

Texas  
APPLESEED

**TNOYS**  
TEXAS NETWORK OF  
YOUTH SERVICES

# YOUNG AND HOMELESS IN TEXAS

February 2017

*Last year, Texas Appleseed and Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS) initiated a joint project focused on identifying systemic drivers of and solutions to youth homelessness. We will soon publish a policy report based on our research, data analysis and stakeholder interviews, including more than 100 interviews with young people across the state. We are excited to preview some early findings.*

## HOW MANY YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS IN TEXAS?

The difficulty of answering this question is rooted in the impulse of a young person who is homeless to hide, either because of stigma (many youth interviewed by Appleseed and TNOYS said they were embarrassed by their status as homeless) or fear of being returned to a home that they left because of abuse or other family problems.

The best numbers we have come from schools. According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA), school districts are trying to educate more than 111,000 homeless children and youth each year. Almost 16,000 of these homeless Texas youth are “unaccompanied” by any adult. As schools work to improve their identification efforts, the number of homeless students they identify has increased. Comparing the 2012-13 school year to the 2014-15 school year, the number of unaccompanied homeless youth identified by schools surged 33 percent.<sup>1</sup>



Texas school districts are trying to educate **more than 111,000 homeless children/youth** each year.

While “point in time counts,” including the recent Youth Count Texas,<sup>2</sup> report a much smaller number of unsheltered youth in Texas, because unsheltered minors tend to hide, point in time counts rarely identify many young people. While these surveys play an important role in understanding characteristics and needs of homeless youth, they should not be considered a reflection of the actual number of unsheltered young people in Texas.

The number of unaccompanied homeless youth...**surged 33%** from the 2012-13 school year to the 2014-15 school year.



## WHAT IS THE IMPACT?

The problem goes far beyond statistics. The odds of graduating and becoming productive members of society are stacked against these kids, exacting a huge cost on their futures and to their communities.

A recent University of Texas study estimates **25% of homeless youth (and another 25% of foster youth) are at high risk for human trafficking.**<sup>3</sup> In 2015, children as young as 13 were arrested for prostitution.<sup>4</sup> Over their lifetimes, these youth will cost taxpayers \$530 million.<sup>5</sup>

Texas Education Agency data shows **homeless youth are more likely to repeat a grade in school and five times more likely to drop out.**<sup>6</sup> Texas dropouts are estimated to cost the state more than \$9 billion over their lifetimes.<sup>7</sup>

**Homeless youth are more likely to have contact with the juvenile or criminal justice systems,** often for crimes associated with their lack of housing or housing instability, including “survival sex.”<sup>8</sup> The high costs associated with juvenile and criminal justice involvement and incarceration are recognized in Texas, the birthplace of the “smart on crime” movement.

## WHAT DRIVES YOUTH HOMELESSNESS?

There’s no single answer, but research consistently shows several drivers:

### FAMILY PROBLEMS

Youth Count Texas revealed that 19 percent of youth reported family problems led to their homelessness; another 15 percent reported having been kicked out by family. Almost 8 percent reported having run away from home and another 8 percent reported having been abandoned by a parent.<sup>9</sup>

- In 2015, more than 5,800 Texas youth under age 17, and more than 450 17-year-olds, were arrested for running away.<sup>10</sup>

### FOSTER CARE PROBLEMS

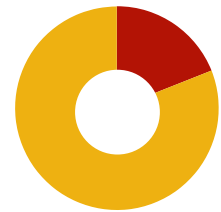
More than 10 percent of youth surveyed for Youth Count Texas indicated their homelessness was foster care or CPS related.<sup>11</sup>

- DFPS reports that in FY 2016, 1,068 youth ran away from a foster care placement. Of those found, it took an average of six weeks to locate the youth; 27 percent either are still missing or turned 18 while on runaway status.<sup>12</sup>
- 27 percent of Texas’ former foster youth report experiencing homelessness within three years of having aged out of the system.<sup>13</sup>

### RE-ENTRY FOLLOWING JUVENILE OR ADULT CRIMINAL JUSTICE INVOLVEMENT

A criminal record is a barrier to housing, even when the offense involved was a misdemeanor.

- Texas Juvenile Justice Department data shows that more than 100 youth could not be released to their home upon leaving a state secure facility because they had no physical residence; the agency was unable to locate the youth’s family; the family was unwilling to accept the youth, or parental rights had been terminated.<sup>14</sup>



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## WHAT SERVICES DO THESE YOUTH NEED?



### 1. YOUTH-SPECIFIC SHELTERS

Youth interviewed by Texas Appleseed and the Texas Network of Youth Services overwhelmingly report feeling unsafe in “adult” shelters. Youth-specific shelters are needed at an average daily cost of \$200/bed.<sup>15</sup>

### 2. TRANSITIONAL LIVING PROGRAMS

These programs offer housing as well as case management intended to get youth back on track and ready for independent living. Providers report an average cost of \$50 per day.

### 3. STREET OUTREACH & DROP-IN/DAY CENTERS

These services are needed for youth who are not ready to transition off the street or who face wait lists. The cost is roughly \$500 per youth.

### 4. COMPREHENSIVE CASE MANAGEMENT

This is for youth who may have temporary housing but need help stabilizing. Average cost is \$2,500 per youth.

## WHAT CAN WE DO?

One of the clear findings of the Youth Count Texas report was that more funding was needed to prevent youth homelessness and provide access to supports and services for youth who encounter homelessness. Our research supports the dire need for funding.

Texas’ primary source of state funding to address homelessness is the Homeless Housing and Service Program (HHSP) administered by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs. This program has provided \$30 million in funding since 2009 to cities with a population of 285,000 or higher, but less than 12% was spent on children 18 or younger. It appears that no HHSP dollars are directed to programs for unaccompanied youth.

To ensure homeless youth get the services they need to transition to successful adulthood and avoid the high costs of poor life outcomes, the Texas legislature should add \$3 million to the HHSP program. Such an additional allocation could support grants to each of HHSP’s eight urban areas totaling \$187,500 per year. These grants could have a huge impact, supporting:

- **15,000 nights in emergency shelters designed for youth or young adults.**
- **60,000 nights in transitional living programs.**
- **Street outreach and drop-in center services for 6,000 youth.**

This investment will avoid a much higher cost to Texas taxpayers down the road.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Data obtained from TEA through open records request and analyzed by Texas Appleseed.

<sup>2</sup> Narendorf, Sarah C., *Youth Homelessness in Texas: A report to fulfill the requirements of House Bill 679* (2016).

<sup>3</sup> The University of Texas at Austin (U.T. Austin), Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault, *Human Trafficking by the Numbers: The Initial Benchmark of Prevalence and Economic Impact for Texas* (2016).

<sup>4</sup> Data obtained from Texas Juvenile Justice Department through open records request.

<sup>5</sup> U.T. Austin, *supra* note 2.

<sup>6</sup> Data obtained from TEA through open records request and analyzed by Texas Appleseed.

<sup>7</sup> The Bush School of Government & Public Service, Texas A&M University, *The ABCD's of Texas Education: Assessing the Benefits and Costs of Reducing the Dropout Rate* (2009), available at <http://bush.tamu.edu/psaa/capstones/projects/2009/TheABCDs.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> More than 800 youth aged 17-24 were arrested for prostitution in 2015 according to Texas Department of Public Safety data.

<sup>9</sup> Narendorf, *supra* note 2, at 29.

<sup>10</sup> Texas Department of Public Safety, *The Texas Crime Report for 2015*, available at [http://www.dps.texas.gov/administration/crime\\_records/pages/crimestatistics.htm](http://www.dps.texas.gov/administration/crime_records/pages/crimestatistics.htm)

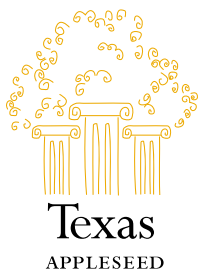
<sup>11</sup> Narendorf, *supra* note 2, at 29.

<sup>12</sup> Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Annual Runaway and Human Trafficking Report, Fiscal Year 2016, available at [http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About\\_DFPS/Reports\\_and\\_Presentations/CPS/documents/2016/human\\_trafficking\\_annual\\_report.pdf](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Reports_and_Presentations/CPS/documents/2016/human_trafficking_annual_report.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> National Youth in Transition Database, *Data Snapshot: Texas*, on file with author.

<sup>14</sup> Data obtained from TJJD through open records request.

<sup>15</sup> Average costs included here were reported to TNOYS by providers via survey.



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