



Minnesota Department of Human Services

Report and Recommendations for Homeless and Runaway Youth



Minnesota Department of Human Services
Family and Children's Services
April 2002

For information contact:
Minnesota Department of Human Services
444 Lafayette Road North
St. Paul, MN 55155-3832
651-297-1864
suzanne.m.guttsen@state.mn.us

Web site: www.dhs.state.mn.us/childint/programs/adolescent/default.htm

Table of Contents

	Page
Background.....	1
Assessment Process	3
Challenges and Barriers	12
Recommendations.....	13
Appendix.....	16

Background

The Minnesota Runaway and Homeless Youth Coalition (RHYC) was established in 1998. The Coalition, consisting primarily of youth program providers, was formed to address the unmet needs of homeless youth. The RHYC is a coalition of adults and youth committed to public policy reform to increase opportunities and resources for homeless and runaway youth in Minnesota. The goals of the coalition are to:

- provide services to help youth return to their families
- provide social, medical, educational, employment services and independent living skills training to prepare youth for healthy and successful adulthood when reunification with their family is not possible
- educate the public about the need for safe shelter and other housing options
- promote private and public action to increase investment in programs, services, shelter and housing options for runaway and homeless youth.

During the 2000 Legislative session, members of RHYC worked to enact the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. The act defined the subpopulations of homeless and runaway youth and set guidelines for a continuum of services for homeless youth.

The act received strong bipartisan support in the House and the Senate but the author withdrew the bill when a citizens group attached an unfriendly amendment. (A copy of the bill is included in the Appendix)

In the summer of 2000, the chair of the RHYC and the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) Commissioner and several of his senior management representatives met with interested legislators to discuss the proposed Runaway and Homeless Youth Act.

As a result of this meeting, DHS Adolescent Services staff was charged with bringing together a Statewide Planning Committee for Runaway and Homeless Youth. The committee would address the following tasks:

- develop recommendations to address the needs of runaway and homeless youth statewide
- improve coordination among state agencies
- assess state funding resources
- determine the best way to build upon the existing continuum of services for youth
- reflect the work of the RHYC in this report.

State agency representatives from the Department of Human Services; the Department of Corrections; the Department of Children, Families and Learning; the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency; members of the Interagency Task Force on Homelessness; the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless; the Runaway and Homeless Youth Coalition; representatives of the Juvenile Law Project and many other youth serving agencies formed the Statewide Planning Committee for Homeless and Runaway Youth. The committee began meeting in September of 2000.

This report outlines the assessments, findings and the recommendations of the Statewide Planning Committee for Runaway and Homeless Youth.

Assessment Process

Definitions

The purpose of this report is to address a population of young people who are homeless or at high risk of homelessness. Nearly 70 percent of homeless youth have experienced out-of-home placement. Virtually all of them have a history of running away from home or from out-of-home placements. About 42 percent of homeless youth report that they first left home due to conflict with their families, another 36 percent report they left because of abuse, neglect or their parent's abuse of drugs or alcohol.

The Department of Human Services, Adolescent Services Unit has developed a broad system of supports for youth. The youth served by DHS funded programs are:

- aged 14-18, in out-of-home care, and are preparing for emancipation
- minor parents who are eligible for either Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP)
- at risk of homelessness
- homeless or have run away from home or placement
- aged 10-18 and may be at risk of unplanned pregnancy or prostitution.

Most of the youth served through DHS programs have multiple risk factors and may access a range of services that meet their needs, including those provided by the Department of Corrections (DOC); the Department of Children, Families and Learning (CFL); and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH).

The Statewide Planning Committee and Department of Human Services staff used the definitions for runaway and homeless youth developed by the Minnesota Runaway and Homeless Youth Coalition in preparing this report. These definitions may not include all of the factors considered by government funding resources, courts or social services. These definitions are, however, appropriate for general use and education. State funded youth programs generally serve homeless youth ages 16-21 and runaway youth ages 12-18.

- **Youth at risk of homelessness** means a youth, aged 12-18, whose status or circumstances indicate a significant danger of being without a regular nighttime residence in the near future. This includes youth exiting out-of-home care before their 18th birthday; youth who were previously homeless; and youth whose parents or caregivers are or were previously homeless.
- **Runaway youth** means an unmarried youth under the age of 18 absent from the home of a parent or other lawful placement without the consent of their parent or lawful custodian.
- **Homeless youth** means a youth under the age of 21 who is without shelter where appropriate care and supervision are available; whose parent or guardian is *unwilling* or *unable* to provide shelter and care; or who lacks a regular nighttime residence.
- **Youth transitioning to self-sufficiency** means a youth living independently with community supports or after care services in stable community housing or exiting out-of-home care at age 18.
- **Unaccompanied youth** means a youth not in the care of a parent, family member or other adult caretaker. This term is commonly used to describe runaway or homeless youth.

The face of homeless youth in Minnesota

Amanda is a 15-year-old white youth of Hispanic origin that grew up in a two-parent blended family in Northern Minnesota. Her parents asked her to leave home because of her drug use and constant conflicts with her parents and stepbrother. She does not believe that she could or would ever move back home. Amanda says she has never been institutionalized, but does feel that she is chemically dependent and that her parents have drug and alcohol problems. An adult has approached Amanda to work in the sex industry, but she has refused. Amanda is currently attending school and working part time in a fast food restaurant. She is earning about \$400 a month. She has just moved into a youth transitional housing program. Her main need right now is to finish high school. She reports that both a youth worker and a social worker have helped her in the last year to get the services she needed.

Source: Wilder Survey of Homeless Youth, October 2000

The Process

The Statewide Planning Committee for Runaway and Homeless Youth began by identifying the continuum of services currently being funded by state agencies for unaccompanied youth. The committee developed charts and listings to identify program overlap, funding sources, and gaps in services.

The following surveys were used in the assessment process. The State of Minnesota Shelter Survey is an ongoing quarterly one-day count of people in shelter or transitional housing. The Wilder Survey of Homeless Youth is a state-wide survey, also a one-day count, that has been conducted every other year since 1994. This survey shows how the numbers and composition of homeless families, adults and homeless youth have changed. The Millennium Survey, March 2000, was conducted by the Youth Stakeholders Group of StreetWorks (a 12-agency collaborative street outreach program). Streetworks program staff assisted youth stakeholders in developing and publishing their report.

DHS staff conducted structured interviews with county social services staff from many areas of the state, providing a local perspective on services for adolescents.

Structured interviews were conducted with homeless youth at two different program sites. These interviews provided input from at-risk and homeless youth being served in community based programs.

Many other individuals from all parts of Minnesota contributed to this report, as well as:

- Minnesota Interagency Task Force on Homelessness
- Support for Emancipated Living Functionally (SELF) Advisory Committee composed of county social workers and providers, and
- Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless.

Wilder Research Center's October 2000 Survey of Homeless Youth, indicates that 662 youth under 17 are homeless each night and an additional 600 youth between 18 and 20 are homeless each night. In addition, the Minnesota Quarterly Shelter Survey indicates that approximately 6.5 percent of those sheltered on a single night are unaccompanied homeless youth under the age of 18.

- Slightly over half of homeless youth and about two-fifths of homeless young adults grew up in a single parent household.
- In the Twin Cities, 44 percent of homeless youth and 48 percent of homeless young adults are African American. In greater Minnesota, 32 percent of homeless youth and 26 percent of homeless young adults are American Indian. The numbers of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth and youth of color are over represented in the homeless population.
- Sixty-six percent of homeless youth and 62 percent of homeless young adults have experienced some type of out-of-home placement. About half of homeless youth report drug or alcohol problems within their immediate family.
- Compared to the general population, homeless youth are three times more likely to report they have been sexually or physically abused.
- About a third of homeless youth have been told by a doctor or a nurse within the last two years that they have a serious mental health problem, an increase from less than a quarter in the 1997 survey.
- Girls who are homeless are seven times more likely than the general population to have had at least one pregnancy.
- Eight percent of homeless youth have at least one child, 55 percent of young adult women (18-21) interviewed have at least one child and 25 percent of the young adult men interviewed have at least one child.
- The percentage of homeless youth enrolled in secondary schools increased from 52 percent in 1994, to 73 percent in 1997 and in 2000.
- On average, the survey shows that youth begin living on their own around age 13. This is slightly younger than reported in previous surveys.

Source: Wilder Survey of Homeless Youth, October 2000

Many runaway or homeless youth will become involved in illegal and dangerous activities in their efforts to survive. The Hofstedt Report on Juvenile Prostitution, 2000, points out that the biggest determining factor in juvenile prostitution is homelessness. The number of youth who participate in "survival sex" is increasing throughout the state (Wilder Survey). For example, young women continue to live with abusive partners because they have no where else to go and trade sexual favors for shelter, food and clothing.

What did the assessment process reveal about Minnesota's continuum of services for youth?

Grants to Community Providers

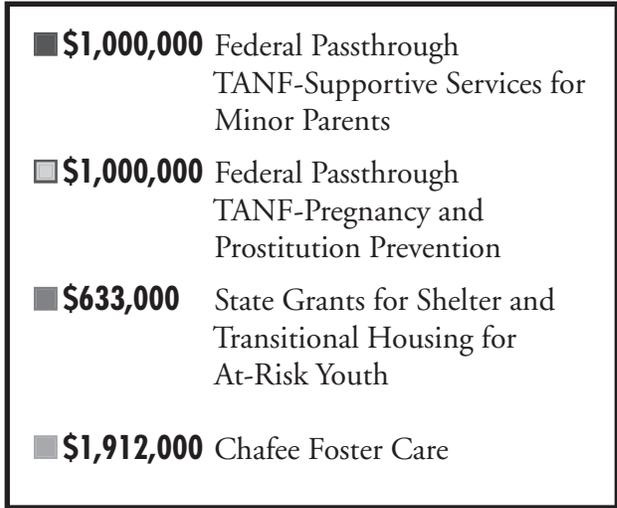
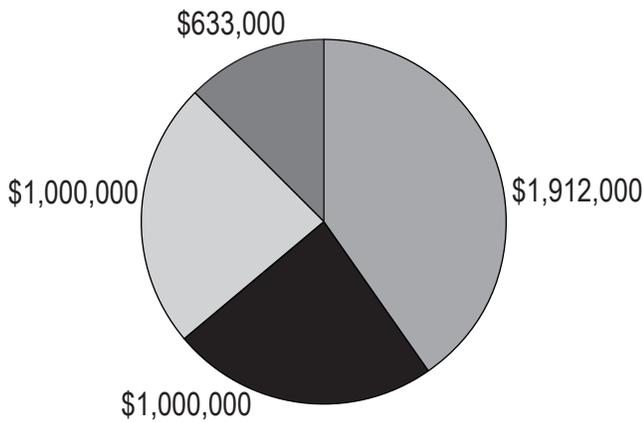
The Department of Children, Families and Learning (CFL) and DHS provide grant funds for about 60 emergency shelter beds for youth ages 16-21. There are another 15-20 funded by other sources throughout Minnesota. Youth access the shelters directly and do not need a referral. CFL and DHS also provide grant funds to nineteen programs that provide transitional housing or services for homeless youth. Some programs provide subsidized rent in local scattered sites, such as apartments, rooms, studios or group housing facilities along with independent living skills training and supportive services. Others provide services designed to prepare youth for the transition to independent living. Street outreach workers and shelter providers report that the number of available shelter and transitional housing beds are woefully inadequate. At least two or three youth are turned away for each youth sheltered. Nearly all of the transitional housing and services programs maintain waiting lists and report they cannot meet the needs of youth in their communities.

Programs for homeless or unaccompanied youth who are no longer in the social services system rarely receive per diem payments from counties. Programs for runaway or homeless youth receive grants from private funding sources, state departments, federal funding sources and sometimes contract with counties to provide specific services.

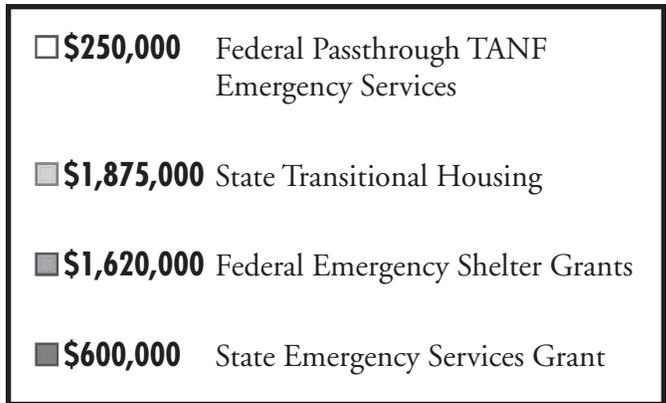
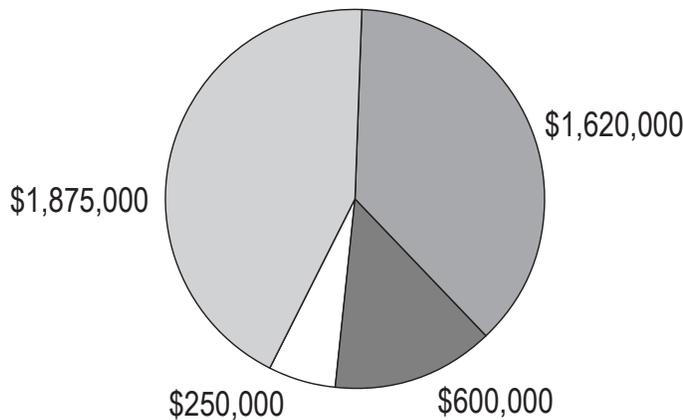
About 10 percent of CFL grant monies fund programs for youth. Other CFL grants are used to serve homeless families and single adults. DHS provides grant funds for shelter and transitional

programs that serve at-risk and unaccompanied homeless adolescents 14-21. About 60 percent of DHS funds are used to provide services for runaway and unaccompanied homeless youth. Grant funds for the two state agencies come from different resources and have different eligibility requirements.

DHS serves homeless youth



CFL serves homeless families, adults and youth



After responding to a structured interview conducted for this report, a young woman living in a Minneapolis Transitional Housing Program wrote:

*To whom it may concern:
I am a 17-year-old youth who lives at a homeless shelter for teens. I think that where I am living is nice but we need better living places for homeless youth. Bigger houses. More resources for homeless youth, as well as adults, but more for youth. It [Report and Recommendations for Homeless and Runaway Youth] should include nice clean homes, with everything working, plenty of food (it doesn't matter if it's donated). Transportation if needed; computers with web site for jobs so people can look at what kind of jobs they can get. That's what I think we [homeless youth] should have. All of these abandoned buildings around here could be made into homeless youth shelters and house agencies too. Thanks for understanding.*



Youth, who took part in structured interviews, reported that they were about 13 the first time they ran away from home. Some ran away as many as 15 to 20 times before they accessed shelter and transitional services. Despite these experiences, or perhaps because of them, the surveyed youth unanimously agreed that it was important to keep children and youth close to their families, homes and communities as long as the children were in a safe environment. Most of the youth surveyed ran from homes that were not safe. Some said they were “kicked out” by their families. At least a third of the youth reported that alcohol and drug treatment for their parents might have helped them stay at home.

When asked about the most important needs for youth who do not have a safe home with family or other caretakers to return to, youth responded:

- To have an adult in their life
- To have a safe and decent place to live
- To not be on the streets.

Other state resources

The Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) administers capital funding for shelter and transitional housing. Some of the facilities house adolescents.

Although the Department of Corrections (DOC) places adjudicated youth in various types of facilities, they do not currently provide transitional housing. DOC does have transitional counselors who assist in reintegrating youth to their home communities. The Red Wing Juvenile Corrections Center offers transitional classes and training that assists youth to reintegrate into their communities.

CFL Learner Options Division provides funding to school programs for educational assistance to homeless children and youth. CFL has also awarded capital grant funds to improve or expand program or school facilities for homeless students.

Costs for out-of-home placement

Federal, state and county funding is used to pay the out-of-home care costs for children up to the age of 21 who have been referred by county social services, the courts or local law enforcement. There are six categories of placement: child foster care, child group homes, correctional facilities, child shelter, child short-term treatment-based shelter, and child residential treatment.

A review of DHS Budgeting, Reporting and Accounting for Social Services (BRASS) records provided the following data on county social service agency share of costs for out-of-home care. Out-of-home care costs listed below include placement costs for children needing specialized care and costs for corrections placement.

DHS out-of-home placement data indicates that at any point in time approximately 52 percent of children in placement are 14-18 years of age. The Department of Corrections estimates that at least 80 percent of children in corrections placement are 14-18 years of age.

In 1998, the county share of costs for all out-of-home placements was about \$112 million.

- \$59 million of total costs were used to place adolescents ages 14-18.
- \$18 million of the total costs for adolescents paid for corrections placement.

In 1999, the county share of costs for all out-of-home placements was about \$117 million.

- \$70 million of total costs were used to place adolescents ages 14-18.
- \$22 million of the total costs for adolescents paid for corrections placement.

In 2000, the county share for all out-of-home placements was about \$114 million.

- \$60 million of total costs were used to place adolescents ages 14-18.
- \$27 million of the total costs for adolescent placements were for corrections placements.

Over the course of three years counties' costs for corrections placement increased by 50 percent while costs for *all* out-of-home placements increased 2 percent.

At-risk adolescents are clearly a concern for many counties in Minnesota. Although most of the large counties have programs to serve runaway and homeless youth, many counties report that housing and programs that prepare runaway, homeless and emancipating youth for independent living are an unmet need. County minor parent workers report that housing for minor parents is also a critical unmet need.

What's missing in the continuum of services?

Based on the assessment and input from other providers and agencies, the Statewide Planning Committee for the Homeless and Runaway Youth Report identified the following as the primary gaps in the continuum of services.

- All of the transitional housing programs serve minor parents; however, there are no emergency shelter programs for minor parents with children. Family shelters will sometimes accept a minor parent family when there is room. Existing youth shelters are licensed for 16-21 year olds and cannot house the younger children of minors.
- All of the shelter, drop-in, street outreach and transitional housing programs explore the possibility of youth returning home to parents or other family members. However, only two have funding for intensive family reunification services and ongoing support to runaway youth and their families.
- There is only one affordable, permanent

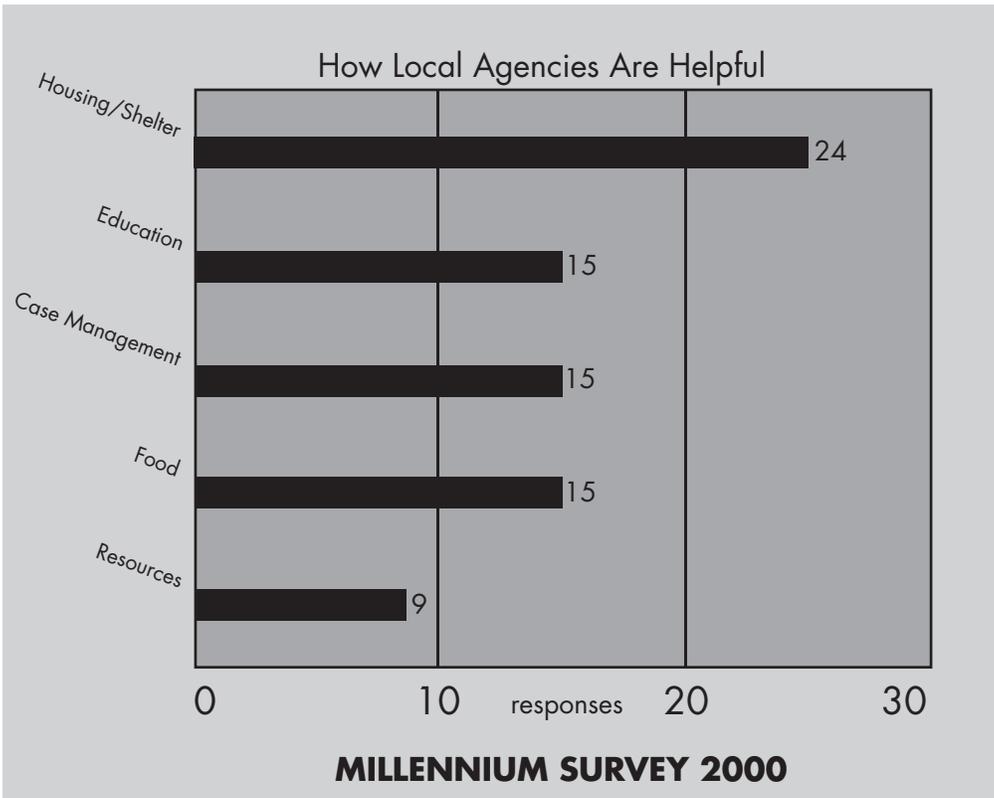
rental housing program for youth 16-21 in Minneapolis. This apartment building has 30 units. There are no other similar models in the state.

- There are only a few supportive or transitional housing opportunities for youth who are seriously emotionally disturbed (SED), chemically dependent, physically handicapped, and none for youth with a dual diagnosis of SED and chemical dependency.
- There are no appropriately supervised, structured transitional housing programs for youth exiting corrections.
- There is a growing need for specialized services for youth with mental health or chemical abuse issues, co-occurring disorders, learning disabilities, pregnant or parenting youth and refugee youth. Programs lack the resources and staff needed to provide appropriate services. As a result, it is very difficult for youth with special needs to successfully complete existing transitional programs.

- Homeless youth programs, local social service agencies and state programs serve minor refugees coming to Minnesota from all over the world. Children and youth of color are greatly over represented in social services and corrections placements and in the numbers of homeless youth reported by the Wilder Survey of Homeless Youth. In addition, providers report that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth are over represented in the populations of runaway and homeless youth. In the most recent survey, 45 percent of homeless youth were African American, Native African or American Indian, up from 31 percent in the 1998 survey.

The voices of homeless youth

Youth interviewed for the Millennium Survey by Wilder Research Center listed housing and shelter as major needs. Youth reported that their next major need was case management or “someone to talk to.” Interestingly, the youth listed contact with an understanding adult equally important to the need for food. Clearly, these youth want to have positive, accepting, adult involvement in their lives.



The *Streetworks Millennium Youth Survey* interviewed 181 youth and 30 youth responded to questions regarding help from local agencies. Of the 30 responses, 24 named housing and shelter as helpful, 15 education, 15 case management, 15 food and nine other resources.

What state efforts are working?

The activities of MHFA and the Interagency Task Force on Homelessness have received national recognition for their innovative approaches to preventing and ending homelessness in Minnesota. Minnesota Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Programs provide flexible funds to public and private agencies that help prevent homelessness in 52 counties.

The mission of the Minnesota Interagency Task Force on Homelessness (ITFH) is to coordinate state efforts to prevent, address and end family, individual and youth homelessness. Members of the task force include representatives of the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, Minnesota Departments of Human Services; Children, Families and Learning; Economic Security; Health; Corrections; and Veteran's Affairs.

The ITFH works to end homelessness in Minnesota by:

- assessing homelessness
- developing and evaluating statewide plans and strategies to guide the investment of state funds
- overcoming barriers to ending homelessness
- coordinating, distributing and effectively administering state resources
- providing assistance and information to public and private service providers
- maximizing resources to address homelessness.

The ITFH serves as an advisory board for Family Homeless and Assistance Prevention Programs. More than \$7 million in state and federal funds is administered by the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA). Although the Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Programs primarily serve homeless families, they are also required to identify and serve unaccompanied youth up to the age of 22.

The Adolescent Services Unit in the Family and Children's Services Division of the Department of Human Services is working to create a seamless combination of federal and state funding for prevention programming, crisis and reunification services, transitional housing, support services and independent living skills training.

In 2000, the Adolescent Unit was given the opportunity to combine funding from the following sources:

- increased federal IV-E-IL funding to provide independent living skills training and services to youth who have been in out-of-home care through the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of December, 1999
- flexible state homeless youth funds to pay for housing costs
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds allocated by the state legislature.

The Adolescent Services Unit implemented a plan to increase existing services, add service components and fund new programs with the combined funding to improve outcomes for Minnesota's youth.

When funding was allocated by the legislature for minor parent support services, members of the adolescent unit intensified efforts to reach low-income communities and populations with the highest need for services. Efforts were also made to streamline the grant making process and improve the cultural competency of services for adolescents. As a result, DHS was able to fund programs for minor parents, fund programs targeted to communities of color, provide street outreach to homeless Native American youth. DHS also targeted funding to those communities with the highest documented need for services; increased the numbers of youth served each year; lowered the eligibility age from 16 to 14 for independent living skills training; and significantly improved services for the growing numbers of runaway and homeless youth.

Challenges and barriers

Balance of Responsibility

The Statewide Planning Committee suggested that the public and the legislature need to learn more about the causes and effects of youth homelessness. Committee members and those interviewed found it difficult to engage communities when there is little recognition that homelessness exists and that many still believe homelessness is a chosen lifestyle. Recognition of the causes and effects of homelessness will help to achieve a balance of responsibility among family, community, county, state and the legislature for unaccompanied youth.

The committee agreed that current services for runaway and homeless youth are fragmented and suggested that in light of the current economy, families and communities as well as public and private agencies should share the responsibility for protecting the legal and human rights of children and youth.

- Adequate funding is needed for community based services to reunify families and help youth stay close to their homes. When funding is limited, counties must prioritize services for young children. Communities can be part of the process to support families with older children.
- Counties need sufficient financial and human resources to provide comprehensive protective services to children in all age groups and to provide ongoing services to youth exiting out-of-home care.
- Families need information and the support of community social services, neighbors, and faith based organizations during difficult or stressful times.

The perception of community agencies is that community, county and state programs should begin working together in the interest of children to ensure that services are accessible and well coordinated. Many people commented that youth accessing one system of service are not likely to access others. For example, young people who are adjudicated as delinquent are not likely to have a social services caseworker. Youth under the age of 18 accessing transitional housing through community non-profit agencies may not be considered for foster care or residential treatment. The committee agreed that

unaccompanied youth needed adult support to learn about and access services. The committee concluded that ongoing collaboration among public and private providers would lead to improved outcomes for adolescents and their families.

County staff interviewed thought that bringing together local housing providers, local housing agencies, county social workers, state consultants, private foundation representatives, corrections workers and community youth-serving agencies would help communities respond to the needs of runaway and homeless youth. Nearly all of the county representatives said they thought the state should take leadership in formulating a strategy to maximize existing local and government resources for runaway and homeless youth. They also agreed that providing technical assistance in multi-agency teams would help communities formulate strategies to address gaps in services for adolescents.

Housing options for youth

Minnesota has continued to move forward to build a continuum of shelter and transitional services for young people that will move them to independence. However, current shelter and transitional housing programs lack the capacity to meet the needs of homeless youth. Providers report that the lack of affordable housing is an enormous barrier for youth without an established rental or employment history. In addition, landlords often choose not to enter into leases with youth under the age of 25. It is extremely difficult to find affordable housing for youth leaving shelter and transitional programs. Youth who are parenting are eligible to apply for federally subsidized housing but there are very few available rental units. Many landlords will not accept government rent subsidies for Section 8 eligible tenants.

The Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) staff report that recidivism is common among youth that return from corrections placement to high risk living situations and unsafe neighborhoods. Existing transitional housing programs for youth do not have adequate supervision and security to serve youth who may be a threat to public safety or who may have ongoing mental health needs. The lack of supervised transitional programs with housing has been identified as a substantial gap in services for youth.

Recommendations

Facilitate dialogues

A series of Regional Dialogues should be facilitated by DHS and other stakeholder groups that would bring together youth representatives from state coalitions and organizations, child welfare officials, housing agencies and providers, county social workers, corrections workers, advocates and community partners. The Dialogues would offer an opportunity for communities to develop a plan that would:

- Improve outcomes for at-risk youth
- Provide services to help families keep their children at home
- Address fragmentation of services for at-risk youth
- Develop strategies to specifically meet the needs of local at-risk youth
- Identify and maximize local resources
- Initiate discussion to promote community awareness and community involvement
- Promote the consistency of policies and laws pertaining to at-risk youth
- Learn how to access state and federal resources and technical assistance
- Learn about housing resources, developing transitional housing programs and other options for older youth and minor parents
- Help county and state agencies plan for future initiatives
- Promote public education about the myths and realities of youth homelessness
- Promote the development of local early intervention services for adolescents and their families.

Improve coordination between state agencies

Committee members, state agency staff and grantee agencies that serve adolescents concluded that coordination between state agencies needed to improve. Some providers and county staff suggested that coordination at the state level could promote improved local coordination of services. The following are recommendations for improving coordination:

- Determine the feasibility of state and county social service agencies developing standard best practices in the provisions of shelter, housing and related supportive services for homeless children and youth including those for children who are accompanied by parents.

- Define a common definition and set of standards for case management.
- Promote the development of affordable housing statewide.
- Continue to participate in the activities of the Minnesota Interagency Task Force on Homelessness, Family Homeless and Assistance Programs and state and regional Continuum of Care planning committees.
- Share information to improve culturally equitable proposal rating, review and grant awards process.
- Combine similar data requirements, such as demographics and financial information on a common form for grantees/providers where possible.
- Coordinate distribution of funds, requests for proposals, rating and review process.
- Develop a separate shelter directory for youth programs (the current directory includes all populations).
- Develop a state training and technical assistance agenda that would provide leadership and support to county and community providers.

The planning committee discussed the possibility of merging funds used for housing programs or locating all of the adolescent grant contracts within one agency. However, funding resources have differing eligibility and service requirements. Federal resources for housing are different from federal resources for child welfare and combining the funds would be very difficult if indeed, possible. State agency staff and committee members felt that services for unaccompanied children and youth should be integrated with other child welfare programs such as foster care, independent living skills training, child protection and adoption services.

Increase access to culturally competent programs

Public and private agencies agreed that there is a need to improve access to culturally responsive services for children and families of color.

- Bring state agencies together to improve the grant making process, target funding to the communities with the highest needs.
- Identify and promote best practices for programs serving youth of color.

- Continue to explore options for combining funds for homeless youth programs.

State agencies have begun to address the disproportionate representation of children of color in foster care and in corrections placement through several new initiatives this biennium.

Enhance education

The committee felt that community agencies need more information about community resources, housing resources and state planning activities. Many community providers do not have all the information they need to work with county or other government agencies and are not always aware of the legal rights of adolescents.

As noted in the youth surveys conducted for this report and in the Wilder Survey of Youth Without Permanent Housing, the average age at which a child first runs away from home is about 13. Providers report that they are seeing more youth of this age on the streets and in drop-in programs. Since a goal of independence is not seen as appropriate for this age group, providers thought it important that services be offered that would focus on early intervention and keeping youth close to home. Services should include a broad range of services that involved family, communities, public and private agencies.

Thoughtful collaboration, cooperation and creativity involving families, communities, county social services, state and federal housing agencies, are key elements in developing a statewide response to youth homelessness.

In conclusion, DHS and the Statewide Planning Committee for Homeless and Runaway Youth wish to thank the following people for their time, expertise and valuable contributions to this report:

The Statewide Planning Group for Runaway and Homeless Youth

Michelle Basham, director
Project Foundation

Cheryl Byers, director
Evergreen House, Bemidji

Michael Dahl, director
Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless

Rachel Kincaid, director
Life House, Duluth

Senator Sheila Kiskaden
Minnesota State Senate

Patrick Leary, housing specialist
Department of Children, Families and Learning

Edward McBrayer, program manager
Project Off Streets

Rhonda McCall, housing program specialist
Minnesota Housing Finance Agency

Irene Opsahl, attorney
Juvenile Law Project

Susan Phillips, director
Lutheran Social Services
Safe House and Transitional Housing

Thomas Sawyer, director
The Bridge for Runaway Youth

Gabrielle Strong, director
Ain Dah Yung

Representative Kathy Tingelstad
Minnesota House of Representatives

Timothy B. Walsh, director of juvenile services,
Department of Corrections

Rich Wayman, director, StreetWorks

Department of Human Services Adolescent Unit staff

Suzanne Guttsen, program consultant
Claire Hill, program consultant
Erin Sullivan Sutton, assistant commissioner
Steve Vonderharr, supervisor

And a special thank you to...

Members of the Runaway and Homeless Youth
Coalition and the Minnesota Area Runaway Youth
Services Organization

and

Youth and county staff surveyed, for their insight and
contributions.

Appendix

H.F No. 2622, 1st Engrossment:

81st Legislative Session (1999-2000) Posted on Mar 7, 2000

- 1.1 A bill for an act
- 1.2 relating to homeless and runaway youth; requiring the
- 1.3 commissioner of human services to establish and
- 1.4 support a comprehensive initiative for homeless youth,
- 1.5 youth at risk of homelessness, and runaways to the
- 1.6 extent that funds exist or become available; providing
- 1.7 for street outreach and drop-in services, emergency
- 1.8 shelter services, and transitional living programs;
- 1.9 proposing coding for new law as Minnesota Statutes,
- 1.10 chapter 257B.
- 1.11 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:
- 1.12 Section 1. [257B.03] [DEFINITIONS.]
- 1.13 Subdivision 1. [APPLICATION.] The definitions in this
- 1.14 section apply to this chapter. Additionally, the terms
- 1.15 “homeless youth,” “youth at risk of homelessness,” and “runaway”
- 1.16 apply to any other statute or program addressing or serving
- 1.17 those populations unless defined differently therein, or unless
- 1.18 the context clearly indicates otherwise.
- 1.19 Subd. 2. [COMMISSIONER.] “Commissioner” means the
- 1.20 commissioner of human services.
- 1.21 Subd. 3. [HOMELESS YOUTH.] “Homeless youth” means a person
- 1.22 under the age of 21 years who is without shelter where
- 1.23 appropriate care and supervision are available, whose parent or
- 1.24 legal guardian is unable or unwilling to provide shelter and
- 1.25 care, or who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime
- 1.26 residence. The following are not fixed, regular, and adequate
- 1.27 nighttime residences:
- 1.28 (1) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter
- 2.1 designed to provide temporary living accommodations;
- 2.2 (2) an institution that provides a temporary residence for
- 2.3 individuals intended to be institutionalized;
- 2.4 (3) transitional housing; or
- 2.5 (4) a public or private place not designed for, nor
- 2.6 ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human
- 2.7 beings.
- 2.8 Homeless youth does not include persons incarcerated or
- 2.9 otherwise detained under federal or state law.
- 2.10 Subd. 4. [YOUTH AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS.] “Youth at risk

2.11 of homelessness” means persons under the age of 21 years whose
2.12 status or circumstances indicate a significant danger of
2.13 experiencing homelessness in the near future. Status or
2.14 circumstances that indicate a significant danger may include
2.15 youth exiting out-of-home placement, youth who were previously
2.16 homeless, youth whose parents or primary caregivers are or were
2.17 previously homeless, and runaways.
2.18 Subd. 5. [RUNAWAY.] “Runaway” means an unmarried child
2.19 under the age of 18 years who is absent from the home of a
2.20 parent or other lawful placement without the consent of the
2.21 parent, guardian, or lawful custodian.
2.22 Sec. 3. [257B.04] [HOMELESS AND RUNAWAY YOUTH INITIATIVE.]
2.23 Subdivision 1. The commissioner has responsibility for
2.24 developing a comprehensive initiative for homeless youth, youth
2.25 at risk of homelessness, and runaways. The commissioner shall
2.26 contract with organizations and public and private agencies that
2.27 provide street outreach, emergency shelter services,
2.28 transitional living services, or family reunification services
2.29 to provide services to such youth, to the extent that funds
2.30 exist or become available. The commissioner shall contract for
2.31 programs that ensure that voluntary services are provided to
2.32 homeless youth, youth at risk of homelessness, and runaways in
2.33 an appropriate and responsible manner.
2.34 Subd. 2. Nothing in this chapter relieves counties from
2.35 existing responsibilities to provide services for homeless
2.36 youth, youth at risk of homelessness, or runaways under section
3.1 626.556, chapter 256E, or other applicable laws.
3.2 Subd. 3. Nothing in this chapter is intended to preclude
3.3 homeless youth ages 18 to 21 from utilizing other services or
3.4 programs available for homeless adults.
3.5 Sec. 4. [257B.05] [STREET OUTREACH AND DROP-IN SERVICES.]
3.6 Street outreach and drop-in services programs under
3.7 contract must be able to locate, contact, and provide
3.8 information, referrals, and services to homeless youth, youth at
3.9 risk of homelessness, and runaways. Information, referrals, and
3.10 services provided may include, but are not limited to:
3.11 (1) family reunification services;
3.12 (2) assistance in obtaining temporary shelter;
3.13 (3) assistance in obtaining food, clothing, and medical care;
3.15 (4) counseling regarding violence, prostitution, substance
3.16 abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, and pregnancy;
3.17 (5) referrals to other agencies that provide support

3.18 services to homeless youth, youth at risk of homelessness, and
3.19 runaways;
3.20 (6) assistance with education, employment, and independent
3.21 living skills;
3.22 (7) follow-up and after-care services;
3.23 (8) specialized services for highly vulnerable runaways and
3.24 homeless youth, including teen parents, emotionally disturbed
3.25 and mentally ill youth, and youth involved in prostitution; and
3.26 (9) homelessness prevention.
3.27 Sec. 5. [257B.06] [EMERGENCY SHELTER SERVICES.]
3.28 Subdivision 1. [SCOPE.] Emergency shelter programs under
3.29 contract must provide homeless youth and runaways with referral
3.30 and walk-in access to emergency, short-term residential care.
3.31 The programs should provide homeless youth and runaways with
3.32 safe, dignified shelter and should help reunite runaways with
3.33 their parents or legal guardians when required or appropriate in
3.34 accordance with subdivision 3.
3.35 Subd. 2. [SERVICES PROVIDED.] The services provided at
3.36 emergency shelters may include, but are not limited to:
4.1 (1) family reunification services;
4.2 (2) individual, family, and group counseling;
4.3 (3) providing food;
4.4 (4) providing clothing;
4.5 (5) access to medical and dental care;
4.6 (6) education and employment services;
4.7 (7) recreation activities;
4.8 (8) advocacy and referral services;
4.9 (9) independent living skills training;
4.10 (10) after-care and follow-up services;
4.11 (11) transportation; and
4.12 (12) homelessness prevention.
4.13 Subd. 3. [PARENTAL AND LAW ENFORCEMENT NOTIFICATION.]
4.14 An emergency shelter and its agents, employees, and volunteers must
4.15 comply with court orders, section 626.556, chapter 260C, and all
4.16 other applicable laws. In any event, unless other legal
4.17 requirements require earlier or different notification or
4.18 actions, an emergency shelter must attempt to notify a runaway's
4.19 parent or legal guardian of the runaway's location and status
4.20 within 72 hours. The notification must include a description of
4.21 the runaway's physical and emotional condition and the
4.22 circumstances surrounding the runaway's admission to the
4.23 emergency shelter, unless there are compelling reasons not to
4.24 provide the parent or legal guardian with this information.

4.25 Compelling reasons may include circumstances in which the
4.26 runaway is or has been a victim of child abuse, neglect, sexual
4.27 exploitation, or abandonment.
4.28 Sec. 6. [257B.07] [TRANSITIONAL LIVING.]
4.29 Transitional living programs under contract must be able to
4.30 help homeless youth and youth at risk of homelessness find and
4.31 maintain safe, dignified housing. The programs should also
4.32 provide related supportive services, or should refer youth to
4.33 other organizations or agencies that provide such services. The
4.34 program should be available to an individual for up to 24
4.35 consecutive months. Services provided may include, but are not
4.36 limited to:
5.1 (1) education assessments and referrals to educational
5.2 programs;
5.3 (2) career planning, employment, and independent living
5.4 skills training;
5.5 (3) job placement;
5.6 (4) budgeting and money management;
5.7 (5) assistance in securing housing appropriate to needs and
5.8 income;
5.9 (6) counseling regarding violence, prostitution, substance
5.10 abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, and pregnancy;
5.11 (7) referral for medical services or chemical dependency
5.12 treatment;
5.13 (8) parenting skills;
5.14 (9) after-care and follow-up services; and
5.15 (10) homelessness prevention.



Minnesota Department of **Human Services**

www.dhs.state.mn.us/childint/default.htm

MS-1982-ENG 04/02