

2018 POLICY PLATFORM



The California Coalition for Youth (CCY) advocates for and with young Californians who are disconnected from the full range of basic services and support needed to transition successfully into adulthood. Thousands of youth up to the age of 18, and many more between the ages of 18-24, experience homelessness and lack access to the shelter and services they need in our state. However, historically the state has invested little to serve runaway and homeless youth. As a result, only 20 of California's 58 counties have direct services of any kind for homeless youth.[1]



In the absence of critical supports, such as education, housing, employment, mental & physical health services and family support, young people are at high risk for:

- Homelessness
- Delinquency/Incarceration
- Commercial Sexual Exploitation/Human Trafficking
- Substance Use/Abuse
- System Dependency
- Violence & Abuse
- Mental Health Crisis
- Poverty & Unemployment
- Trauma
- Unintended Pregnancies

California has the highest number of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness in the country with 15,458 youth between the ages of 12-24, which is 38% of the country's total (an increase from 31% in 2016) based on the 2017 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress.[2] In addition, California also has the second highest percentage of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness who are unsheltered at 82.5%[3] in the country. In a recent national study, about 50% of youth who were homeless during the 12-month period studied experienced homelessness for the first time in their lives, and unmarried parenting youth had a 200% higher risk of reporting homelessness.[4]

The California Coalition for Youth believes that one of the most severe results of youth disconnection is homelessness, and California is in the midst of a homelessness crisis among youth and young adults under age 25. Once homeless, youth tend to be exposed to even more dangerous situations that can lead to further abuse and neglect that can potentially put their lives at risk. They experience trauma, violence and exploitation while living on the streets. Between 40% to 71% of young people have met diagnostic criteria for substance use disorders, and many of these young people often meet diagnostic criteria for both drug and alcohol dependence.[5] Furthermore, 20-40% of youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBT and a disproportionate share are youth of color.[6]

[1] CA Homeless Youth Project, Programs Serving Homeless Youth (2011), <http://bit.ly/1wDLgWq>

[2] US Dept. of Housing & Urban Development, The 2017 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, Part I

[3] Ibid.

[4] Morton, M.H., Dworsky, A., & Samuels, G.M. (2017). Missed opportunities: Youth homelessness in America. National estimates. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

[5] Slesnick N, & Prestopnik J. (2005). Dual and multiple diagnosis among substance using runaway youth. *American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*, 1,179–201. Kipke MD, Montgomery SB, Simon TR,& Iverson EF. (1997). Substance abuse disorders among runaway and homeless youth. *Substance Use & Misuse*, 32, 969–986. Johnson KD, Whitbeck LB, Hoyt DR. (2005). Substance abuse disorders among homeless and runaway adolescents. *Journal of Drug Issues*, 2005b, 35, 799–816.

[6] See pages 11-14 of the full report and the addendum beginning on p.162 for a more detailed summary of the available research on the proportion of homeless youth who identify as LGBT. Regarding the proportion of the U.S. population that identifies as LGB, the 1992 National Health and Social Life Survey found that 4.9 percent of men and 4.1 percent of women ages 18-44 report ever having a same-sex partner. The 2002 National Survey of Family Growth found that 4.1 percent of 18-44 year-olds identify as LGB. Analysis of 2006 National Exit poll (NEP) data found that 3 percent of voters identify as lesbian or gay (the NEP did not allow respondents to identify as bisexual or transgender). NEP and Voter New Service (VNS) polls since 1996 have found the number of lesbian and gay respondents to range from 3 percent to 5 percent. The available research on the proportion of the U.S. population that identifies as transgender is too limited to permit an accurate estimation.

To ensure that California's unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness have access to the services, resources, support and programs they need to transition successfully into adulthood and lead prosperous lives, we focus on the following policy priorities:

SHORT TERM GOALS

1. Build upon the State of California's recent investments of funding dedicated to addressing the unmet needs of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness. CCY recommends that the state increase its funding commitment by adding \$61 million starting in the 2018-2019 Budget to support and expand additional programs and services for unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness. Funds should support the following activities:



Prevention and Early Intervention Support Services such as family support and reunification services, street and community outreach programs, and drop-in (open-access) centers.



Low Barrier and Diverse Housing Opportunities. Programs would include runaway and homeless youth shelters, homeless young adult shelters and homeless young adult housing programs.



Post-Housing and Follow-Up Services.



Creation of the Office of Homeless Youth and Young Adults.

LONG TERM GOALS

1

Encourage the federal government to adequately fund and align resources with the State of California to prevent and end youth homelessness. Encourage the State of California to accurately count the number of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness in the state to better advocate for the state's fair share of federal funding, and to better determine where the need for additional programs and services are for unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness in California.

2

Encourage the State of California to allocate appropriate resources to ensure that unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness have the opportunity to successfully transition into independent living, access education, and gainful employment. For unaccompanied homeless minors, who meet the definition of abuse and neglect, encourage the elimination of barriers to accessing programs and services in the child welfare system.

3

Encourage the State of California to maintain a balanced approach when enacting regulations that allow for the inclusion of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness and innovation by homeless and foster youth providers in order to better respond programmatically and fiscally to the needs of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness and foster youth in the state.