

# Homeless Youth Coalition

An illustration showing a person walking towards the right, with a hand reaching out from the bottom left towards the person's feet. The person is wearing a dark jacket and pants. The hand is a simple line drawing.

**addressing the needs of  
teens and young adults in our community  
who are homeless**



in connection with the city-county  
Commission on Homelessness,  
the oversight body of *Destination: Home*,  
the ten-year plan to end homelessness in Evansville and Vanderburgh County  
[www.destination-home.info/hyc.htm](http://www.destination-home.info/hyc.htm)

# Homeless Youth



## BUILD THE INFRASTRUCTURE

### HOUSING

**STRATEGY 5:** Develop Specialized Transitional Housing for Youth (18-23) and Victims of Domestic Violence.



Transitional Housing is traditionally designed to accommodate a smaller number of clients with increased support services and more privacy than an emergency shelter provides. The length of stay can extend up to two years. Support services include case management and skill development activities. As the name implies, clients best suited for transitional housing are those in some type of transition.

Traditionally, it was used to transition homeless individuals and families into permanent housing. However, we now know that some sub-populations of the homeless can be better served through Housing First and Supportive Housing models. The Task Force to End Homelessness has identified two sub-populations that we believe can benefit from transitional housing.

**"Scott," a participant in one of the focus groups for formerly homeless persons, stated, "Homelessness has changed from the hobo riding the rails or the county home. It's young people. I am not sure that a homeless shelter is a good place for them. It's like getting a degree in delinquency."**

**Young men and women often need specialized assistance in identifying their barriers to housing. As well, they often do not feel comfortable in shelters whose average population is much older. To successfully bridge homeless youth (ages 18 to 23) into permanent housing, specialized transitional housing will be developed where they are empowered to identify and address their educational, vocational, and social needs.**



### SERVICES

**STRATEGY 5:** Improve Access and Coordination of Services for Specialized Populations.

Many specialized services already exist that serve specific populations.

**Homeless youth are a special concern.**

The Task Force proposes to **investigate homeless youth issues by convening a meeting of all community stakeholders to increase awareness of existing services and develop ways to improve coordination of service.** We also propose to **assist in developing/monitoring youth programs** included within this plan.

We propose, as well, to **publicize the National Run-Away Switchboard** by acquiring information stickers about the service and working to place them in public pay phones, public transportation, youth serving agencies, and other community bulletin board settings.



## BUILD THE INFRASTRUCTURE (continued)

### **RAISING INCOMES**

**STRATEGY 4:** Address the Employment Needs of Offenders, Youth and the Currently "Unemployable."

The Community Discharge Plan referred to earlier in this report should address not only housing needs, but the means to maintain permanent housing – steady employment.

We propose to coordinate employment with the Community Discharge Plan ... We will work to create a climate in which employers who offer individuals an opportunity to succeed receive adequate funding and support for their efforts.



We recognize that the set of skills required to obtain and keep a job extend beyond vocational skills. **To help close the front door to homelessness for at-risk youth, we support the development of on-site independent living programs at area youth homes.**

**These programs will equip young individuals with the daily living skills and attitudes they will need to remain employed and develop ongoing job skills.**

The Task Force to End Homelessness learned of a **new approach to establishing employment history of ex-offenders, youth and the unemployable, known as "Transitional Jobs."** We will **investigate this program further** for effectiveness and compatibility with existing services in Evansville and Vanderburgh County, with an eye toward possible development of a similar program.



*“Although the cause for homelessness among youth vary greatly by individual, the underlying themes among these causes reveal a strong link between homelessness and broader social issues...”*

National Alliance to End Homelessness



## Destination: Home GLOSSARY

**Homeless Youth** – One who is under age 18 who meets the definition of homeless person. Per the Department of Education: (Governs Subtitle B - Education for Homeless Children and Youth funds - McKinney-Vento funds used by EVSC)

The term homeless "children and youths" —

(A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes —

- (i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
- (ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (within the meaning of section 103(a)(2)(C));
- (iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- (iv) migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).



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**Five Categories of homeless youth** have been identified, as defined by the National Network of Families and Youth Services

- Runaway Youth** Runaways are youth who have left a home environment and who, in theory, could go back home. Often they do return home fairly quickly. Many runaways are seen in shelters around the country.
- Throwaway Youth** These are the youth who have come from some stable living situations but have been thrown out for any number of reasons. There may be accompanied mental health issues and, commonly, substance abuse issues, or a combination that may result in parents just not knowing what to do other than to say "Get Out."
- Homeless Youth** These are youth who do not have a place to which they can return. They may have come from very dysfunctional family situations, or the family has dissolved, or living situations have been primarily in various placements group homes. These young people really are on the streets and lack places to which they might return.
- Systems Youth** Young people who have been in the child welfare system, who bounce out, who leave group homes, or leave placements. These are youth who end up on the streets because placements and foster care are not working. They often turn up in homeless youth and runaway programs.
- Street Youth** Sometimes referred to as homeless/street involved youth. They have been homeless so long that they have become quite involved in the street culture. They may be episodically homeless, going home for a while or being in placement for a short time, but they become used to street life and street culture. This is a tough population because of the substance abuse and risk behaviors that accompany street culture. Their life situations tend to be complicated, and access and availability of multiple services have an impact on the scope and length of time they remain on the street.



## Homeless Youth Data

*“Youth homelessness is disturbingly common. Although the prevalence of youth homelessness is difficult to measure, researchers estimate that about 5 to 7.7 percent of youth experience homelessness. With at least one million youth on the streets and in shelter—and thousands more leaving juvenile justice, mental health facilities, and leaving foster care systems—the problem of youth homelessness continues to grow.*

*“Everyone finds transitioning to adulthood difficult, but homeless adolescents have even greater obstacles to overcome. Stable housing linked with services are critical to helping homeless youth transition to adulthood.”*

(National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2007)

*“The precise number of homeless and runaway youth is unknown due to their residential mobility and overlap among the populations. Determining the number of these youth is further complicated by the lack of a standardized methodology for counting the population and inconsistent definitions of what it means to be homeless or a runaway. Estimates of the homeless youth population range from 52,000 to over one million. Estimates of runaway youth — including “throwaway” youth — are between 1 million and 1.7 million.”*

(Congressional Research Service, 2007)

## The Ten Essentials Your Community Needs to Prevent & End Youth Homelessness

The National Partnership to End Youth Homelessness\* has developed the following checklist as a guide to help communities identify the minimum requirements for an effective permanent solution to prevent and end youth homelessness.

The essentials are based on the National Alliance to End Homelessness Ten Essentials for Ending Homelessness in Your Community and the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness, which draws from over twenty years of research and experience with communities around the country. The essentials are slightly modified to respond to the unique housing and service needs of homeless youth. No essential is more important than another. All require participation from every sector of the community.

**Plan.** Your community has a set of strategies focused on ending youth homelessness. A wide range of players, such as government programs, elected officials, homeless providers, etc. have made funding and implementation commitments to these strategies.

**Data.** Your community has a homelessness management information system (HMIS) that can be analyzed to assess how long youth are homeless, what their needs are, what the causes of homelessness are, how people interact with mainstream systems of care, the effectiveness of interventions, and the number of homeless youth.

**Emergency Prevention.** Your community has in place an emergency homelessness prevention program that includes crisis counseling, family reunification services, rent assistance, and landlord intervention.

**Systems Prevention.** Mainstream programs, like child welfare, juvenile corrections, mental health, etc. that provide care and services to youth, consistently assess and respond to their housing needs. Discharge planning includes placement in stable housing for all young people being released from public institutions.

**Outreach.** Your community has an outreach and engagement system designed to reduce barriers and encourage homeless youth to enter appropriate housing linked with appropriate services.

**Youth Housing Continuum.** The youth shelter and transitional housing system in your community is organized to reduce or minimize the length of time youth remain homeless, and the number of times they become homeless. Outcome measures will be key to this effort. Your community has skilled housing search and housing placement services available for homeless youth and young adults who cannot be reunified with their families.

**Services.** When youth are housed, they have rapid access to funded services, and mainstream programs provide the bulk of these services. They should have direct access to public programs and services for health, mental health, substance use disorders, parenting classes, life skills training, etc. just as any member of the general public.

**Youth Development.** To better serve youth, agencies and providers engage youth in meaningful ways, shifting their role as a recipient of service to that of a leader and decision maker in program development, delivery and evaluation, organizational management, and advocacy.

**Permanent Housing.** Your community has a sufficient supply of permanent supportive housing to meet the needs of all chronically homeless youth. Your community is implementing a plan to fully address the permanent housing needs of extremely low-income young people.

**Income.** When it is necessary in order to obtain housing, your community assists homeless youth to secure enough income to afford rent, by rapidly linking them with employment and/or benefits. It also connects them to opportunities for increasing their incomes through educational and vocational programs.

\*The National Partnership to End Youth Homeless (NPEYH) is a consortium of the Child Welfare League of America, National Alliance to End Homelessness, National Foster Care Coalition, National League of Cities, National Network for Youth, & Volunteers of America.