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***Presentation to the Interim Study Committee on Missing and Homeless Children***

In Vanderburgh County, utilizing data from the Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation (grades k-12), we estimate 362 youth homeless with 218 of those youth couch surfing (no permanent residence). Although these numbers are not all-inclusive, they do give us a starting point from which to work.

Imagine being a 16 year old who is having difficulty with your parents. They have threatened to toss you out of the house. Now, imagine you don't have anywhere to go. What would you do? In Evansville, there are not many options. Evansville does not have a drop in center; there is no temporary shelter for teens – you must have your parent with you to go to the family shelters. You cannot get access to healthcare or dental care except by seeing the school nurse, if the school has one on site. And that is if you are consistently going to school.

The [Homeless Youth Council](#) in Evansville is charged with making recommendations for youth like the imagined story to the [Commission on Homelessness](#). Based on our six months of review and meetings, we are challenged to find resources to help these youth. We need help at the state level. We are interested in the state of Indiana (the legislature):

- Identifying additional federal dollars and/or grants for homeless youth and utilizing those dollars to serve the entire state;
- Identifying best practices based on research models for serving homeless youth and making that information available to our communities;
- Identifying services needed for youth placed in temporary, transitional housing; and
- Identifying strategies to reduce/prevent youth from becoming homeless, running away, being kicked out of their homes, etc.

What happens if we don't help these youth? Research shows that these youth are at higher risk for being victims of crime, not completing high school, and possibly substance abuse, and 50% of homeless adults were homeless in their youth. In order to prevent homelessness in adults, we would be wise to end homelessness in youth.

Cynthia Smith

*Healthy Families America/Indiana*  
*Indiana Family Social Service Admin*  
*Indiana Youth Services Association*  
*United Way of SW Indiana*

**PROMOTING POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND STRENGTHENING FAMILIES SINCE 1973**