



Unaccompanied Youth FAST FACTS

Incidence of Youth Homelessness

- Approximately 1.6 million youths (7 %) ages 12 to 17 had run away from home and slept on the street in the past 12 months. (SAMHSA Office of Applied Studies, 2004)
- 7.6% of adolescents 12 to 17 years of age had spent at least one night in an emergency shelter, public place, abandoned building, or with a stranger during the previous year. (Ringwalt, Greene, Robertson, & and McPhetters, 1998)
- 2.8 million youth run away from their homes each year. (Greene J. , Ringwalt, Kelly, Iachan, & Cohen, 1995)
- 18- to 19-year-olds are 5%, or 22,000 to 44,000 of the homeless population on a single day, or about 80,000 to 170,000 over the course of the year. (Burt, Aron, & Lee, 2001)
- 20- to 24-year-olds are 7%, or 31,000 to 59,000, of the homeless population on a single day, or about 124,000 to 236,000 over the course of a year. (Burt, Aron, & Lee, 2001)

Demographic Characteristics

- Most runaway youth (68 %) were older teens, ages 15-17. (Hammer, Finklehor, & Sedlak, 2002)
- The average age at the first homeless episode is 14.7 years. (YouthCare, Inc., 1998)
- The majority of homeless youth are Caucasian, 57%. Black or African American youth comprise 27% and American Indian or Alaskan Natives make up 3%. (Office of Applied Studies, 2004)
- Black or African American youth, who comprise 15.4% of the US youth population, are disproportionately represented among homeless youth populations. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006)
- Available research suggests that between 20% to 40% of all homeless youth identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered (LGBT). (Ray, 2006)

Causal Factors

- The most common endangerment component of runaway and expelled youth is physical or sexual abuse at home in the year prior to the episode or being afraid of abuse upon return. The second most common endangerment was the youth's substance dependency. (Hammer, Finklehor, & Sedlak, 2002)
- Over 50% of youth in shelters and on the streets report that their parents told them to leave or knew they were leaving and did not care. (Greene J. , Ringwalt, Kelly, Iachan, & Cohen, 1995)



NN4Y Fast Facts: Unaccompanied Youth

- Results indicated that 51% left home because of being thrown out, 37% left because of their parents disapproval of their drug use, and 31% left home because of parental abuse. 47% indicated that they were sexually abused, with females reporting significantly higher rates than males. (Rew, Taylor-Seehafer, Thomas, & Yockey, 2001)

Abuse History

- 46% of runaway and homeless youth reported being physically abused, 17% reported being sexually exploited and 38% reported being emotionally abused. (Slavin, 2001)
- The prevalence of sexual abuse ranges from 21% to 70% in some studies. Abuse and trauma are further compounded by survival sex and other victimization. (YouthCare, Inc., 1998)
- According to YouthCare studies of a homeless youth sample, 33% had been in foster care, 51% had been physically abused, and 60% of girls and 23% of boys had been sexually abused. (YouthCare, Inc., 1998)
- In November 2002, the Department of Health and Human Services reported that between 21% and 40% of runaway youth had been sexually abused, compared to between 1% and 3% of the general youth population. (American Civil Liberties Union, 2003)
- Over 70% of runaway and throwaway youth in 2002 were estimated to be endangered based on 17 indicators of harm or potential risk. (Hammer, Finklehor, & Sedlak, 2002)

Mental Health

- 45% of homeless youth reported mental health problems in the past year. 50% to 56% of youth reported mental health problems over their lifetime. (Burt M. R., 2007, June 19)
- Two thirds of the youth in a sample conducted by YouthCare had diagnosable mental health issues based on the DSM III-R including Disruptive Behavior Disorder, Attention Deficit Disorder, Depressive Disorder, and Post Traumatic Stress. (YouthCare, Inc., 1998)
- About 50% of street youth have had a pregnancy experience compared to about 33% living in shelters. Less than 10% of household youth have had a pregnancy experience. (Greene & Ringwalt, 1998)
- Youths aged 12 to 17 who had run away from home in the past 12 months were more likely to have used alcohol, marijuana, or an illicit drug other than marijuana in the past year than youth who had not runaway. (Office of Applied Studies, 2004)



NN4Y Fast Facts: Unaccompanied Youth

Sexual Exploitation Experiences

- Runaway and homeless youth experience rape and assault rates 2 to 3 times higher than the general population of youth. (Robertson & Toro, 1998)
- 66% of males and 33% of females had been assaulted on the street, and 47% of the females had been sexually assaulted according to a sub-sample of homeless youth. (Cauce, et al., 1998)
- More than one third of homeless youth engage in survival sex. (Ray, 2006)
- 162,000 homeless youth are estimated to be victims of commercial sexual exploitation in the United States. (Estes & Weiner, 2001)

HIV and AIDS

- An estimated 16,859 to 27,600 runaway and homeless youth in the United States are currently HIV positive. (Rotheram-Borus, Song, Gwadz, Lee, Van Rossem, & Koopman, 2004)
- Runaway youth are 6 to 12 times more likely to become infected with HIV than other youth. (Rotheram-Borus, Song, Gwadz, Lee, Van Rossem, & Koopman, 2004)
- Homeless youth are 7 times as likely to die from AIDS and 16 times as likely to be diagnosed with HIV as the general youth population. (Ray, 2006)

Substance Abuse

- Homeless youth are 3 times more likely to use marijuana and 18 times more likely to use crack cocaine than non-homeless youth. (Ray, 2006)

Consequences

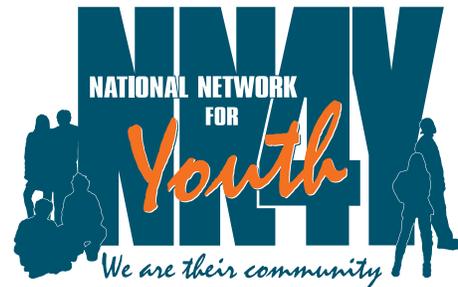
- A significant portion of homeless and runaway youth present in programs exhibit characteristics which are predictors of delinquent behavior, adult homelessness, addiction behaviors, and mental illness. In addition, they are subjected to cultures of violence in their families and on the streets. (Simkin P. , 2004)
- Youth living on their own are at a higher risk for anxiety disorders, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicide attempts and other health problems due to the enhanced exposure to violence. (HCH Clinicians' Network, 2000)



NN4Y Fast Facts: Unaccompanied Youth

National Network for Youth

The National Network for Youth (NN4Y), founded in 1974, is a nonprofit membership organization that champions the needs of runaway, homeless, and other disconnected youth through advocacy, innovation and member services. NN4Y provides its members and the general public education, networking, training, materials and policy advocacy with federal, state, and local lawmakers. NN4Y is committed to ensuring that opportunities for development and permanence be made available to youth who face greater odds due to abuse, neglect, exploitation, homelessness, lack of resources, community prejudice, differing abilities, barriers to learning, and other life challenges.



NN4Y's membership includes community-based, faith-based, and public organizations that provide an array of services to youth and families in the U.S. states and territories as well as some international locations. NN4Y's organization members provide the full gamut of preventive, interventive, and developmental supports to youth and families in high-risk situations, including street-based crisis intervention, emergency shelter, transitional and independent living arrangements, permanent housing, individual and family counseling, lifeskills, parenting, and health and wellness education, physical and mental health treatment and care, and education, workforce development, arts, and recreation services. Collectively, NN4Y member organizations serve over 2.5 million youth annually. In addition, youth, youth workers, and regional and state networks of youth-serving organizations belong to NN4Y.

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