations are made for unaccompanied Youth (13-22) that are homeless or in a housing crisis living. These youths were under-represented in the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness for the City of Manchester, New Hampshire.

This committee does not address the needs of youth who are a part of either a family that is homeless or in a housing crisis. We believe that population has already been a part of the adopted 10 Year Plan.

Who Are Unaccompanied Homeless Youth?

Unaccompanied homeless youth are young people who lack safe, stable housing and who are not in the care of a parent or guardian. They may have run away from home or been forced to leave by their parents. Unaccompanied youth live in a variety of temporary situations, including shelters, the homes of friends or relatives, cars, campgrounds, public parks, abandoned buildings, motels, and bus or train stations.

Generally, youth leave home due to severe dysfunction in their families, including circumstances that put their safety and well being at risk. Unfortunately, physical and sexual abuse in the home is common; studies of unaccompanied youth have found that 20 to 50% were sexually abused in their homes, while 40 to 60% were physically abused.¹ Parental drug use or alcoholism and conflicts with stepparents or partners also provoke youth to run away from home.² In a survey of unaccompanied youth in California, over half felt that being homeless was as safe as or safer than being at home.

Here in Manchester the experiences of Child and Family Services and the Office of Youth Services affirm the national profile of unaccompanied homeless youth.

A recent focus group of youth between 14-21 who were taking part in Child and Family Service's Drop-in Support Center were asked about their experiences and shared their view of being Manchester's Homeless Youth.

To this group being homeless was:

- Not having a stable place to live
- Not knowing where to go
- Being evicted
- Asked to leave home
- Too many living at home
- Economy
- Irresponsibility

Some of their ideas for a solution were:

- More job opportunities
- People who care
- More temporary housing
- An agency to help with needs

Child and Family Services' Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs provide a continuum of care for runaway and homeless youth, including a Street Outreach Program (SOP), Runaway and Homeless Youth Program (RYP) and Transitional Living Program (TLP). In 2008 the three programs combined served 1,120 youth between the ages of 12-22. The SOP and RYP combined served 393 youth under the age of 18 years. In Manchester, their service to the under 18 population is unique since all other programs serve youth only as part of a family. Since this service is unique, it is limited in its capacity. Based upon the number of unaccompanied youth in Manchester and the limited services available, there is a need to expand the number of emergency beds for youth under the age of 18 years.

Another need that has been identified for youth under the age of 18 in the Manchester community is a need to provide a safe place with structure for youth who are having family troubles which puts their housing in jeopardy. Temporary housing that provides respite during a crisis time in the family, gives both the child and the family a much-needed break and a connection to supportive services. This resource would allow agencies to assist the situation for the betterment of the entire family and in particular for the youth. This also supports the need for expanded beds for youth under the age of 18 years, which can provide this much needed respite service.

Also, homeless providers feel that there is a need within the community for housing and supportive services for young adults, ages 18 to 22. The CFS Transitional Living Program (TLP) served 57 clients in 2008; average adult age was 18 years, 10 months. This program is at capacity and continually has to turn youth away. A study by the National Health Care for the Homeless Council in 2004, found that young adults are especially vulnerable to homelessness. These youth face several unique challenges based upon their age related to housing, education, employment and health care. The study found that since many young adults lack financial resources, those who lose the support of their parents lack a supportive network and opportunities to access resources and acquire life skills. This can include youth who are estranged from their families, grew up in foster care or have been incarcerated.³ At the CFS TLP 40-60% of the youth served have been in the foster care system and 20% have previously entered into the criminal justice system. Without a support system or a helping adult these youth end up homeless and on the streets.

Current economic challenges (2009) also bring about crisis for many youth who are or have been working at low wage jobs and living with others. This population of youth find themselves competing to maintain or seek entry-level jobs with more experienced job seekers as well as an older population that are no longer economically secure in their retirement.

Are Public Schools Responsible for the Education of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth?

Yes. Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (hereafter referred to as the McKinney-Vento Act) requires that state and local educational agencies provide students experiencing homelessness with school access and stability, and remove barriers to their attendance and success. Under the Act, every school district must designate a homeless liaison to ensure the McKinney-Vento Act is implemented in the district. Homeless liaisons must do outreach to identify unaccompanied homeless youth, assist them with school enrollment and refer them to healthcare and other

community services. For more information on the federal educational rights of homeless students, please visit <http://www.naehcy.org> or <http://www.serve.org/nche>. Here in Manchester the School District has a person to oversee this Federal mandate as well as liaisons in every school in the District. The District funds the transportation of any youth whose family's situation has placed them into a shelter or in transitional housing.

The District also operates a number of alternative educational models for Youth at Risk. The District's Policy that allows a youth to stay in school until they finish a High School Degree up to turning 21 is a great service to this population of youth at risk.

Nationally, 50% of homeless youth age 16 or older reported having dropped out of school, having been expelled, or having been suspended. ⁴

Best Practices

The programs at Child and Family Services are modeled after the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, which provides evidenced-based program designs for runaway and homeless youth and include the Street Outreach Program, Transitional Living Program and Basic Center Program (known as the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program at CFS). ⁵ The recommendations look to expand on this practice and to include other successful programs currently operating in New England. In Burlington, Vermont there is a runaway and homeless youth program funded by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (Spectrum) that serves as a model for the expansion of services in Manchester. Spectrum has a continuum of services similar to CFS, but includes several housing options: Spectrum One Stop, an emergency youth shelter for youth ages 14 to 21; Maple Street SRO, a transitional living program for youth ages 16-21; Murray Street Coop, a group living transitional program for young men transitioning from foster care to independence. www.spectrumvt.org. A review of practice-based research showed that the effectiveness of counseling and skill-building is minimal until a youth's basic needs are met. Two proven and effective ways to assist street youth are shelter and drop-in programs. The review stated,

A model youth shelter would provide for immediate basic needs, foster broad and meaningful youth participation in the program's development and implementation, employ social and community economic development initiatives, promote consciousness-raising, link youth to mainstream culture, and advocate on the youth's behalves. (Karabanow & Clement:94).

The review concludes that comprehensive programs and services work well to attract runaway and homeless youth and that priority should be placed on supports for youth exiting the street including, housing, employment initiatives and emotional supports. ⁶

Also, a study by the National Health Care for the Homeless Council recommends short- and long-term strategies to overcome the unique barriers faced by homeless young adults over the age of 18. These strategies address issues around healthcare, housing, education, employment and social support. The study recommends a combination of financial resources, transitional housing and life skills training to support these youth as they move towards independence. The study also recommends vocational and training services that integrate education, work cooperatives and work programs. The study goes on to recommend services that will create a support network for these young

adults, including family counseling, coordinated services for youth transitioning from a system, support programs for family shelters housing teens, mentoring services and shelter-based support services for parenting young adults.⁷

Recommendations:

Communities that have the greatest success in ending homelessness capture resources from many different funding streams. These resources include access to mainstream funding from state and local government as well as investments by the philanthropic and business communities.

Finding the resources to pay for new programs and services is challenging. Many of the actions in this plan have no cost. However, significant resources will be required to undertake this ambitious plan.

There has been a significant investment by the City of Manchester of time and resources. To serve runaway and homeless youth better, we would like to recommend the following be added to the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness for the City of Manchester.

Prevention:

- Increase understanding about homeless youth to all agencies.
(Report to MCOC and GMASA on this report)
- Add this population among Discharge Planning Committee of MCOC
(Recommend to MCOC)
- Partner with Foster Care System and Juvenile Justice Services.
(OYS facilitate a meeting with ongoing sub-committee)
- Make an agreement that is funded for a bed set-aside for a youth in crisis with local group home facility.
(Webster House-Child and Family Services and OYS)

Housing:

- Network information with Human Services Agencies
(Report to MCOC and GMASA)
- Explore changes in current housing models.
(Join or initiative advocacy on local and state level)
- Set aside funding for this population through already established programs.
(Child and Family Services funding increased for this population)

Services:

- Increase availability /funding for Supportive Services and Case Management
(Child and Family Services funding increased)
- Address barriers to housing stability.
(Advocacy on local, state and Federal levels)
- Adopt a zero tolerance policy for discharging youth from Public Systems into homelessness from Foster care, child protection, and juvenile corrections
(MCOC discharge Committee and working on agreements of various agencies/programs)

- Increase conflict resolutions with other services for youth at risk of homelessness.
(OYS funded to bring together and to do possible training with other partners)
- Increase the number of financial resources available for youth for housing.
(CFS increased funding as well as advocacy building)
- Expand the ability to rapidly re-housing youth who become homeless.
(Call partners together to put together a plan and to seek funding)
- Secondary Education and Job training needs to be expanded for youth.
(Bring together School District and other Partners doing this)
- Enhance the financial literacy of youth.
(SNHS, School District, Business Community and other Partners to plan, advocate and seek funding for this part)
- Explore and enhance the access to financial assistance to youth.
(Child and Family Services, City of Manchester Welfare, OYS and other Partners to plan, advocate and seek funding for this part)

Potential Housing Assistance:

1. Research developmentally appropriate housing models that incorporate positive youth development, harm reduction and a low barrier approach to housing and supporting runaway and homeless youth.
2. Expand on current transitional housing options for homeless youth (individual and parenting) to include youth ages 16 to 22. Research transitional housing models for youth nationally, focusing on a model that supports education, work development and volunteer work.
3. Participate in and support the statewide initiative to have an emergency shelter for youth 13-18 years of age who are unaccompanied.
4. Explore the options for a developmentally appropriate emergency shelter for youth 18 to 22 years of age. Research models nationally, focusing on a low barrier, positive youth development approach.
5. Support emergency beds at local group homes for runaway youth ages 13-18.

¹ Robertson, M. & Toro, P. (1999). "Homeless Youth: Research, Intervention, and Policy." *Practical Lessons: The 1998 National Symposium on Homelessness Research*. Washington DC: U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development. Retrieved July 18, 2007 from <http://aspe.os.dhhs.gov/progsys/homeless/symposium/3-Youth.htm>. See also MacLean, M.G., Embry, L.E. & Cauce, A.M. (1999). "Homeless Adolescents' Paths to Separation from Family: Comparison of Family Characteristics, Psychological Adjustment, and Victimization." *Journal of Community Psychology*, 27(2), 179-187.

² Robertson & Toro, *supra*, note 10.

³ Ammerman SD, Ensign J, Kirzner R, Meininger ET, Tornabene M, Warf CW, Zerger S, Post P. Homeless Young Adults Ages 18-24: Examining Service Delivery Adaptations, 50 pages. Nashville: National Health Care for the Homeless Council, Inc., 2004.

⁴ Homeless and Runaway Youth Receiving Services at federally Funded shelters. *United States General Accounting Office*. GAO/HRD-90-45

⁵ Fernandes, Adrienne L. CRS Report for Congress: Runaway and Homeless Youth: Demographics, Programs, and Emerging Issues, 33 pages. Washington DC: Domestic Social Policy Division.

⁶ Karabanow, Jeff & Clement, Philip. Interventions With Street Youth: A Commentary on the Practice-Based Research Literature. *Brief Treatment and Crisis Intervention* Vol. 4, No. 1, pages 93-108: Oxford University Press 2004.

⁷ Ammerman SD, Ensign J, Kirzner R, Meininger ET, Tornabene M, Warf CW, Zerger S, Post P. *Homeless Young Adults Ages 18-24: Examining Service Delivery Adaptations*, 50 pages. Nashville: National Health Care for the Homeless Council, Inc., 2004.