

Youth Count!

Piloting Methods for Understanding Youth Homelessness

We do not yet have a thorough understanding of how many youth become homeless after being kicked out of their homes, running away, having negative experiences with the foster care system, or exiting jail and prison with nowhere to go. In fact, not many communities do. As part of this year's Point In Time Count, the Houston/Harris County Continuum of Care is one of nine communities working to pilot methods for more accurately counting and surveying unaccompanied youth who are homeless. Homeless teens and young adults have a unique set of challenges and needs, and understanding their needs is one of the first steps toward developing solutions.

We need your help! To participate in the Youth Count!, please contact Whitney (Fleming) Patterson, wpatterson@homelesshouston.org or 832-531-6001.

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness is supporting the efforts by hosting webinars by leaders in the homeless youth field including Eric Rice, Jama Shelton, and Martha Burt.

http://www.usich.gov/population/youth/a_framework_for_ending_youth_homelessness_2012/youth_count/

Taking the lead locally are representatives from the Texas Homeless Education Office, area school districts, Children's Protective Services, Harris County Protective Services, the County Attorney's Office, US Health and Human Services, UT School of Public Health and University of Houston Graduate School of Social Work, our local chapter of Funders Together, as well as homeless youth service providers, and is staffed by the Coalition for the Homeless. We are looking for youth who are currently or formerly homeless to help design and implement the process, as well as individual and agency volunteers who are able to conduct surveys.

The goal is to gain a better understanding of how many homeless youth there are in our community and their needs, as well as participating in a cross-site evaluation that will help inform new federal youth count requirements. As part of the federal goal for ending youth homelessness, agencies that span education, runaway and homeless youth services, and HUD plan to learn from the nine communities about challenges and successes in working across systems, survey and enumeration methods across geographic area types, and the experiences of youth who are homeless.