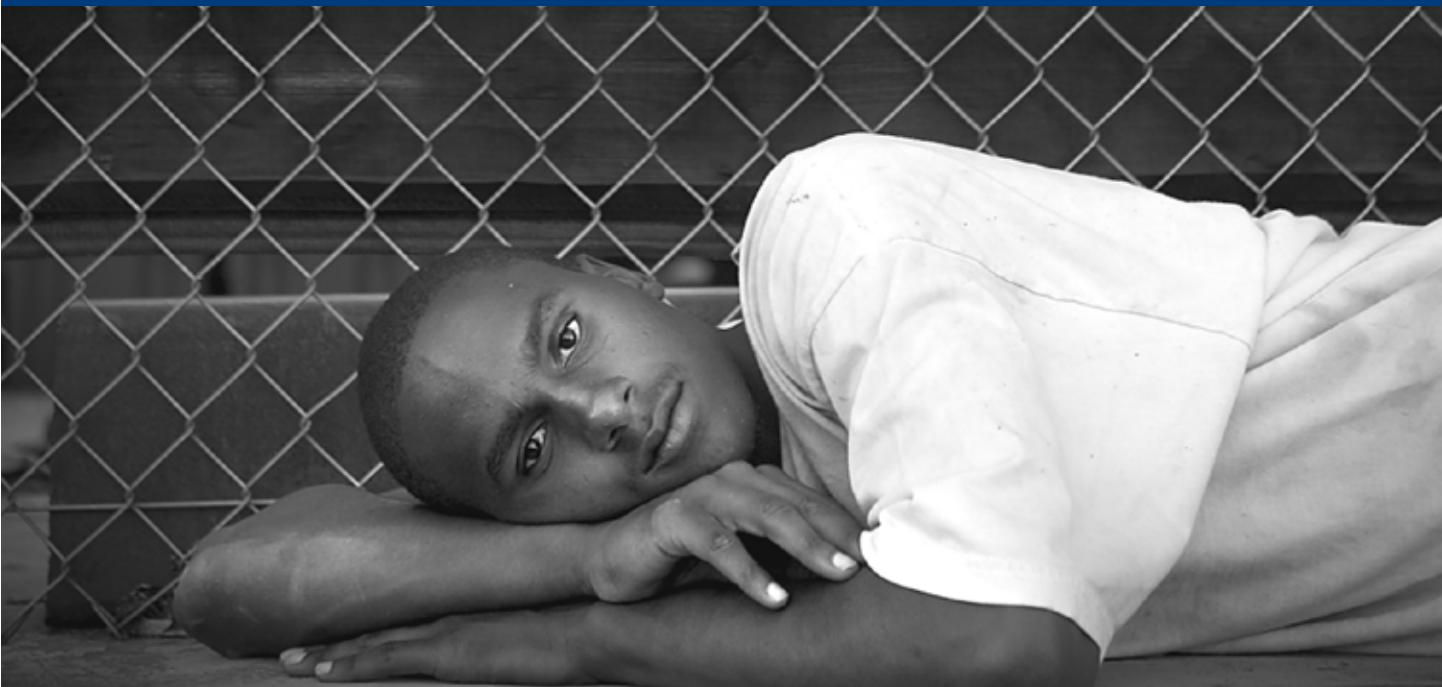




MORE THAN A ROOF: **HOW CALIFORNIA CAN END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS**

By Shahera Hyatt

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About the Author

SHAHERA HYATT is the Executive Director of the California Homeless Youth Project, a research and policy initiative of the California Research Bureau focusing on educating policymakers on the needs of homeless youth in California. Hyatt chairs the Sacramento Gay & Lesbian Center's Homeless Youth Initiative, and is a member of the National Alliance to End Homelessness' National Advisory Council on LGBT youth. Her publications include policy briefs on LGBT and sexually exploited homeless youth in California. Hyatt is an Associate Clinical Social Worker with over 8 years of experience working with or on behalf of youth in both non-profit and government settings. She holds a master's degree in social work from California State University, Sacramento.

About the Project

The California Homeless Youth Project (HYP) is a multi-year research and policy initiative of the California Research Bureau and the California State Library. The HYP highlights issues and solutions for youth ages twelve to twenty-four who are living "on the edge" of homelessness or are currently homeless in California. In particular, the HYP engages these youth directly in research and policy discussions, giving voice to their experiences and recommendations as well as those of researchers, practitioners and policy experts. The HYP is supported by funding from The California Wellness Foundation.

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Introduction

California's public systems play a key role in the effort to end youth homelessness. Many youth who experience homelessness or who are at-risk of homelessness are at some point in contact with these systems (e.g. child welfare, mental health, corrections, benefits programs, etc.). Addressing youth homelessness at the state-level means working together to substantially reduce the number of youth who are currently experiencing homelessness, preventing new cases of homelessness, and creating an efficient and coordinated system to quickly set youth on a path to attain safe and stable housing if a young person is kicked out, runs away from home, or is discharged from care without an identified housing destination. Other homeless subpopulations that have embraced the mission of ending homelessness, such as veterans and the chronically homeless, have been able to substantially move the dial in reducing their prevalence across the country.¹

Homelessness takes a serious toll on the lives of youth through increased rates of mental health and substance abuse disorders, unemployment, and lower educational attainment. Preventing and ending youth homelessness today is far less costly than paying for the consequences of chronic homelessness tomorrow. For these reasons, it is crucial that the State of California pursue strategies to end youth homelessness through prevention, supportive services, housing, and improved data collection. A State Action Plan to End Youth Homelessness is a strategy to bring together public and private sector partners to exercise leadership and establish ending youth homelessness as a priority in California. This State Action Plan is a compilation, synthesis, and adaptation of recommendations and strategies identified in many reports and studies (see page 18 for a listing of key reports).

Purpose

The State Action Plan was requested by Senator Carol Liu and is guided by an Advisory Board made up of community leaders who support this work by sharing their knowledge and experience. The Plan exists to increase and improve

collaboration between state and local agencies in the public and private sectors. It builds upon the federal strategic plan, *Opening Doors*, developed by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), and provides recommendations for policymakers and service providers in California.²

Scope

Though the state lacks resources to implement all of these action steps at once, every action taken will move us closer to the goal of ending youth homelessness. This Plan will be presented to various stakeholder groups including the Assembly Select Committee on Homelessness, the Child Welfare Council, the State Interagency Team on Children and Youth, and others, who will then be invited to respond to the Plan by taking on individual action steps as appropriate.

Organization of the Plan

The Plan is organized into 10 subject areas that came up consistently in the literature on youth homelessness, followed by multiple action steps to achieve each overarching goal. Next to each step, there is a letter indicating to which parties the action step is directed: **(S) for Service Providers, (G) for Government Agencies, and (P) for Policymakers**. Though the Plan is organized by issue area, the sections are not mutually exclusive. We encourage the state and local government agencies whose responsibilities lie in these respective issue areas to work together to achieve these goals.

Definitions

For the purposes of this Plan, we define homeless youth to include both unaccompanied minors between the ages of 12 and 17, and transition age youth (TAY) between 18 and 25, who lack a stable or permanent address. This includes youth sleeping in shelters, on the street, in parks, in cars and buildings, as well as "couch-surfers" who find temporary shelter with friends (or, less often, family members), but lack a permanent or stable home. See Appendix A for a listing of state and federal definitions of homeless youth.

Themes in Ending Youth Homelessness

Prevention & Early Intervention

Prevention is the most cost-effective and humane way to end homelessness. A nationally representative study comparing adults who had experienced homelessness with those who had not found a strong link between “adverse childhood experiences” and adult homelessness; children who experienced neglect and physical or sexual abuse were 26 times more likely to become homeless as adults.³ Addressing the underlying causes of childhood abuse and neglect that can lead to homelessness requires promoting a culture of individual, familial, community and government responsibility for youth both within and outside of systems of care.

Goal 1: Prevent instances of homelessness before they occur.

Action Steps

- Ensure that youth exiting from child welfare and juvenile justice systems are provided with independent living skills training programs that adequately prepare them to discharge from these systems of care. Identify housing destinations prior to exit so youth do not discharge into homelessness (G, P)
- Enhance access to mainstream safety net programs including CalFresh, Supplemental Security Income, and Medi-Cal by streamlining enrollment procedures and providing education and outreach at schools, drop-in centers and other areas where youth congregate (G, P)
- Promote financial stability of homeless and at-risk youth through education and employment initiatives such as financial literacy, asset building, and credit counseling courses (S)
- Ensure that youth have stable, long-term connections with positive adults who can act as a safety net and provide support, counsel, mentorship and role modeling for youth. These adults can be family members, friends, service providers, or come from other places in the youths’ community⁴ (S)
- Encourage public child welfare agencies to use state dollars or federal Promoting Safe and Stable Families program dollars to create prevention opportunities for youth and their families in the form of family intervention services such as family therapy or case management (G, P)
- Provide timely short- and medium-term financial assistance, legal and mediation services, housing courts, and supportive services for households who are about to lose their housing and for families and youth who are homeless (S, G)
- Utilize home visiting programs to provide early prevention and intervention services to homeless or at-risk children and their families, particularly taking into account lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth who are kicked out of their homes due to their family’s rejection of their sexual orientation and gender identity (S)
- Identify and address obstacles that prevent abused or neglected children from accessing child welfare services that can benefit them and their families by identifying missed entry points for intervention (G, P)



Best Practice Spotlight: Demonstration project in Alameda County conducted by the Alameda County Foster Youth Alliance, Bay Area Legal Aid, and Dreamcatcher Youth Shelter.

These organizations have partnered to understand how extended foster care can be a bridge between homeless youth and the child welfare system. Since July 2011, the demonstration project has worked to open child welfare cases for homeless minors who have reported abuse and neglect, making the case to youth that extended foster care offers new youth-friendly placement options with higher levels of independence and self-sufficiency. The research team will be issuing a report with preliminary findings in February of 2013. There are currently efforts underway to replicate this demonstration project in the Central Valley and Los Angeles.

For more information on Prevention & Early Intervention:

- *Ending Youth Homelessness Before it Begins: Prevention and Early Intervention Services for Older Adolescents*, National Alliance to End Homelessness, August 2009. http://b.3cdn.net/naeh/5a3c6b2bf975ee8989_1bm6bhh9y.pdf
- *Family Acceptance Project*, San Francisco State University: <http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/>
- *California Fostering Connections to Success*: <http://www.cafosteringconnections.org/>



Education

Homeless youth often experience undue hardships academically and have difficulty navigating the educational system. In our 2008 report, *Voices from the Street: A Survey of Homeless Youth by Their Peers*,⁵ the pursuit of education was cited by youth as one of the top three strategies for exiting the cycle of homelessness. Three-fourths of the homeless youth we surveyed were not in school. Most of the 54 youth were between the ages of 17 and 24, yet only six had graduated from high school or attained a GED. This data is consistent with national surveys of unaccompanied homeless youth. At the same time, a majority of youth expressed the desire to return to school and had life goals (such as becoming a teacher or social worker or working in the medical field) that require extensive education to achieve.⁶

[Goal 2: Improve educational outcomes for homeless youth as a pathway to achieving stability and employment.](#)

Action Steps

- Ensure that homeless youth have consistent access to school-based resources such as federal nutrition programs, lockers, showers, computers, and transportation vouchers to meet their basic needs (G)
- Help youth access their academic records by amending the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act to allow for student records to be transferred quickly when a homeless youth needs to change schools and a parent is not available to consent to the transfer of these records (P)
- Clarify state reporting requirements to ensure that homeless youth are able to enroll in school without being referred to law enforcement or child welfare, except in cases where doing so would be beneficial or if there is an immediate danger to their health or safety (G, P)
- Require that basic information about the McKinney-Vento Act is included at least once a year in the ongoing, mandatory trainings of principals, and other school staff, and increase McKinney-Vento staff, particularly in school districts that are heavily impacted by homelessness (G, P)
- Share information about the rights of undocumented homeless students under the McKinney-Vento Act. For example, the Superintendent of Public Instruction can issue a letter clarifying the rights of migrant students and provide guidance to school districts (G)
- Foster collaboration between Migrant Education Programs (MEP) and homeless education programs to help homeless education programs understand the educational, health, emotional, or social needs unique to migrant children, and provide referrals of migrant students who may be experiencing homelessness⁷ (G)
- Ensure that all homeless youth in schools are counted by training school staff to identify homeless youth, posting notice of McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act eligibility, educating Parent-Teacher Associations, and using enrollment forms that can help determine housing status. Gather and collect this data at the state-level (P)
- Ensure that local educational agencies set aside adequate amounts of Title I, Part A funds to serve homeless youth, and encourage the use of such funds to increase dedicated McKinney-Vento staff (P)
- Enact state legislation clarifying that homeless youth have the right to enroll in school. Establish uniform procedures for such enrollment to ensure that they are not denied entry into school. Consider including a liability shield to protect schools that enroll youth without parent/guardian's consent. (A limited liability shield would help address some school administrators' concerns that enrolling homeless youth could expose them to lawsuits by parents.) (P)

Education, (cont)

- Issue a statewide policy instructing school districts in procedures to calculate and accept partial credits, with specific protocols for inter-district records transfers and awards (G, P)
- Require that existing school dropout recovery programs receive training on homelessness and conduct outreach to homeless youth (S, G)
- Ensure that homeless youth are able to fully participate in all school-related activities, including sports and other extracurricular activities, by creating exceptions to residency requirements that are consistent with what is currently offered for foster youth.

For more information on Education:

- *The Educational Success of Homeless Youth in California: Challenges and Solutions*, Patricia F. Julianelle, California Research Bureau, October 2007.
- *National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth*: <http://www.naehcy.org/>
- *California Department of Education, Homeless Children and Youth*: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/>



Employment

Employment is a critical tool to help homeless individuals get off the streets and maintain an income and stability. Over 90 percent of the youth we surveyed in *Voices from the Street* identified a specific career goal as their exit out of homelessness. Many youth cited a strong desire to “give back” or help others in similar circumstances. Most young people want the opportunity to work, but face significant barriers to employment, which have only increased since the economic recession. These goals aim to address some of the barriers youth face by addressing partnerships with the local business community as well as state programs that assist the unemployed.

[Goal 3: Improve employment opportunities for homeless youth so they can gain the financial stability to move into stable, permanent homes.](#)

Action Steps

- Help transition-aged youth advance in employment opportunities through adult basic education, bridge programs, and vocational training or skill building (S)
- Engage businesses to help youth find jobs in their community. Encourage business partners to give tours of their organization or let youth “job shadow” in return for their business and encourage business partners to work collaboratively with Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs (RHYP) to create real employment opportunities (S, G)
- Address hidden mental and physical health disabilities that can be a barrier to employment by ensuring that employment training programs offer skill building that is culturally competent to assist youth with physical and health disabilities (S)
- Assist youth who are homeless in accessing job opportunities by increasing collaboration among homeless service providers, Workforce Investment Act-funded programs, and the Department of Labor (S, G)

- Support schools and organizations that help youth discover and cultivate their marketable assets including work ethic and career interests⁸ (S, G)
- Provide youth with role models and mentors who reflect their experiences both culturally and personally and have gone on to successfully obtain jobs (S)
- Offer peer support groups for youth who are working in order to promote sustained employment, and provide childcare for young parents who are able to find work (S)

For more information on Employment:

- *Larkin Street Youth Services’ Hire Up Program*: <http://www.larkinstreetyouth.org/programs/education-employment/hire-up-employment/>
- *Employment and Homelessness*, National Coalition for the Homeless: <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/employment.html>
- *Improving Employment Outcomes: The Role of TANF and WIA*, National Alliance to End Homelessness: <http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/4.10-improving-employment-outcomes-the-role-of-tanf-and-wia>

Supportive Services

Young people need a continuum of services to help prevent them from leaving home, and to protect them if they do. These services include family preservation and support services, such as mediation and family counseling to assist families while young people are still in the home; outreach and early intervention for youth who have recently left home; and drop-in centers for unaccompanied youth who have been on the street to gain access to substance abuse treatment, mental health services, shelter, and other additional services.

[Goal 4: Increase coordination and integration of the continuum of services and supports needed to get youth off the streets.](#)

Action Steps

- Employ family intervention and reunification as a first line of defense against homelessness by supporting family-finding technologies (such as online searching or social media) and providing support and aftercare for families who are reunified⁹ (S, G)
- Develop a system to expedite and pay for birth certificates and California IDs for homeless youth in order to reduce barriers to accessing services (G, P)
- Train and encourage case managers and therapists to provide individualized, goal-based planning¹⁰ (S)
- Coordinate homeless services in each community by creating a centralized point-of-access for intake/assessment¹¹ (G)
- Engage LGBT homeless youth in designing appropriate services and supports that meet the unique needs of this subgroup, and better serve all youth¹² (S)
- Simplify case management by using technology to increase efficiency when



Best Practice Spotlight: Project STRIVE (Support to Reunite, Involve, and Value Each other)

Project STRIVE is a research endeavor using brief family-based therapeutic intervention that has been shown to reduce sexual risk behavior, drug use, and delinquent behaviors among homeless youth in Los Angeles and San Bernardino Counties. This intervention took place over five 90 to 120 minute long sessions that focused on family strengths, problem solving, conflict negotiation and role clarification. New skills were taught in the first session and reinforced throughout. For example, creating and nurturing a positive family climate was a theme in all sessions. The five weeks focused on:

- 1) Creating a positive family atmosphere
- 2) Increasing problem-solving abilities
- 3) Uncovering obstacles and reviewing HIV and street life educational materials
- 4) Learning how to negotiate solutions
- 5) Practicing problem solving using the family problem of greatest difficulty, and reviewing family strengths

This intervention has demonstrated significant reductions in risk behavior among homeless youth; sexual risk behavior, alcohol use, and hard drug use all decreased over 12 months compared to the control group.

For more information, please see: Milburn, N. G., Iribarren, F. J., Rice, E., et al. (2012). A family intervention to reduce sexual risk behavior, substance use, and delinquency among newly homeless youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 50*, 358-364.

Supportive Services, (cont)

connecting youth to services and supports. For example, online applications for multiple programs can increase access to benefits by allowing youth to upload and send documents, use electronic signatures, and easily track their application status (S, G)

- Increase federal Basic Center Program (BCP) funding to target grantees who serve pregnant/parenting homeless youth with services to help these youth improve their lives and their parenting skills, and move into safe and stable homes (G)
 - Ensure programs that serve pregnant/parenting homeless youth are sensitive to developmental needs of both the young child and the parent, and if the organization is not able to provide developmental health needs (i.e. pre-/post-natal care, mental health), the agency should be partnered with resources that meet these needs, such as the California Home Visiting Program¹³ (S, G)
 - Encourage public child welfare agencies to identify unaccompanied minors and youth at-risk of leaving home as a population to serve in the child and family state plan (P)
- Expand community-based service capacity to serve the actual number of homeless youth needing services in each community¹⁴ (S, G, P)

For more information on Supportive Services:

- *Centralized Intake for Helping People Experiencing Homelessness: Overview, Community Profiles, and Resources, Homelessness Prevention & Rapid Re-housing Program (HUDHRE): http://www.hudhre.info/documents/HPRP_CentralizedIntake.pdf*
- *Struggling to Survive: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/Questioning Homeless Youth on the Streets of California, Hyatt, California Homeless Youth Project, March 2011.*
- *[Programs Serving California's Homeless Youth: Results of a Point-in-Time Survey](#), California Homeless Youth Project, January 2011.*



Best Practice Spotlight: Homeless Youth Capacity Building Project (HYCBP).

The HYCBP is a project of the John Burton Foundation that seeks to reduce homelessness among transition age youth in California. This project focuses on increasing the capacity of service providers throughout the state both through training and technical assistance, especially in the area of performance management. In its first two years, the HYCBP also as focused on larger policy goals in partnership with the California Coalition for Youth. Policy accomplishments to date:

- 1) Including the Interests of Transition Age Youth in California's Permanent Source Campaign
- 2) Extending Age Eligibility of Foster Care in California by Implementing Assembly Bill 12
- 3) Developing Regulation Standards for Homeless Youth Shelter Programs in California

<http://www.cahomelessyouth.org/>

Housing Strategies

Ensuring that youth have access to affordable and stable homes is one of the most important steps that can be taken to end youth homelessness. Homeless youth face a number of barriers to stable housing, including access to affordable housing, inadequate income and assets, little-to-no family safety net, early parenthood, a lack of relationships with supportive adults, and oftentimes a juvenile court or criminal record. Programs and services that provide youth with housing also provide youth with opportunities to learn the values of independence, dignity, and self-sufficiency. These skills allow youth to break the cycle of homelessness.

[Goal 5: Increase access to safe, stable, and affordable homes for unaccompanied homeless youth.](#)

Action Steps

- Increase safe, affordable housing options for transition-age youth by prioritizing homeless youth in affordable housing programs, and including transition-age youth in California's permanent source campaign (P)
- Expand the reach and effectiveness of Transitional Living Programs (TLP) by minimizing barriers to entry, reducing involuntary exits, and increasing capacity to serve homeless youth that are missed by the child welfare system (S)
- Coordinate treatment and supportive services with housing to help youth be successful in maintaining their housing, and allow lengths of stay long enough for them to achieve goals that will enable them to be independently housed¹⁵ (S)
- For youth ages 18-24, increase access to Continuum of Care services including HEARTH Act resources, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing (S, G)
- Ensure that non-minor dependents in extended foster care have access to a

continuum of housing options to meet their needs including Supervised Independent Living Placements (SILPs), Transitional Housing Placement Plus Foster Care (THP+FC), and foster homes that are willing to take on youth ages 18-21 so they do not exit into homelessness (S, P)

- Forge relationships between program staff, local landlords, and affordable housing developers to increase quality and availability of affordable housing options (S)
- Work closely with public housing authorities (PHAs) to make sure that a portion of funds allocated for homelessness be set aside for youth in need (S)
- Develop and implement regulation standards for homeless youth shelters in California by creating a licensing category for emergency youth shelter facilities (G, P)
- Consider alternative models to housing youth in crisis including more flexible shelters or host home options, particularly in underserved and rural areas of the state¹⁶ (S)
- Develop low-barrier housing models for the highest-needs homeless youth, including those with mental health and substance use disorders, to allow them to remain in developmentally-appropriate youth housing (S)
- Ensure that Transitional Living Programs and other longer-term housing options are sensitive to the needs of immigrant/undocumented youth who need help transitioning to permanent housing and have barriers to work and education¹⁷ (S)
- Make subsidized permanent housing programs accessible to immigrant youth, including those who are undocumented¹⁸ (S, G, P)



Best Practice Spotlight: Coalition for Responsible Community Development (CRCD)

In December 2011, CRCD and the Little Tokyo Service Center opened the 36th Street Apartments – a new permanent supportive housing complex in South Los Angeles, serving 10 extremely low-income transition age youth (TAY) who were homeless or at tremendous risk of becoming homeless, including foster youth, young parents, youth with disabilities, and young people exiting the justice system.

At the 36th Street Apartments, CRCD adopted the permanent supportive housing model of the Corporation for Supportive Housing, where housing is available for as long as the tenant needs it and services are not mandatory to remain housed. Each youth signs a lease and pays rent.

The 36th Street Apartments received an allocation of project-based Section 8 vouchers, which enables youth to pay approximately 30% of their income towards rent, as they stabilize their lives and work towards achieving their goals.

EARLY OUTCOMES

In the first three months:

- 100% of youth developed individual action plans and a household budget
- 20% opened bank accounts
- 20% gained employment and increased their income
- 20% enrolled in secondary education
- 50% enrolled in vocational training
- Since opening, zero youth have been evicted

CRCD and its community-based partners provide supportive services on-site to promote housing stability, prevent further episodes of homelessness, and support each young person's successful transition to adulthood. Services are voluntary and are designed to directly address the individual needs and goals of youth, such as education, employment, career pathways, and independent living skills.

Since opening the 36th Street Apartments, CRCD and its partners have opened a mixed-population building with 10 units set aside for TAY and a youth drop-in center on the ground floor; a 19-unit permanent supportive housing building for TAY with mental illness; and are providing services to more than 40 homeless youth being housed in the community through Section 8 Housing Choice vouchers. Before the end of 2012, CRCD will open one more mixed-population building with a total of 8 units set-aside for TAY. To learn more about CRCD, visit: <http://www.coalitionrcd.org>.

For more information on Housing:

- *Measuring Success in Housing Programs for Homeless Youth*, Hollywood Homeless Youth Partnership, to be released January 2013. <http://hhyp.org/>
- *Housing for Homeless Youth*, National Alliance to End Homelessness, Pope, L., November 2011. http://b.3cdn.net/naeh/930d4e040411974676_vrm6iid00.pdf
- *Housing for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care: A Review of the Literature and Program Typology*, Us Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research, April 2012. http://www.huduser.org/publications/pdf/HousingFosterCare_LiteratureReview_0412_v2.pdf



Health

People experiencing homelessness consistently rank healthcare alongside paid employment and housing as a primary need. Increased access to mainstream health services has the potential to prevent or end homelessness for youth suffering from physical and mental health disorders.

[Goal 6: Improve health outcomes for youth who are experiencing homelessness.](#)

Action Steps

- Increase the availability of healthcare treatment programs specifically aimed at youth within neighborhood health centers, one-stop health centers, and mobile service programs (S)
- Increase the food security of homeless youth by improving access to healthy food through federal nutrition programs (School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program, Summer Food Service Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and the Emergency Food Assistance Program). Take advantage of all possible federal waivers and administrative procedures to accomplish this goal (G)

- Ensure access to HIV and other medical care services for HIV-positive homeless youth, and increase efforts to integrate health services into supportive housing (S, G)
- Increase the number of children and youth who have health insurance and access to quality health, dental and mental health services through targeted outreach and expedited eligibility review (S, G)
- Prepare outreach strategies to transition-age youth for 2014 when the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act will expand coverage to all adults and children under 133% of the poverty level and encourage local service providers to prepare for Medi-Cal expansion by ensuring they have adequate staff to support new enrollees and bill for services (S, G, P)

For more information on Health:

- *Understanding the Health Care Needs of Homeless Youth*, US Department of Health and Human Services <http://bphc.hrsa.gov/policiesregulations/policies/pal200110.html>
- *Top Priorities for Homeless Youth Health Care*, National Clearing House on Families & Youth <http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/tools/exchange/well-being/health-care-priorities>



Best Practice Spotlight: Health Shack

Health Shack was created through a partnership with Wind Youth Services, UC Davis Adolescent Medicine, Linkage to Education, Sierra Health Foundation, Community Health Resource Development, and FollowMe.com, and is intended to support youth in navigating the complex systems of healthcare, education, employment, housing and other resources. Unaccompanied youth often lack a central place to keep and access important documentation including identification cards, job histories, education records, medical records and financial statements. The goal of Health Shack is to assist in the development of unaccompanied youth by providing a Personal Health Information System (PHIS) that is designed with and for these youth, which provides resources as well as safe keeping and accessibility for important life documents through an online database accessible to the youth.

<https://www.healthshack.info/about.html>

Juvenile Justice & Law Enforcement

The number one recommendation for policy change identified by youth surveyed in *Voices from the Street* was to undo the criminalization of homelessness, which they saw as exacerbating their housing instability. In *No Way Home: Understanding the Needs and Experiences of Homeless Youth in Hollywood*, the 2010 report by the Hollywood Homeless Youth Partnership, nearly 70% of homeless youth surveyed had prior involvement in the juvenile justice system.¹⁹

[Goal 7: Provide alternatives to prosecution and incarceration and ensure that law enforcement responses to homeless youth are culturally competent, developmentally appropriate, and solution focused.](#)

Action Steps

- Train police to communicate effectively and respond appropriately to young people in crisis who are on the streets. Make it safe for homeless or criminally-involved youth to turn to the police for help by providing education to at-risk youth of their legal rights when reporting crimes committed against them²⁰ (G)
- Employ justice system strategies that provide alternatives to prosecution and incarceration. Offer reentry planning for youth who are returning to the community after interaction with the criminal justice system. This solution includes use of specialty courts, citation-dismissal programs, holistic public defenders offices, and reentry programs²¹ (S, G)
- Provide comprehensive reentry services that include case management and planning, housing, and employment²² (S, G)
- Promote collaboration between service providers and law enforcement regarding outreach to youth and specialized crisis intervention training to limit the number of arrests for nonviolent offenses. This partnership can also help link individuals

experiencing street homelessness with supportive housing and services to help move them off the street permanently²³ (S, G)



For more information on Juvenile Justice:

- *Voices from the Street: A Survey of Homeless Youth by Their Peers*, Bernstein, N.; Foster, L., California Research Bureau, March 2008, <http://www.library.ca.gov/crb/08/08-004.pdf>
- *A Cluster Analysis of Service Utilization and Incarceration among Homeless Youth*, Butler, L.; Tyler, K. University of Nebraska, Lincoln. January 2012. <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1185&context=sociologyfacpub>
- *Best Practices in Interagency Collaboration: Youth Homelessness and Juvenile Justice*, National Center for Homeless Education. http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/juv_just.pdf

Rural Areas

Homelessness, particularly among youth, is often thought of as an urban problem. However, it exists in all regions of the state and carries additional challenges in rural communities. Efforts to end youth homelessness in rural areas are complicated by a lack of awareness and resources.

[Goal 8: Ensure that rural communities in California have the capacity to address youth homelessness in their local region.](#)

Action Steps

- Ensure equitable access to funding resources in rural areas (G)
 - Include outreach services to youth in rural service delivery systems to maintain continuity of care (S)
 - Recognize that youth service providers in rural areas aren't necessarily "homeless agencies" and may serve clients with a variety of needs. These agencies should be trained to respond to youth homelessness (S)
 - Consider the needs of rural providers and rural program models when developing data standards and reporting guidelines (G)
 - Invest in research on rural homelessness and work to identify best practices for serving youth in these areas (G)
 - Examine public transportation infrastructure needs in underserved areas and explore innovative solutions such as shuttle transportation to improve access to services, facilitate employment searches and access to work for homeless youth and parents (G, P)
- Encourage the use of host home models by public child welfare agencies and allow them to utilize their licensing and background process to approve host home providers (G, P)



For more information on Rural Homelessness:

- *Short Videos by Rural Homeless Youth*, National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth, Federal Youth Services Bureau <http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/the-beat/2012/06/videos-rural-homeless-youth>
- *Support Systems for Rural Homeless Youth: A Collaborative State and Local Demonstration*, National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth, Federal Youth Services Bureau <http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/tools/exchange/new-year-new-look-at-positive-youth-development/support-systems-for-rural>
- *Housing and Outreach Strategies for Rural Youth*, National Alliance to End Homelessness, (October 2012). <http://b.3cdn.net/naeh/3f100858fc52da907cctm6bhnhe.pdf>

Governance

Our public systems frequently come into contact with homeless youth and their families, but often lack the coordination and communication to work together to effectively address homelessness among youth. The State of California should act swiftly to pursue strategies to end to youth homelessness. We offer a number of action steps to guide federal, state and local government to respond to this issue in an effective and timely way.

[Goal 9: Establish ending youth homelessness by 2020 as a state priority in California.](#)²⁴

Action Steps

- Replicate Colorado’s model of addressing youth homelessness by creating an Office of Homeless Youth Services – a state entity that coordinates current services, and facilitates interagency collaboration to identify gaps, remove barriers, improve access, and share information related to homeless youth²⁵ (G, P)
- Establish a statewide Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) to develop and implement a ten-year plan to end homelessness in California that includes the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth. The ICH should include representatives from the Governor’s Office and all relevant state government agencies and meet regularly to discuss implementation, update to the plan, and educate the public on their goals and objectives²⁶ (P)
- Provide opportunities for Continuum of Care members, homeless shelter staff, homeless education liaisons, 211 staff, child welfare workers, youth, and others in related organizations in regions throughout the state to network, coordinate, and collaborate to improve services for homeless children, youth, and families (S, G)
- Ensure effective discharge and transition planning from child welfare, juvenile justice, the Department of Corrections

and Rehabilitation, hospitals and other institutions that can identify those at-risk of homelessness prior to and upon release and facilitate linkages to housing and other supports needed to avoid homelessness and end costly recycling through these service systems (G)

- Promote integrated care for homeless youth at all levels of government by allowing flexibility in combining funding streams. Government entities should also shorten and simplify program applications and encourage outreach to homeless youth through incentives for agencies and service providers (G)



For more information on Governance:

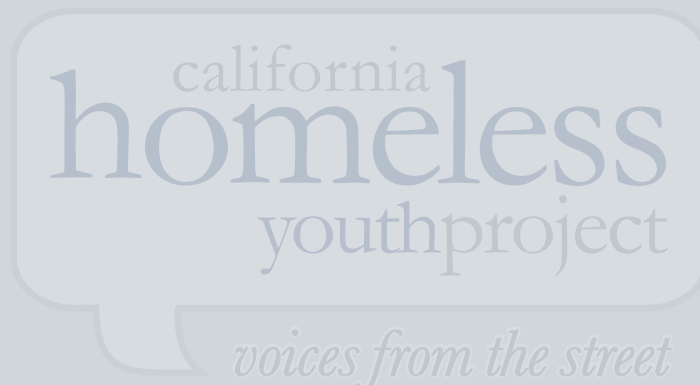
- *Too Big to Ignore: Youth Homelessness in California Two Years Later*, John Burton Foundation and the California Coalition for Youth, February 2012. <http://www.cahomelessyouth.org/pdf/Too%20Big%20to%20Ignore%20Two%20Years%20Later.pdf>
- *Alone Without a Home: A State-by-State Review of Laws Affecting Unaccompanied Youth*, National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, National Network for Youth, September 2012 <http://www.nlchp.org/content/pubs/Alone%20Without%20a%20Home,%20FINAL1.pdf>



Best Practice Spotlight: The Foster Youth Re-Entry (FYRE) Work Group, State Interagency Team on Children and Youth, California

The FYRE was created to strengthen services to former foster youth exiting the juvenile justice system (also known as “crossover youth” or “dual status youth”) by sharing client specific data to identify these youth in the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ); and, piloting an approach to more effectively inform these youth about available community resources. The FYRE has made significant progress in achieving this goal and has completed deliverables, which include:

- 1) Successfully launching the first Former Youth Re-Entry Transition to Adulthood “passport to independence” event. Approximately 40 staff from various state, local and private agencies participated in all day “behind the walls” event to inform former foster youth about housing, education, employment training and placement, alcohol and drug programs, transition services, support networks and independent living programs.
- 2) Produced a Foster Youth SB 945 CD with guidelines and materials that can be used to replicate the event in county detention sites, educational settings and workshops.
- 3) Provided the CDSS Foster Youth Resource Toolkit to inform foster youth in DJJ on the availability of programs and services. Work group members provided updated information to CDSS on services administered by their departments.
- 4) Encouraged the Administrative Office of the Courts to modify and implement the court’s “Commitment to DJJ” form (JV-732) to include the identification of foster youth.
- 5) Worked with CDCR/DJJ and CDSS to develop an memorandum of understanding to share data for the purpose of identifying foster youth in DJJ.



Research & Data

In order for California to accurately gauge the scope of youth homelessness and understand the characteristics of these youth, it is imperative that we improve our data collection systems. Without doing so, there is no way of knowing whether current services are sufficient, if we are addressing the most pressing needs of this population, and whether programs are successful in reducing the number of youth experiencing homelessness. Additional research is particularly needed to examine the different approaches for serving various subgroups in the homeless youth population (LGBT, pregnant/parenting, and youth exiting foster care and juvenile justice) to identify best practices.²⁷

[Goal 10: Continue to pursue a research agenda and data collection strategy that will help California better understand the number and characteristics of homeless youth in our state.](#)

Action Steps

- Add specific questions about housing status and homelessness to California's version of the Center for Disease Control's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) (G)
- Improve the data collection, identification, and outreach efforts of local education agencies (LEAs) by supporting the California Department of Education in increasing the number of homeless children and youth identified and receiving services under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act²⁸ (G)
- Fully participate in Continuum of Care (CoC) point-in-time counts and the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Establish a data committee with representatives from each CoC to ensure that HMIS is collecting data necessary to monitor progress toward ending youth homelessness (S, G)
- Improve the integration of homeless youth in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) biennial Point-in-Time homelessness counts to accurately estimate the number of homeless youth in each county across California²⁹ (G)
- Ensure that all shelters serving homeless youth report to the HMIS or the Runaway and Homeless Youth Information System (RHYMIS) in order to create a more accurate picture of homelessness in California (S, G)
- Collect housing status data from all beneficiaries participating in government-funded programs through a common data standard (G, P)
- Require that local jurisdictions incorporate the needs of homeless youth into their 10-year plans to end homelessness, including their Housing Elements (G)
- Share data to expedite applications for state-funded programs (while protecting confidentiality) in order to break down the silos between government agencies (G, P)
- Encourage communities to incorporate child welfare National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) information into local data on youth homelessness (G)
- Encourage youth providers to aid public child welfare agencies in identifying former foster youth so they can be included in the NYTD³⁰ (S, G)
- Collect and analyze data on client outcomes to monitor progress in reducing youth homelessness and guide program and policy development (S)

For more information on Research & Data:

- *Estimating California's Homeless Population*, Foster, L., California Research Bureau, October 2010. <http://cahomelessyouth.library.ca.gov/docs/pdf/HomelessYouthPopEstimateReport.pdf>
- *Promising Practices to Support Homeless and Exploited Youth*, Hunt, D., Senate Office of Research, September 2012. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/113835286/SOR-Homeless-Youth-Memo>
- *Youth Count Website*, National Alliance to End Homelessness: <http://www.endhomelessness.org/pages/youthcount>

Key Reports

This State Action Plan is a compilation, synthesis, and adaptation of recommendations and strategies identified in many reports and studies, including the following:

1. United States Government Accountability Office. "Homelessness: Fragmentation and Overlap in Programs Highlight the Need to Identify, Assess, and Reduce Inefficiencies." May 2012. <http://www.gao.gov/assets/600/590782.pdf>
2. Building Changes and United Way of King County. "Priority Action Steps to Prevent and End Youth/Young Adult Homelessness: An Implementation Plan." April 2012. http://www.cehkc.org/DOC_reports/YAHomelessness.pdf
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5. Senate Office of Research. "Addressing Youth Homelessness: A State Perspective." November 2011. <http://cahomelessyouth.library.ca.gov/docpdfAddressingYouthHomelessnessAStatePolicyPerspective.pdf>
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8. United State Interagency Council on Homelessness. "Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness." 2010. http://www.usich.gov/PDF/OpeningDoors_2010_FSPPreventEndHomeless.pdf
9. John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes and the California Coalition for Youth. "Too Big to Ignore: Youth Homelessness in California." November 2009. <http://www.cahomelessyouth.org/pdf/Too%20Big%20to%20Ignore.pdf>
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APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS OF HOMELESS YOUTH

Runaway and Homeless Youth Act

The federal Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Act (42 USC 5701) defines “homeless youth” as individuals who are not more than 21 years of age, or not more than 18 years of age if seeking shelter in a center, or not less than 16 years of age if seeking services in a transitional living program, and for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative, and who have no other safe alternative living arrangement. [Source: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/content/aboutfysb/rhycomp08.htm>]

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

The federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 USC 11302) defines youth receiving Education for Homeless Children and Youth services as homeless if they “lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence,” including sharing housing or living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or campgrounds due to lack of alternative accommodations; living in emergency or transitional shelters; and living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar places. [Source: http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/mv_full_text.pdf]

The Homeless Emergency and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009 amends and reauthorizes the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act with substantial changes, including an expansion of HUD’s definition of homeless: (1) An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; is living in a place not meant for human habitation, in emergency shelter, in transitional housing, or is exiting an institution where they temporarily resided. The primary change from existing practice is that people will be considered homeless if they are exiting an institution where they resided for up to 90 days (previously 30 days), and were homeless immediately prior to entering that institution; (2) An individual or family who is losing their primary nighttime residence, which may include a motel or hotel or a doubled-up situation, in 14 days (previously seven days) and lacks resources or support networks to remain in housing; (3) Unaccompanied youth and families who are homeless under other federal statutes (such as the education definition or the RHY Act definition) who have experienced a long-term period without living independently in permanent housing, have experienced persistent instability as measured by frequent moves, and can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time due to chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance addiction, histories of childhood abuse, the presence of a disability, multiple barriers to employment, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against an individual or a family member; (4) Individuals and families who are fleeing, or are attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member. [Source: <http://www.hudhre.info/documents/HomelessAssistanceActAmendedbyHEARTH.pdf> http://hudhre.info/documents/HEARTH_HomelessDefinition_FinalRule.pdf]

California Government Code Section 11139.3

For purposes of facilitating and supporting the development and operation of housing for homeless youth, “homeless youth” is defined as either A) a young person not older than 24 years who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, is no longer eligible for foster care on the basis of age, or who has run away from home; or B) a young person less than 18 years who is emancipated and is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. [Source: <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycode?section=gov&group=1100112000&file=11135-11139.7>]

APPENDIX B: ACRONYM KEY

Basic Center Program (BCP)

California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR)

California Department of Social Services (CDSS)

Continuum of Care (CoC)

Coalition for Responsible Community Development (CRCD)

Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ)

Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program (EHCYP)

Foster Youth Re-Entry (FYRE)

Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Homeless Youth Capacity Building Project (HYCBP)

Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH)

Local Education Agency (LEA)

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT)

Migrant Education Programs (MEP)

National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)

Public Housing Authority (PHA)

Personal Health Information System (PHIS)

Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs (RHYP)

Supervised Independent Living Placement (SILP)

Support to Reunite, Involve, and Value Each Other (STRIVE)

Transition Age Youth (TAY)

Transitional Housing Placement Plus Foster Care (THP+FC)

Transitional Living Programs (TLP)

United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH)

Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

End Notes

¹ VA-HUD: Homelessness among Veterans Declines 12% in 2011, United States Department of Veterans Affairs, (December 2011). <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2234>; *The State of Homelessness in America 2012*, National Alliance to End Homelessness, January 2012. http://b.3cdn.net/naeh/9892745b6de8a5ef59_q2m6yc53b.pdf

² *Addressing Youth Homelessness: A State Perspective*, Senate Office of Research, (November 2011). <http://cahomelessyouth.library.ca.gov/docpdfAddressingYouthHomelessnessAStatePolicyPerspective.pdf>; *Promising Practices to Serve Homeless Youth*, Senate Office of Research, (September 2012). <http://www.scribd.com/doc/113835286/Promising-Practices-to-Serve-Homeless-Youth-SOR-Memo-2>

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