

THE CALIFORNIA COALITION
FOR YOUTH
CALIFORNIA'S ROAD MAP:
PREVENTING & ENDING
YOUTH HOMELESSNESS



CALIFORNIA'S ROADMAP - PREVENTING AND ENDING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

November 2018



Building on last year's Call to Action paper, the California Coalition for Youth is releasing this road map for the next Administration to hit the ground running in order to tackle and end youth homelessness during their tenure. We know that when we intervene effectively with young people experiencing homelessness, when we align our resources well, and when we have adequate resources, we are able to ensure that young people, not only get off the streets, but they get the support and education and employment services that they need so they can go on to independence and self-sufficiency.

The Issue at Hand

California has the highest number of unaccompanied youth and young adults experiencing homelessness in the country, which also represents 38% of the nation's total, and the second highest number of youth and young adults who are unsheltered. Of the 15,458 young people sleeping on the streets during a single night in 2017, 890 of these young people are parents to children of their own.¹ What's more troubling is that we know these numbers are a vast under count. The methodology is imprecise, and youth tend to stay hidden from view out of safety or out of a desire to appear "normal."

This population is also virtually unfunded and without a "home" in the State of California. In the 2016-17 Budget, California spent \$3.4 billion on child welfare and foster care, \$235.8 million on the juvenile corrections and probation system, and \$11.8 million on homeless youth.² Not a single state agency or department had responsibility for addressing the needs of young people experiencing homelessness. While there have been modest one-time investments in recent years, they are still a drop in the bucket and do not reflect an ongoing commitment to meet the needs of young people experiencing homelessness.

Unfortunately, homelessness among some groups of youth is very disproportionate – up to 40 percent of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ.³ Among racial and ethnic groups, African American youth were especially overrepresented, with an 83% increased risk of having experienced homelessness over youth of other races.⁴ Most telling, the lack of a high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma (GED) was the most strongly correlated indicator with the greatest risk of experiencing homelessness. These young adults, without a high school diploma or GED, had 4.5 times the risk of experiencing homelessness compared to peers who completed high school.⁵

Then, there are young parents, especially those who are unmarried, as they had three times the risk of experiencing homelessness compared to non-parenting peers. Pregnancy and parenthood are common among youth experiencing homelessness with forty-four percent of the young women, ages 18 to 25, who participated in Chapin Hall's Voices of Youth Count, reported being pregnant or a parent. Nationwide about 1.1 million children have a young parent who experienced homelessness in the past year. When addressing the needs of pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness, there can be a positive impact on two generations.

Lastly, to note, homeless youth tend to have started using drugs at a younger age, often before age 15. Early drug use and abuse is predictive of serious adult addiction problems and long-term homelessness. Homeless youth in San Francisco experience a mortality rate in excess of ten times that of the state's general youth population.⁶ We've learned that 50 percent of the chronically homeless population had their first experience of homelessness when they were under the age of 25.⁷ Therefore, if we are effective at addressing the needs of young people, we can go a long way in addressing the needs of adults, in reducing the number of adults who experience chronic homelessness.

Opportunities

Despite facing these incredible obstacles and the lack of available resources across the state, these young people have strengths and hopes for their own future. We know we can end youth homelessness as a number of states and cities have announced ending homelessness among veterans. This will go a long way to address the state's growing homelessness crisis.



Immediate Steps

Council Appointees. The Governor appoints all of the department directors and agency secretaries that are represented on the Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council, which is now responsible for addressing the needs of young people experiencing homelessness. We urge the next Administration to consider that their Secretaries and Directors are the ones to sit on the Council so that the key decision makers are at the table to weigh in and guide the work. Additionally, we recommend that state representatives from education and workforce development be included on the Council. This will round out the Council's representation to include those segments that assist the homeless with achieving independence and self-sufficiency.

Implement A Systems Approach. On January 1, 2019, Senate Bill 918 (Wiener – D) will go into effect, which takes the first significant step for California to begin the state-level system work and coordination necessary to prevent and end youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. The Council will now be tasked to set specific measurable goals and map progress towards ending youth homelessness, and will be the body directly responsible for addressing homeless youth. The Council will work to:

- Decrease the duration and frequency of homelessness among youth.
- Develop and collect data on county-level and statewide numbers on youth homelessness.
- Coordinate efforts to prevent homelessness among youth who were involved in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems.
- Coordinate with young people experiencing homelessness, appropriate state entities and other stakeholders to inform policy, practices, and programs.

Uplift Youth Voice. To effectively incorporate, coordinate and engage youth with lived experience, their voice must be heard and listened to, and is critical to the long-term success of this initiative. The Council should convene listening sessions for youth and young adults across the state and take actionable steps as a result of their input.

Point In Time Counts. During January 2019, the next Point-In-Time count will take place during the last week of the month. The data collected through this process informs and drives federal funding awards that come into states from HUD. Encouraging local governments and Californians to engage in the process and direct resources to support the counts are critical.



Revenue Sources & Allocation. As Governor, California can make a commitment to end youth homelessness by investing resources in the 2019-20 Budget so that every community has programs for youth who are experiencing homelessness. This can be achieved by using Proposition 64's, Prevention, Early Intervention and Treatment Account Fund to support and expand additional programs and services for unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness. This is consistent with Revenue & Taxation Code Section 34015(f)(1)(C), which states, "grants to programs for outreach, education and treatment for homeless youth and out-of-school youth with substance use disorders." These funds should target the following services:

- Prevention and Early Intervention Support Services such as family support and reunification services, street and community outreach programs, and drop-in (open-access) centers. At least \$25 Million.
- Low Barrier and Diverse Housing Opportunities. Programs would include runaway and homeless youth shelters, homeless young adult shelters and homeless young adult housing programs. At least \$60 Million.
- Post-Housing and Follow-Up Services. At least \$15 Million.

Additionally, the Homeless Youth and Exploitation Pilot Program and the Homeless Youth Emergency Services and Housing Program must be changed from pilot programs and transition into permanent programs that are funded on an ongoing basis in the annual budget process.

Longer Term Actions

System-wide Approach. Prevent and end homelessness from public systems – foster care, juvenile justice and education – in order to better address the needs of young people and prevent them from entering homelessness.

- Provide additional resources to the Department of Education to expand services and trainings to McKinney-Vento homeless youth liaisons. Ensure that local educational agencies are dedicating adequate resources and staff to support the needs of homeless students.
- Expand the use of Cal Grants to support the cost of housing and food and eliminate the sunset on AB 801 to benefit youth experiencing homelessness in community college to continue to have access to priority enrollment.
- Ensure that child welfare agencies are working with former foster youth or youth aging out of foster care to gain access to affordable housing, such as a Family Unification Program, Housing Choice Voucher, which can be used for up to 36 months. This can be extremely useful for youth who were not in care on their 18th birthday and would otherwise not qualify for extended foster care. Due to the passage of the federal Family First Prevention Services Act, California should extend the Chafee Independent Living eligibility through age 23 and provide resources to support this program expansion as well as pilot a partnership with homeless youth providers and child welfare for a youth who would be "a candidate for foster care" to be provided services by the homeless youth provider.
- Increase the number of days a youth can stay in a runaway and homeless youth shelter beyond 21 consecutive days to 60 consecutive days to allow more time for a provider to work with youth on reunification or entry into foster care.
- Expand access to legal aid services in order to provide services to justice involved youth and reentry services for youth, who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, exiting juvenile justice facilities.



Sustainable Wages. Work with the California Workforce Development Board on implementation of the Breaking Barriers to Employment Initiative, which prioritizes youth as a population to serve (Unemployment Insurance Code Section 14034). In the 2018-19 budget, \$15 million was appropriated to kick off this program. Once available, utilize the program outcomes to identify additional opportunities to better serve youth experiencing homelessness and ensure the workforce system is actively working to address the needs of homeless youth.

Conclusion

Youth homelessness is unacceptable; no young person should have to choose between school and the streets or between meaningful work and the street economy. No young person should be sleeping on a city bus or camping on a sidewalk. It is imperative that California take action now to put an end to this crisis. Now is the time, and this Administration can make it happen.

About the California Coalition for Youth

The California Coalition for Youth (CCY) is a thirty-eight-year-old grassroots non-profit organization located in Sacramento that, as a statewide coalition, takes positions on and advocates for public policies, programs and services that empower and improve the lives of all California's youth ages 12-24, with a strong focus on disconnected, runaway and homeless youth. CCY represents several hundred youth and community agencies throughout California. Our coalition acts as a voice for youth and young adults by advocating for public policies, programs, and services that respect, empower, and protect the rights of all youth. Learn more at: www.calyouth.org

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