Youth Homelessness in Harris County

Youth Count 2.0, a community-based research study, looked at homeless youth ages 13-24 in Harris County during October-November 2014. A total of 632 youth were counted during that four week period. Of those counted, 434 completed surveys from which the following data are based. Strategies for recruitment included visiting shelters, magnet events and street outreach. The study used inclusive definitions of youth homelessness including:

- Youth who live in emergency shelters, transitional housing, hotel/motels, cars, abandoned building, on the street, or in a space not designed for human habitation.
- Youth who are unstably housed, staying temporarily with friends or acquaintances or doubled up, or do not know where they can stay 30 days from now.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Aged 18-24 - 87%
Aged 13-17 - 13%

434 surveyed

- African American - 61%
- White - 16%
- Hispanic - 15%
- Multiracial - 12%

63% came from the Houston Area

- 25% identify as LGBTQ
- 24% have children
- 6% are pregnant

Male - 54%
Female - 42%
Transgender/Other - 4%

68% had a previous episode of homelessness

58% had been involved in a public system of care

- 41% had been in the foster care system at some point
- 22% aged out of foster care
- 31% had been involved with the juvenile justice system
- 13% aged out of juvenile justice
EDUCATIONAL & VOCATIONAL OUTCOMES

- 51% completed high school
- 7% received their GED
- 28% are still in school
- 21% currently work

HIGH RISK FOR VICTIMIZATION AND POOR HEALTH OUTCOMES

- 29% traded sex to meet their needs
- 31% had been raped
- 31% had been physically abused
- 28% had been sexually abused
- 55% had been emotionally abused
- 48% met the criteria for current mental distress
- 24% had attempted suicide
- 51% had been in a detention center, jail, or prison

NEED FOR SERVICES

- 37% had gone to a shelter and not stayed the night. TOP REASON: The shelter was full
- 50% had thought of going to a shelter but did not. TOP REASON: Thought they could make it on their own

- Shelter Full: 55%
  - Uncomfortable: 29%
  - Too Young/Too Old: 22%

- Could make it on their own: 48%
  - Didn't know where to go: 32%
  - Didn't want others to know: 29%
  - Heard shelter was dirty or bad: 20%

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expand housing and shelter services for youth/young adults
- Broaden age restriction to include youth younger than 18 and older than 21
- Develop more youth/young adult specific services.
- Connect youth with tangible support for educational and vocational training
- Utilize public systems such as schools, child welfare, and juvenile justice as a point of early intervention and prevention
- Increase university partnerships to research and implement best practices for health promotion and disease prevention

CONTACT

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