

Summary of Recommendations of the Homeless Youth Council February, 2008

It became important in our discussions to understand and define the two populations of homeless youth: (1) youth in shelters with their families and (2) youth who are unaccompanied (without parents/family). We realized the importance of including youth who are no longer minors as part of our definition. Consequently, these recommendations primarily address unaccompanied youth and young adults between the ages of 13 and 23, further referred to as "youth."

PLAN for Outcomes – Using data to develop local outcomes to end youth homelessness

- Enter unaccompanied youth as separate individuals ("head of household") in the Hoosier Management Information System (HMIS) and increase the number of local youth-serving agencies sharing data on homeless youth with HMIS staff
- Create a housing risk assessment tool currently relevant to youth and useful to youth-serving agencies in discussing housing needs and options.

CLOSE the front door to youth homelessness

Family conflict and violence, foster care placement and involvement in the juvenile justice system have been cited as the three primary causes of youth homelessness. In addition, studies of families demonstrate a correlation in family housing stability and youth homelessness.

- Support and enrich existing community programs designed to strengthen parenting skills as well as raise awareness of and address abuse and neglect issues, increasing the coordination of these services as well. Expand them to serve in crisis intervention situations.
- Because stable family housing promotes healthier family dynamics and school attendance and because unstable housing has been cited as an indicator of future youth homelessness, we support the recommendations of *Destination: Home* regarding affordable housing.
- Members of the proposed Homeless Youth Coalition should work with the Discharge Planning Coalition in planning for youth aging out of the foster care system and those released from juvenile detention centers (locally and regionally) and child caring institutions.

OPEN the back door to leave youth homelessness

Evansville is the only city of significant size in the state of Indiana that does not have Drop-In Center or some form of emergency shelter for youth (13 to 17 year olds and 18 to 21 year olds). We recommend the development of a center that includes both outreach services and emergency shelter.

BUILD the infrastructure

- Develop permanent supportive housing for youth (ages 16 – 21) with intensive case management, and for older youth or young adults (those over 21) in accord with the principles of adult permanent supportive housing models.
- Increase coordination with our local WorkOne and youth-serving organizations that will result in improved access to educational opportunities and employment skills training.
- Increase access to information on federal programs that assist youth aging out of foster care
- Support the work being accomplished by the Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation through its McKinney-Vento grant through building partnerships that augment its work of providing supplemental services.
- Develop a public awareness campaign to be coordinated with the *Destination: Home* Awareness Team, including information designed specifically for youth who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness, social services agencies, the faith community, funders, businesses/employers, educators, legislators and other lawmakers, and the courts. As awareness is raised, avenues for concerned individuals/groups to take action through coordinated service delivery should be created and made known.

Accountability and Monitoring of Recommendations

We recommend that an ongoing Homeless Youth Coalition be formed to implement the Homeless Youth Council's recommendations and to report on progress to the Commission on Homelessness. This coalition would be made up of representatives of youth-serving organizations, funders, and other community leaders. Its charge is the development of three- and five-year goals and strategies for ending youth homelessness and serving those at risk of homelessness.

To view or download the Homeless Youth Council's recommendations in their entirety, visit
www.destination-home.info/hyc/recommendations.htm
or call Patty Avery at 465-7278 to request an e-mail or printed copy.