Targeted Interventions: Meeting the Needs of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

Identifying Unaccompanied Homeless Youth: Deriving Data from an Accurate Count

MA Appleseed Conference
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Clark University
11/15/12
Session Objectives

• Learn from others in the room about communities’ efforts to count homeless youth
• Obtain in depth understanding about Worcester’s efforts
• Share information about state and national efforts
• Contribute to an effort to count and understand the situations of homeless young people in MA
Challenges and Considerations for ‘Counting’ Unaccompanied Youth

Challenges
• Multiple definitions
• No standardized methodology

Considerations
• Intended use should drive decision-making about methodology
• Implementation issues (length of time, youth involvement)
• Data analysis
• Level of resources available
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Survey/ Tool</th>
<th>Bias/ Limitations</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Precision Required</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Street Survey</td>
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<td>Shelter/Agency Youth Survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Existing Surveys (YRBS)</td>
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<td>Existing data (HMIS, McKinney Vento)</td>
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<td>Combination of the above</td>
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Process we use in Worcester

Point in Time Week

Planning meeting
Identify outreach sites
Contact sites
Assign volunteers and outreach teams
Disseminate packets
Analyze data
Organize press conference

Recruit and Train volunteers
Refine and translate the tool
Develop instructions, resource guides, packets of survey materials
Contact sites
Clean and enter data

Point in Time Findings Dissemination
Worcester Teen Housing Task Force in conjunction with the Compass Project and Clark University

2011 Point in Time Survey of Homeless Youth and Youth Adults

http://m.theatlanticcities.com/housing/2012/10/hidden-cost-counting-homeless/3495/
2011
Point-in-Time
Survey

• Conducted on October 19th 2011(+), roughly 30 organizations helped disseminate the survey along with extensive street outreach
• 535 young people ages 13-25 took the survey.
• 102 of them lived in a shelter, were couch surfing, or stayed in a car, park, street, or abandoned building the night before taking the survey
• 31 respondents lived in a residential facility
• 137 of the respondents with a home had a friend who was homeless
Residential status

- Living in a shelter: 50%
- Couch surfing: 41%
- Living in cars, buildings, park, street: 8%
Residency and Citizenship Status

- Born In Worcester: 52%
- Lived in Worcester 6 Months+: 76%
- U.S. Citizen: 78%
Pregnant and Parenting

54% Homeless

12% Not Homeless
Employment

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Homeless</th>
<th>Not Homeless</th>
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<td>19.5%</td>
<td>37%</td>
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Involvement with Public and Private Services and Programs

- 24% Ever in custody of social services
- 25% Ever in out of home placement
- 38% Ever received mental health services

Homeless vs. Housed

Social Services
Servicios Sociales
Juvenile & Criminal Justice System Involvement

- **Homeless**
- **Housed**

- DYS Involvement
- Released from jail or juv. detention last 2 years
Experiences with Violence and Safety

- 23% Homeless
- 21% Home
- 17% Not Homeless
- 11% With partner
Gaps in Resources Addressing Factors of Youth Homelessness

- Close to 40% of the homeless respondents reported that they did not get the help they sought
  - Long wait lists
  - Didn’t hear back
  - Lack of transportation
  - Couldn’t access needed paperwork or identification

There is a significant lack of emergency housing options for homeless youth and young adults
What is driving youth and young adult homelessness in Worcester and what are we doing about it?

**YEAR ONE:** RESOURCES FOR STREET OUTREACH
- Family conflict and instability

**YEAR TWO:** FUNDING FOR COMPASS PROJECT—FAMILY CONFLICT AND SUPPORTIVE CASE MANAGEMENT

**YEAR THREE:** NETWORK DEVELOPMENT
- Homelessness Prevention & Family Strengthening
- Emergency Shelter
- Transitional Living
- Permanent Supportive Housing
What would it mean to do this at the state level?

- Engaging youth in the process as researchers and advocates
- Tapping into young people’s social networks (RDS/NSUM)
- Using existing data (surveys, HMIS, etc)
- Coordinating a statewide count

Let’s get into small groups for 10 minutes...
Final Questions/Comments