# Homeless Youth and the *Bring LA Home Campaign to End Homelessness*
Windyn Hines

## Contents:

Dedicated to Lola Marie and
future homeless young people

Thank you, also, to the Coordinating Council for Runaway and Homeless Youth for your patience and vision.

Thank you to Natalie for your companionship, understanding, and belief in me.

To my mom, Susan, brothers, Jarrett and Jonas, sister, Jeanne, and soul, Magen, as well as my surrogate family here in Los Angeles, Kathy, Irma, and Katy, I am forever indebted to you for your unconditional love and support. Thank you for allowing me to fail. I would be truly lost without you.

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Executive Summary

Homeless youth are a vibrant group of young people. They have complex needs and serious health issues, but with the correct approach, have the potential to develop into incredible human beings. By encouraging homeless youth to participate in decision-making and the creation of new programs, as well as fostering a positive and support relationship between homeless youth and the surrounding community, homeless young people can, in fact, realize their own potential and develop an orientation for the future.

In April of this year the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, along with the Los Angeles Coalition to End Hunger & Homelessness, released the *Bring LA Home Campaign to End Homelessness*. This 10-year campaign consists of over 200 recommendations for the City and County of Los Angeles. Phase I of the campaign makes a special commitment to creating affordable housing, as well as concentrates on three focuses: the chronically homeless, homeless families, and mainstream systems reform. Estimates of the cost of the plan range from a high of $12 billion to a low of 2.7 billion in affordable and supportive housing. The City contributed $50 million to supportive housing last year and just before the public release of the plan in April, the County invested $100 million on improved services for homeless on skid row.

Phase I of the campaign only slightly addresses homeless youth. In a rush to release the plan, the *Bring LA Home* executive committee decided to postpone youth-specific recommendations until July of this year. But Children's Hospital Los Angeles convened an ad hoc task force to create youth specific recommendations in December of 2005. They are thoughtful recommendations that recognize the many places homeless youth fall through cracks in the system. The recommendations advocate for developmentally appropriate services that match the needs of homeless youth, as well as agency coordination, and policy changes in order to provide homeless youth with a seamless system of care.

In interviews with professionals representing the *Bring LA Home* campaign and service providers for homeless youth throughout Los Angeles, everyone gave useful recommendations for improvements in the system, as well as programs, that could better serve Los Angeles' homeless youth populations. The professionals linked to the campaign knew well about the issues facing the homeless youth population. One-third of the service providers had not heard about the campaign.

Programs that work with homeless youth need to help young people build trust, reduce high-risk behavior, begin a process of healing, and become self-sufficient. The *Bring LA Home* campaign, as an advocate for change, has the opportunity to set precedent for innovative programs for homeless youth. They should create recommendations that encourage youth involvement in decision-making, as well as programs that foster a relationship between homeless youth and the surrounding community. These partnerships could help the community overcome stigmatizations about homeless youth. They could restore dignity to homeless youth through providing access to the many "natural" resources that exist in the community so that the young people can build the knowledge, skills, and support needed in order to grow into full human beings.

Introduction

> *In class we worked on the verb "to want."*
> *"How can we make a sentence with the verb to <u>want</u>?"*
> *"Windyn," Andre asked, "What do you <u>want</u> to do when you grow up?"*
> *I answered and then turned to my 19-year-old student, Sandy.*
> *"Sandy, what do you <u>want</u> to do when you grow up?"*
> *He smiled, shifted his weight and crossed one leg. He picked up his cigarette and drew a breath. Smoke escaped through his nervously smiling teeth. "Me?" He motioned to his chest, his head dropped. "I want to be useful."*
>
> <div align="right">-Sandy, Jakarta street youth</div>

At age 19, not yet knowing where he stands in life, only knowing that tonight he will again be sleeping on the street, Sandy makes a seemingly simple, yet hugely significant request. What, in fact, does the future hold for him? What future-orientation do homeless youth have to look forward to? James Baldwin, in his book <u>Notes of a Native Son</u>, writes, "...each generation is promised more than it will get: which creates in each generation, a furious, bewildered rage, the rage of people who cannot find solid ground beneath their feet,"[i] Homeless youth possess this fury; they scream this rage. The have no place to stand, no opportunity to exert agency, and no chance to be heard.

Adolescence is a difficult time in all young people's lives, but homeless youth additionally face familial abuse, rejection, and abandonment. Whether leaving home is a choice or a result of force, young people then find themselves lacking both familial and financial support in an unfamiliar world of violence, drugs, prostitution, and dramatic health risks. Operating on the edges of society, homeless youth quickly unlearn hopes of mainstream social acceptance. They become invisible, and more often criminal, to the passerby. Homeless youth are chewed up and spit out into the far reaches of the community to fend for themselves at a time when support and guidance are needed most.

With little dignity, little trust, and a stunted vision of the future, homeless youth have difficulty finding solid ground beneath their feet.

This is not to say that we should give up on homeless youth as lost cause. On the contrary, homeless youth are a vibrant group of young people from whom we have much to learn. Homeless youth take mainstream institutions and translate them into social orders that provide protection and survival in some of the most uninhabitable situations imaginable. But the reality of those uninhabitable situations ultimately proves problematic to the meaningful existence of homeless youth. At some point, we must address the plight that fuels these young people's rage. Programs must harness the creative energy displayed by homeless youth and use it in ways other than for the sole purpose of survival. Society needs to foster an environment that encourages and provides skills to homeless youth so that they can move past only trying to survival and create, for themselves, an orientation for the future.

Sanggar Anak Akar, a community of street youth in Jakarta, Indonesia, could operate as a working model for programs interested in the development of homeless youth into full human beings. The Sanggar community helps empower youth by encouraging them to express their strengths, by inviting them to take part in decision-making, and by drawing on the natural resources of the surrounding community. Los Angeles could benefit from a program that helps young homeless people find a place to stand, exert their agency, and make their voice heard. The *Bring LA Home Campaign to End Homelessness* could incorporate wording and examples into their youth-specific recommendations to advocate for more innovative programming and more creative support from Los Angeles' political will.

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Use-ful adj
1. capable of being put to use to serving some purpose;
2. having value or benefit, or bringing some advantage.
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In developing future-orientation, what else is more orienting than having a

*purpose*? Whether a young person's goal is to go to school, to create video games, to find

an apartment, or to simply "be useful," programs and people working with homeless

youth can help young people develop autonomy and self-sufficiency through the

development of trusting relationships, the reduction of high-risk activities, the process of

healing, and the fostering of empowerment.

Chapter 1) Literature Review

This chapter serves as an overview of some of the literature and research written about homeless youth since 1987.[ii] These scholars address some of the issues having to do with varying definitions of homeless youth, the multiple causes of youth homelessness, and the experiences young people face once they are on the street. In conclusion, local scholars comment on the homeless youth population specific to Los Angeles.

**Introduction**

Homeless youth are a unique and complex group of people who, for various reasons, end up living on the street where they suffer from serious physical and emotional problems. They are misunderstood and stigmatized, making it difficult to integrate back into mainstream institutions and society. In defining homeless youth, homeless young people are often mistaken with homeless children or thrown in the rankings of homeless adults. For instance, government legislation and language frequently groups homeless children and youth together. But this misinterpretation ignores the large differences between the two, further hindering the creation of policies that truly aim at remedying youth homelessness. What separates youth from other homeless populations is the age range of 12-24[1] years of age and the reality that, on the street, they are overwhelmingly alone. As result of being virtually alone, unaccompanied homeless youth have to survive on their own without many traditional social and financial supports. Homeless youth's

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[1] Homeless youth are categorized between ages 12 and 24 because after age 12, many young homeless people who are still united with their families on the street (especially males) are no longer allowed in the same shelters as their other family members. They officially leave the definition of "homeless child" and enter into "homeless youth." The age range is also consistent with what doctors and psychologists know about the stages of adolescence. In terms of policy restrictions, homeless youth, ages 18-24, loose many benefits and health/ housing services. Upon reaching age 25, homeless young adults become considered homeless adults (although some organizations recognize youth up to 25 and 26).

adolescence further compounds this lack of support. It is a time when all young people

enter a process of searching and growing. Adolescent young people, as well as adolescent

homeless young people, all struggle to find their place within their community and the

larger society. However, unaccompanied homeless youth live without the support that

leaves room for much of the freedom of exploration and growth that other non-homeless

youth are privileged to. They "live without the support of traditional societal structures,

such as family, school, church, and community institutions."[iii] Furthermore, little or no

shelters and housing options exist for the homeless youth population. Once on the street,

and without traditional support systems, youth find ways to survive in unconventional

and, oftentimes, uninhabitable locations. They live in places such as under bridges, on

rooftops, in abandoned buildings ("squats"), or doubled up in cheap hotels or a friend's

apartment. Situated between the cracks of society, homeless youth go largely unnoticed

and hidden from public view. On the street they are subject to victimization and

exploitation. They suffer from increased health risks resulting from activities such as

violence, survival sex, and drug use.

Defining Homeless Youth

The definition of homeless youth is far from universal. Internationally, homeless

youth are referred to as "street children." This definition includes youth up to age 18. The

population of street children is broken up into three categories: children "on" the street,

children "of" the street, and abandoned children. Children "on" the street "work during

the day and often return to their families at night. These children and youth may use

social resources such as school, church, and other community groups."[iv] According to the

Society for Adolescent Medicine (SAM), children "of" the street only have some ties to

their families. They "work and live on the streets."[v] The last group of street children is "truly abandoned, with no family ties,"[vi] and only constitutes a small percentage of the street youth population.

In the United States, no widely accepted definition of homeless youth exists. The Association for Children and Families (ACF) believes that "a diversity in definitions creates significant barriers [in] efforts to integrate and synthesize the literature."[vii] Definitions include youth varying from ages 12-21, and in some cases up to age 24. Homeless youth are usually broken up into several categories that relate to the ways in which the young person becomes homeless. The Society for Adolescent Medicine (SAM) categorizes homeless youth into four, overlapping subgroups: runaways, throwaways, street youth, and systems youth.

Runaway youth are thought to have left home because of "abuse, neglect, or serious conflicts"[viii] with parents. The National Center for Homeless Education defines runaways as "young people from the ages of 12 to 24 who have spent at least one night on the streets, in a public space (e.g. park), or in a shelter."[ix] The ACF extends the definition to include youth who have stayed in "unstable residences with friends or acquaintances."[x]

Throwaway youth have been asked to leave their home, have been restricted from returning home, or have been abandoned. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which is "the first comprehensive emergency aid program for America's homeless,"[xi] defines throwaway youth as "children and youth denied housing by their families."[xii] Throwaway youth are often subjected to "extreme levels of abuse or neglect."[xiii] They are also usually significantly older than runaways.

Assistant Program Specialist at the National Center for Homeless Education, Jan Moore, refers to street youth as any young person living indefinitely or intermittently in "high-risk, nontraditional locations" and who "engage[s] in activities such as sex or drug-trade or panhandling."[xiv] Street youth are "usually totally on their own for their survival and are frequent victims of the violence and numerous dangers of the streets."[xv]

Systems youth are young people exiting custodial care, such as foster care or juvenile justice systems. The National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) says that many of these systems youth "are neither sufficiently prepared to live independently, nor provided adequate aftercare services that will ensure a stable residential placement following discharge."[xvi] Systems youth can come from any government system, "such as juvenile justice and foster care."[xvii] Systems youth differ from other types of runaways because they "frequently have had no recent family contact,"[xviii] making it extra difficult for them to find support systems on which to fall back on.

Magnitude of the Problem

Estimates for this population vary as much as the multiple definitions used for homeless youth. The difference in numbers comes from the different ways in which homeless populations are counted and, particularly for homeless youth, the high rate of transience and often "hidden" populations existing beyond the service capacities. It is difficult to get a realistic count of homeless youth because while some studies have been discounted for only interviewing and counting youth who are in shelters ("Federally funded shelters are estimated to serve only 1 in 12 runaway youths."[xix]), other studies have been questioned because they are accused of only interviewing the "visible" homeless youth (only going to areas where they know homeless youth congregate).

The Society for Adolescent Medicine (SAM) found that worldwide there are anywhere from 30 million to 170 million street youth.[xx] In the United States in 1999, J. Greene et al found that, "nearly 1.7 million youth had a runaway/throwaway episode."[xxi] But estimates rise as high as 2.8 million youth over the course of a year in a report published by the Research Triangle Institute in 1995.[xxii] The numbers vary substantially due to the challenges of counting homeless youth due reasons as varied as the "hidden" nature of homeless youth, the varying definitions of who is actually a homeless youth and the different approaches to sampling.

In a national survey of adolescents conducted by Ringwalt et al, they "found that the prevalence of homeless adolescents between the ages of 12-17 is 7.6 percent."[xxiii] Of this 1.6 million homeless adolescents, "an estimated 200,000 are living on the streets."[xxiv] With similar numbers, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services writes: "Homelessness among youth in the U.S. is disturbingly common, with an estimated annual prevalence of at least 5 percent[xxv] for those ages 12 to 17, and adolescents appear to be at greater risk for literal homelessness than adults."[xxvi] The U.S. Conference of Mayors found that the prevalence rate of 5% is "a marked increase from 3% in 1998."[xxvii] On the other hand, the National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Throwaway Children (NISMART) found that "there is suggestive evidence that the runaway problem may have been smaller in 1999 than it was in 1988."[xxviii] But Andrea Witkin et al challenges this in a 2000 study where she found that the "number of homeless youth continues to grow exponentially, with about 2 million youth per year leaving home without parental permission."[xxix]

Jan Moore from the National Center for Homeless Education pointed out that regardless of the estimates used, "It is accepted that homelessness among youth is substantial and widespread throughout the nation."[xxx]

**Demographics**

<u>Age</u>

The Society of Adolescent Medicine's (SAM) position paper on the "Health and Health Needs of Homeless and Runaway Youth," found that the median age for homeless youth is 14-16 years old. Younger youth may not be on the street for as long as older youth because they "are more often reported by parents or police,"[xxxi] and have higher rates of family reunification. Older youth struggle with receiving services because many federally funded programs will not accept youth over age 18. This is a problem in foster care because many young people are forced out at age 18, unprepared to live completely independently. The National Alliance to End Homelessness found that "25 percent of the [foster] youth were homeless at least one night."[xxxii] Age is also a barrier for homeless youth in need of federal benefits such as Medicaid. Organizations that work with older populations of homeless youth must find funding sources and interim benefits for the youth who do not fit into the strict age requirements set by federal funding.

<u>**Gender**</u>

The research conducted by James A. Farrow M.D. et al through the Society for Adolescent Medicine (SAM) found a fairly even gender distribution among runaways. Male and female homeless youth come to the street for different reasons and have very different experiences once there. In 2003, the National Network for Youth reported, "most homeless youth living on the streets are boys. Boys are more likely to be kicked

out and girls are more likely to run away."[xxxiii] On the street, both male and female homeless youth are subject to danger and violence, but female homeless youth are often more susceptible to sexual violence, while males are more likely to be physically assaulted.

**Racial and Ethnic Makeup**

While there is a fair amount of traveling between cities by homeless youth, the Society for Adolescent Medicine (SAM) found that "most runaways come from within a 50-mile radius"[xxxiv] of where they receive services or live on the street. They concluded that the racial make-up of the homeless youth population reflects the particular surrounding community.

**Sexual Orientation**

Family conflicts over a young person's sexual orientation can lead youth to runaway or parents to throw them out. Joseph Truong, of the National Youth Advocacy Coalition (NYAC), states, "26% of gay adolescent males were forced to leave home as a result of their sexual identity.[xxxv] Marjorie J. Robertson and Paul A. Toro write, "3 to 10 percent of [homeless] youth have reported their sexual orientation as gay, lesbian or bisexual."[xxxvi] Although some statistics show estimates as high as 25-35%,[xxxvii] Robertson and Toro believe that these higher estimates are due to incorrect sampling and that the percentage of homeless youth who are gay, lesbian or bisexual are consistent with the national model of about 10 percent.[xxxviii]

On the street, gender orientation is often fluid. Survival comes before gender definitions and homeless youth can, and do, take on many different gender roles and

sexual orientations. Sexual preference, along with survival and companionship, lead many homeless youth to experiment both with same and opposite sex relationships.

## **Length**

The amount of time a young person spends on the street is an important factor in determining the status of a young person's homelessness because it overwhelmingly compounds the severity of the experience. The longer a young person is on the street, the more likely they will participate in risky behaviors and/or be subject to victimization and exploitation.

The length a young person spends on the street differs greatly depending on whether or not they stayed in a shelter, as opposed to the streets. Jan Moore, from the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE), points out that "for those living in shelters, the average length of homelessness was four months…but the average length for those on the streets was three years."[xxxix] Homeless youth who live in shelters are less likely to participate, or be victim of, risky behaviors and are more likely to reunite with their families. The longer a young person stays on the street, the less likely they will access shelter services. In the more "hidden" areas of the community, youth are at substantially greater risk of poor health, other heath risks, victimization, and exploitation.

A study conducted between 1993 and 1994 by Shelter Partnership, Inc. found the following statistics for the lengths of time certain percentages of youth stay on the street.

- 20% homeless less than 2 months,
- 20% homeless for 2 months,
- 50% homeless for longer than a year.[xl]

Researchers have hypothesized that a window of opportunity exists for intervening with newly homeless youth who have recently left home for the first time. Therefore, estimating the length of one's homelessness can shed light onto the severity of an individual's experience and help service providers provide the correct care.[xli]

<u>Education</u>

*"It's hard to wake up for school when you don't have an alarm clock on the roof you are sleeping on." –Shannon, Albuquerque homeless youth*

Education is "a strong predictor of the ability to overcome poverty and become independent; without education, homeless children may never have the opportunity to acquire many critical life skills."[xlii] Cauce, et al. shows that "up to three-quarters of older homeless youths drop out of school."[xliii] In an important study conducted by Lindsey and Williams in 2002, they found that "formerly homeless youth reported that leaving school was a turning point in their lives and that their situation worsened afterward."[xliv]

Causes of Youth Homelessness

Concern over the issue of homelessness began in the mid-80s, when the mostly older-male homeless population in America began to change. Now, at a time when Los Angeles' Police Chief, Bill Bratton, calls L.A.'s skid row "the worst situation in America,"[xlv] we see that the demographics of the homeless population are dramatically different. Not only has the population grown, but women and children overwhelmingly represent the growing population of homeless persons. The homeless population is now largely made up of formerly working-class Americans. The author, Matthew Kraljic writes: "A significant number of today's homeless are in fact former members of the middle class who have become economically disenfranchised by shifts in the American workplace and its financial institutions"[xlvi]

The cause of homelessness today is due to huge losses in affordable housing, with 2.2 million low-rent apartment units vanishing from the market between 1973 and 1993, while the demand for such units increased by 4.7 million renters. Author Bruce Burleson continues: "In just two short years between 1993 and 1995, the supply of low cost units decreased by another 900,000."[xlvii] Poverty associated with a changing labor market and shift to low-paying jobs causes homelessness, as well. The contraction of the urban economy due to urban sprawl and the globalization of the economy formed low-wage, service jobs, with little or no benefits, for a surplus of workers. "Between 1973 and 1993, real income decreased by some 20 percent. In 1996, 36.5 million Americans lived in poverty, up some 43% from the 1970 figure of 25.4 million."[xlviii] Burleson writes that "in the average state a minimum wage worker would have to work 83 hours a week in order to afford a two-bedroom apartment at 30 percent of her or his income."[xlix] Cuts in public assistance and a lack of access to affordable health care are huge contributing factors to the increase and change in the homeless population. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, initiated a "welfare to work" program as well as a 5-year lifetime limit on collecting welfare benefits. The Act cut public assistance drastically by presupposing that families were perpetrators of the welfare system rather than victims of poverty. Gaps in healthcare compound cuts in public assistance, with almost 46 million Americans without health insurance coverage and 8.5 million children without healthcare at all.[1]

Where Youth Come In

The causes of homelessness in the general population—the loss of affordable housing, the changing labor markets, the shift to low-paying jobs, the cuts in public

assistance, and a lack of access to affordable health care—are not beyond the realm of homeless youth and actually affect them in dramatic ways. Although estimates of homeless youth have not been the most accurate, ranging anywhere from 750,000[li] to 2.8 million, and have not been collected for as long as estimates on adult homeless populations, research points to an increase in the homeless youth population. In 1998, Ringwalt et al conducted research where they found the annual prevalence of youth homelessness to be 7.6 percent. While there are obvious reasons housing pressures, changing job opportunities, lack of benefits, and lack of health care affect homeless youth, it is just as important to recognize the indirect consequences of these structural changes. These changes jeopardize family health because they put pressures on resources and create family conflict. For example, the changes in the workforce puts pressure on family income and could create conflict in the home. Additionally, families without health care do not have access to services such as counseling and mental illness treatment that might aid, or even abate, family conflict. As well, young people suffering from abuse do not have access to the necessary avenues through which they could stop or heal from the abuse.

The causes of youth homelessness are tremendously difficult and devastating. The situations young people find themselves in are so severe that the young person is forced to make a choice between staying at home or moving into a potentially dangerous situation on the streets. The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) groups the causes into three overlapping categories: family problems, economic problems, and residential instability.

Family problems are some of the most devastating experiences homeless young people face, with 65% of youth saying parental relations were the main reason for running.[lii] Extreme physical, sexual, and/or psychological abuse, as well as neglect, alter the young person's view of what is acceptable parental behavior, make it hard for young people to trust adults, and encourage the development of mental and behavioral disabilities. In a study conducted in 2000, Bao et al found a "clear relationship between physical and sexual abuse of youth and their subsequent homelessness."[liii] The Administration for Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) found that "60%-75% of runaways report serious physical abuse, and the prevalence of sexual abuse, especially among women, is even higher."[liv] As a result of abuse and rejection, Fleisher (1995) says youth "develop a defensive, fear based belief that people cannot be trusted and will not help them."[lv] Parental substance abuse is another cause of youth homelessness and could be connected to later youth drug use. Homeless youth also report experiences of reoccurring arguments and parental control issues and conflict over sexual orientation, sexual activity, or pregnancy.

Youth homelessness is caused by economic problems and residential instability, as well. In some cases, monthly expenses for families are so high that parents must ask their children to leave. Economic instability is related to residential instability because for many families wages do not rise at the same rate as property costs. Families cannot afford housing prices and suffer from displacement. Once evicted, they have difficulty re-entering the housing market and end up living doubled-up (temporarily staying with family or friends). Wright et al. describes this moment as "a stage of residential instability" which often precedes homelessness.[lvi]

Public custodial care programs produce homeless youth because young people are not ready to live independently upon discharge. Upon release, foster youth loose many supportive contacts and have trouble living independently. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) writes, "those leaving care to live on their own rarely have anyone to turn to for help during difficult times."[lvii] In a report conducted by the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, they found that "In the United States an estimated 25% of former foster youth are homeless within 2-4 years of emancipation."[lviii]

Experiences and Challenges Faced on the Street

On the street, homeless youth experience an intensified risk of health and safety problems. "Every year assault, illness, and suicide claim the lives of approximately 5,000 runaway and homeless youth."[lix] Risks result from activities youth participate in order to survive such as survival sex and drug use. They also result from dangers that come from living on the street, such as victimization, exploitation, and violence. Risks compound and complicate when youth live in conditions of irregular diet, sleep, and exposure to the elements. These conditions serve to exacerbate pre-existing physical and mental health problems. Jan Moore, from the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE), writes, "homelessness…can interrupt normal socialization and education, which likely affects a young person's future ability to live independently."[lx]

Survival Sex

Homeless youth commit a number of "survival crimes," (crimes committed in order to secure food, shelter, or clothing), that greatly threaten their physical and mental health. They range from breaking-and-entering, mugging, to survival sex. According to Greene et al, survival sex is "the selling of sex to meet subsistence needs."[lxi] Survival

sex, of which an estimated 45% of the street youth population engages in,[lxii] puts youth at high-risk for contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS, as well as becoming pregnant. "It is estimated that as many as 4% of the runaway or homeless youth population are currently HIV infected."[lxiii]  Halcon and Lifson report, "over half of homeless adolescent females report having been pregnant at least once, with more than half with two or more pregnancies."[lxiv] Further exasperating the problem, Linda Weinreb discovered that "homeless infants are 4 times more likely to require special care at birth than other infants."[lxv]

Survival sex is directly connected to many physical health problems, as well as mental health, and substance abuse problems. Oftentimes, unsafe sexual activities cause direct physical health problems, while the more complicated effects of living on the street, in combination with a young person's history of abuse, cause serious mental health issues.

Substance Abuse

In order to survive on the street, some homeless young people use drugs in an effort to mute-out bad experiences and harsh environments, or as a way to self-medicate for mental illnesses. Milburn Rotheram-Borus, Ph.D. found that "of homeless youth who have been on the streets for six months or more, 72% use drugs as a coping mechanism."[lxvi]

Substance abuse greatly increases the risk of HIV/AIDS and other STIs because of needle sharing and increased sexual activity. The Children's Defense Fund found that "57% of homeless youth reported being high during their last sexual encounter with a partner other than their main partner; i.e. someone they rely on for economic survival. In

fact, 25% were high during last sexual encounter with main partner."[lxvii] This behavior

puts homeless youth at an even higher risk for HIV/AIDS than before.

## Overall Health

The lack of basic health care services puts homeless young people at risk of

numerous health problems. With limited access to care, young people rely on emergency

room care, which becomes expensive for them and the public. Their physical health

problems include:

-"malnutrition,
-immunization delay,
-complicated upper respiratory tract infections,
-gastrointestinal problems,
-developmental delay,"[lxviii]
-head lice,
-teeth problems,
-suicide, and
-homicide.

Garfein et al. found that "homeless youth are at higher risk of contracting

infectious diseases such as diabetes, hepatitis, and HIV…and skin and respiratory

diseases contracted while living on the streets or in shelters."[lxix]

## Mental health

Homeless youth suffer from "high rates of psychological symptoms such as

depression, anxiety, conduct disorders, post-traumatic stress, poor school adjustment,

delinquent acting out, and aggressive behaviors."[lxx] The National Center for Homeless

Education (NCHE) found that out of the homeless youth population, "up to 24% of males

and 16% of females could have PTSD [post traumatic stress syndrome]."[lxxi] On the street,

homeless youth face traumatic experiences that cause mental health problems, sometimes

as severe as PTSD. Due to feelings of rejection and abandonment, homeless youth suffer from extreme loneliness and hopelessness, as well. "Among the most common and most serious of problems of youth homelessness is low self-esteem."[lxxii] The website for My Friend's Place, a local drop-in center in Hollywood, has the following statistics:

-Major depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and conduct disorder are found to be three times higher in runaway youth than in youth who have not left home.[lxxiii]
-The number of homeless youth diagnosed as learning disabled is double the rate of other children.[lxxiv]
-Of homeless youth who have been on the streets for six months or more, 35% have attempted suicide.[lxxv]

Social Interactions

While on the street, homeless youth form distinct social groups. These groups can have both positive and negative influences on individual young people. They play a very important role in the lives of homeless youth because each group provides young people with a form of protection, as well as a way to survive on the streets. The specific groups often take on the role of a surrogate family for the homeless young person. Jan Moore, from the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE), wrote that "those without a network of support reported more current illicit drug use, multiple sex partners, and survival sex, suggesting there is a protective effect of a network."[lxxvi]

To provide an example, a report from Children's Hospital gives a detailed description of some of the "subcultural street groups" that exist in Los Angeles. They are listed below:

"Most of the street-acculturated youth were affiliated with one of five street groups: (a) *punks or skinheads,* characterized by their antiestablishment attitudes and opinions and physical appearance (e.g., multicolored hair or shaved heads, multiple piercings); (b) *hustlers,* characterized by their involvement in survival sex or prostitution; (c) *druggies,* characterized by their use, including injecting, dealing, and sharing of drugs; (d) *gang members,* or youth who are members of a gang; and (e) *loners,* or youth who reportedly do not affiliate with other groups or are rejected by groups because of their inability to conform to group norms or rules. Loners were also described as having more serious mental health problems."[lxxvii]

Negative effects include peer pressure to participate in risky behavior. Bao et al found that "peer support reduces depression, but may also increase peer pressure toward deviant behavior [such as drug use or participation in criminal activities]. This behavior may then lead to depression that counteracts the beneficial effects of their social support."[lxxviii]

Landmark Legislation

In 1974, the federal government enacted the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) called for the creation of three programs, each with their own individual responsibilities. They were:

-The Basic Center Program, which provides financial assistance to meet immediate needs.

-The Transitional Living Program, which supports residential services for 16- to 21-year-old for up to 18 months.[2]

-The Street Outreach Program, which funds private, nonprofit agencies' efforts to help runaway and homeless youth transition off the streets.[lxxix]

The National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) created a chart of past appropriations, as well as funding requests for FY 2007. It is listed below:[lxxx]

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[2] The National Collaboration for Youth found that "the average cost of serving a youth in a Transitional Living Program is $8,348.00 per year – a mere fraction of the public dollars spent on housing youth in costly corrections systems."

| Program | FY 2003 Enacted | FY 2004 Enacted | FY 2005 Enacted | FY 2006 Enacted | FY 2007 President's Request | NAEH FY 2007 Request |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| RHYA Consolidated | 89.978 million | 89.431 million | 88.724 million | 87.837 million | 87.837 million | **120 million** |
| -Transitional Living | 40.5 million | 40.260 million | 39.942 million | 39.539 million | 39.539 million | 68 million |
| - Basic Centers | 49.4 million | 49.171 million | 48.782 million | 48.298 million | 48.298 million | 52 million |
| RHYA Street Outreach | 15.4 million | 15.302 million | 15.178 million | 15.027 million | 15.027 million | **20 million** |
| Total | 105.378 million | 104.733 million | 103.902 million | 102.864 million | 102.864 million | 140 million |

In 1986, as part of the Homeless Persons' Survival Act, the Homeless Eligibility Clarification Act, "removed permanent address requirements and other barriers to existing programs such as Supplemental Security Income, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Veterans Benefits, Food Stamps, and Medicaid." [lxxxi]

Before 1987, the atmosphere for homeless individuals and families was much different. A lot changed in the terms of rights for homeless people with the passage of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987. The Act remains the only "major federal legislative response to homelessness."[lxxxii] It includes fifteen programs offering different services to homeless people, including the rights of homeless children and youth to an equal education. In the beginning "congress authorized just over $1 billion in expenditures for McKinney Act programs for 1987 and 1988; however, a total $712 million was appropriated for those years. In subsequent years, overall funding levels increased from $350.2 million in FY87 to the all-time high of $1.49 billion in FY95. Recently, however, support for McKinney Act programs has declined."[lxxxiii] In fact, the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) found that "U.S. budget allocated to Homeless Assistance Grants has decreased by 8% over the past four years, and by 28%

since 1995, when the homeless plans were consolidated (National Law Center on

Homelessness and Poverty, 2005)…Adding to these concerns, the Administration's

suggested budget proposes a 36% decline in federal housing assistance by FY2010

(NLCHP, 2005)."[lxxxiv]

Los Angeles

The *Bring LA Home* campaign struggles with many of the same enumerating

challenges as national estimates of homeless youth. The 2005 Los Angeles Homeless

Count found that "homeless youth tend to 'couch surf' from one location to another,

making their identification difficult."[lxxxv] They are also "suspected to keep a distance

from the general homeless population, for their own safety."[lxxxvi] The count found that

"in some areas, local issues hampered [their] enumeration efforts. For example, [their]

enumeration teams in Hollywood claimed there had been a 'sweep,' or a clearing of,

homeless people (including homeless youth) just prior to [their] enumeration, which

directly affected [their] count."[lxxxvii] Challenges also resulted from an "undercount of

homeless without citizenship or legal residency status"[lxxxviii] which includes some

homeless youth.

The 2005 Los Angeles Homeless Count counted 1,104 unsheltered youth. For the

entire Los Angeles Continuum of Care (CoC),[3] the Point-in-Time calculation was 82,291

homeless individuals every night. For unaccompanied youth, only 1,394 were counted.

The annual projection for the Los Angeles CoC was 221,363 homeless persons, with only

3,750 counted as unaccompanied youth.[lxxxix] Contrasting these estimates, a 5-year study

conducted by Children's Hospital Los Angeles counted 7,000-8,000 runaway youth in

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[3] **Continuum of Care-** a comprehensive and coordinated housing and serve delivery system providing a
balance of outreach, emergency, transitional, and permanent housing and service resources, so that
homeless persons can make the transition from the streets to jobs and independent living.

Hollywood alone.[xc] (This does not include the growing number of homeless youth congregating in Venice Beach, or the populations in downtown LA, Van Nuys, the San Fernando Valley and Pasadena).
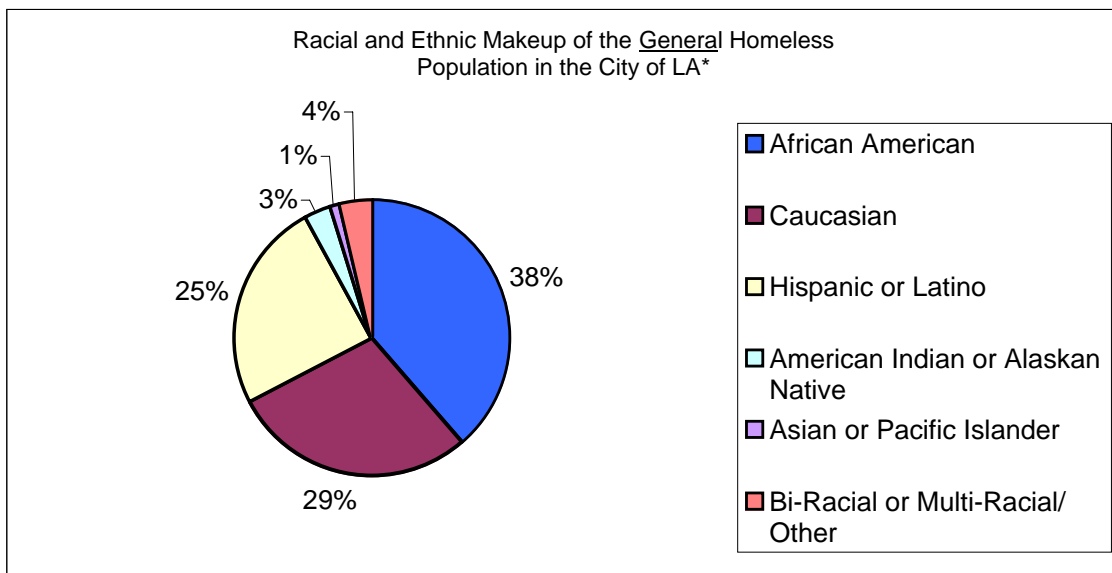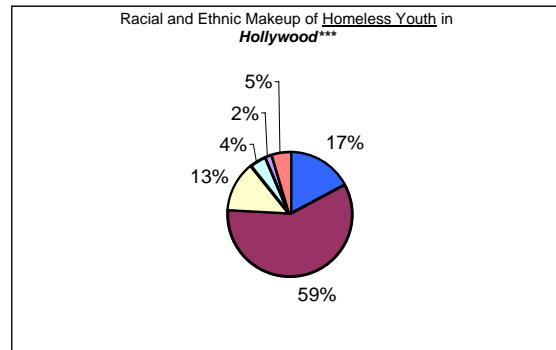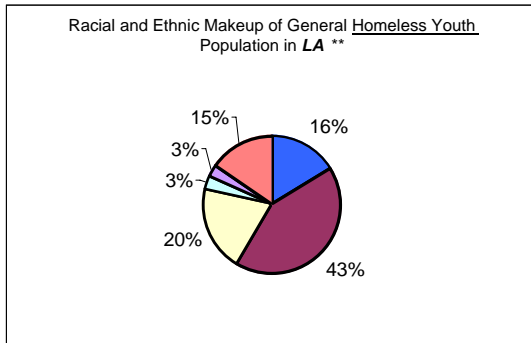
Gender

In Los Angeles, the gender distribution among homeless youth is more comparable to the gender distribution among the general homeless population. Michele D. Kipke et al found that seventy-one percent of homeless youth were male.[xci] Among the general Los Angeles homeless population, two-thirds of the population are male and one-third female.[xcii]

Racial and Ethnic Makeup

In Graph 1, the racial and ethnic makeup for the homeless youth population in Los Angeles, and in the more focused area of Hollywood, is not the same as the makeup of the general homeless population throughout Los Angeles.

Graph 1) *



Racial and Ethnic Makeup of the General Homeless Population in the City of LA*

- African American — 38%
- Caucasian — 29%
- Hispanic or Latino — 25%
- American Indian or Alaskan Native — 3%
- Asian or Pacific Islander — 1%
- Bi-Racial or Multi-Racial/Other — 4%

Racial and Ethnic Makeup of General Homeless Youth Population in *LA* **

15%
3%
3%
20%
43%
16%



Racial and Ethnic Makeup of Homeless Youth in *Hollywood****

5%
2%
4%
13%
59%
17%

## Causes of Youth Homelessness

A local drop-in center in Los Angeles called, My Friend's Place, exemplifies the

heightened risk homeless youth face for abuse compared to their non-homeless peers:

> -"In 2002, 63.5% of the homeless youth seen at the High Risk Youth Clinic reported a history of
> abuse and neglect compared to 14.9% of their non-homeless peers. For youth seen by the Mobile
> Health Team serving local shelters and drop-in centers in Hollywood, 76.7% of youth served
> reported histories of abuse and neglect."[xciii]
> -"More than half of homeless youth in one study report that their parents either told them to leave
> or knew they were leaving but did not care."[xciv]

In relation to systems youth, the Los Angeles County Department of Children and

Family Services (DCFS) found that "of the 1,000 youth emancipat[ing] from the foster

care system in Los Angeles County each year, 45% either go directly onto the streets or

end up on the streets within six weeks of emancipation."[xcv]

Experiences and Challenges Faced on the Street

## Substance Abuse

Homeless youth use many different kinds of drugs (which often depends on the

availability of a certain drug in different regions), but in a Los Angeles report about

intravenous drug use, Children's Hospital found that "36% of homeless youth surveyed

reported that they had injected drugs at some point in their lives, of these more than half, 58% had injected within the past 30 days. Of those, 21% reported sharing needles."[xcvi]

## **Mental Illness**

The My Friend's Place website referenced a local study that found "among street youth in Hollywood ages 13-17, 26% met the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders criteria for major depression compared to 4-6% of community and school samples of adolescents."[xcvii]

Conclusion

The exact magnitude of youth homelessness in the United States is unclear, but the 5% prevalence rate calculated by at the U.S. Conference of Mayors shows that this is a growing problem. The causes of youth homelessness vary and overlap one another. It is difficult to distinguish on direct path that leads to youth homelessness. This makes it difficult for prevention projects to direct their efforts. Homeless youth face traumatic experiences and heightened health risks on the street. They require comprehensive services targeted to their individual needs.

Chapter 2) Methodology

I wanted to look at the *Bring LA Home* Campaign to End Homelessness, published by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) and Los Angeles Coalition to End Hunger & Homelessness (LACEH&H), in order to review how it addressed homeless youth. I conducted interviews with professionals linked to the campaign because I was interested in how they defined homeless youth and interested in what they felt were the particular issues connected to this population.[4] In addition to these interviews, I conducted interviews with service providers for homeless youth in the Los Angeles area because I was interested in whether they had been contacted in the process of formulating recommendations, as well as interested in what recommendations they felt needed to be included.[5] I also conducted informal interviews with two homeless young people here in Los Angeles outside a local drop-in center and three in Albuquerque with homeless young people I knew because of prior work done in New Mexico. I began by asking them to tell me a little bit about themselves. After finding out a little bit about how they came to the streets, we talked about programs that worked well for them. I also shared and discussed with them the recommendations I gathered from my interviews, as well as the model program I highlight, Sanggar Anak Akar, in order to gather their feedback.

In addition to personal interviews, I participated in the Coordinating Council for Runaway and Homeless Youth's (CCRHY)[6] meetings in October 2005 and April 2006.

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[4] I spoke individually with one representative from LAHSA and one from LACEH&H; although I also had the opportunity to hear many representatives of these two organizations speak at different meetings.

[5] I interviewed a total of five service providers individually throughout Los Angeles County, although two-thirds of them were from the Hollywood area. I also had the opportunity to meet many other service providers at the CCRHY's meetings.

[6] The CCRHY promotes interagency collaboration on issues surrounding and affecting homeless youth.

Here I came into contact with 20 + service providers working with homeless youth, as well as representatives from LAHSA and LACEHH. The *Bring LA Home* campaign held blue ribbon panel meetings where I learned, in more depth, about the campaign and about the various organizations throughout Los Angeles who work with homeless persons.

I gathered my sources by self-research and with the direction of a representative from Children's Hospital, who not only pointed me to current reports about homeless youth, but connected me with my initial interview.

In choosing model programs for homeless youth, it is difficult to find organizations that track, and then make available, their program outcomes (It is even more rare to find this information nicely put together in an online format). Two of these programs are New Avenues for Youth in Portland, Oregon and Urban Peak in Denver and Colorado Springs, Colorado. The third model I use is Sanggar Anak Akar in Jakarta, Indonesia. I do not have program outcomes for this model, but rely on personal experience and observations.

Problems

I did not allow myself sufficient time to conduct a big enough interview pool in order to create a quantitative analysis of program recommendations. In addition, the homeless youth participants cannot adequately represent the entire homeless youth population. The young people had valuable things to say about what barriers they felt need to be addressed and which programs work well and which do not. But homeless youth are a diverse group, and even though many homeless young people share similar characteristics, the total of five homeless young people I spoke with are not representative of the entire homeless youth population.

In addition to this, I lack measurable outcomes for my key model program in Jakarta, Indonesia. My observations are based on experience, alone, and the comparison of my experience to the work I had done previously with homeless youth in New Mexico, as well as what I came to know of the homeless youth population here in Los Angeles.

I have learned several things I did not know before about writing a research paper as well as about the homeless youth population here in Los Angeles. If I were to write this paper again, I would have begun much earlier, and made connections with different homeless young people and service providers initially, so that I may have had a reliable and continuous support and information source throughout. I would have also used more quantitative means to express myself so that my work might be translated into outcomes that could be used in order to secure more funding for homeless youth.

Through my research I became aware of issues in need of further research. One of these areas was in housing models for young people. If I were to continue researching on the topic of homeless youth, I would focus in on housing models within and outside the United States, looking at the quantitative data that supports holistic housing models for homeless young people (especially for the most hard-to-reach street youth).

I also became aware of youth housing in Hollywood that is operating without license. These houses operate under the radar but have been known to work well for street youth who do not fit into housing that is more mainstream. It would be worthwhile to study these unlicensed housing models in order to grasp an idea of what is working for harder-to-reach youth. It would also be valuable to see how these housing models are accountable to the young people they house.

One more area of interest in terms of bridging the gap between when a young person first enters the street and when they exit the street would be to look at where homeless young people end up. Do they become homeless adults? Are they incarcerated? Do they reintegrate with mainstream society? A long-term longitudinal study could serve to benefit how services are targeted to youth so that they may not have to enter homelessness.

Chapter 3) *Bring LA Home! A Campaign to End Homelessness*

In 2002, The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), which is the joint power's authority between the City and County of Los Angeles, began to draft a 10-year plan to end homelessness. LAHSA began the 10-year plan in response to the growing homeless population in L.A., especially of the visible chronically homeless population,[7] and the Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) funding requirements that L.A. make a plan for its' chronically homeless. On April 6th, 2006, LAHSA and the Los Angeles Coalition to End Hunger and Homelessness (LACEH&H) released *Bring LA Home: The Campaign to End Homelessness*. The campaign is the result of four years of research and discussion among an executive board and blue ribbon panel representing 63 members from all facets of the community. In 2005, the research group, the Economic Roundtable, conducted a Homeless Count from which working groups gathered statistics and information about specific characteristics of homelessness in Los Angeles. From this data—which staggeringly found that in Los Angeles there are over 88,000 homeless persons every night with 240,000 experiencing homelessness each year—the working groups made over 200 recommendations. There has been a lot of skepticism about the plan's potential for implementation. LAHSA admits that this is a costly undertaking, with estimates of up to $12 billion in affordable and supportive housing (with a lower target of approximately $2.7 billion).[8] But advocates restate that the cost of keeping the current

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[7] **Chronically Homeless-** homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.
[8] The more expensive number is associated with the creation of 50,000 new affordable housing units, while the lower target aims for 11,500 new units.

situation at status quo is even higher (in both monetary and human costs[9]). These advocates believe that the political will to bring this campaign into action is possible. In the campaign it says that with "the sustained commitment and leadership of elected and appointed officials to enact and change policies, appropriate and redirect funds, and keep the issue alive and in the public light,"[xcviii] the face of homelessness in 10-years will change for the better.[xcix]

At a meeting before the release of the campaign, blue ribbon panel members discussed the idea that with commitment we will see change within the homeless population in Los Angeles. But two advocates for homeless youth also sat in the audience and had different interpretations. One mentioned that in order to prevent homelessness we must address how are we producing *new* homeless. Another brought up how homelessness, as a cyclical phenomenon,[10] is a lifelong process. Both of these points raised the issue of "closing the front door"[11] to homelessness. If service providers, political leaders, and community members truly want to "close the front door," it becomes more apparent that we have to begin with youth.

Almost two months later at the release of the *Bring LA Home* campaign, Philip Mangano, the Executive Director of the Federal U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, and the man who coined the "front door, back door" phrase, said the way

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[9] **Human costs-** diminished health and well-being of homeless people, the burden on business through impaired access to their goods and services, and the detriment to the general community due to fear and restricted access to streets and parks (Leonard Schneiderman, Dean Emeritus, UCLA School of Social Work).

[10] **Homelessness as a cyclical problem-** Homelessness is not a one-time, fix-it problem. People become homeless through a process of institutional breakdowns. Because of its cyclical nature, the best way to stop homelessness is to prevent it from happening or intervene early on.

[11] Closing the front door would entail stopping the cycle of homelessness. If homeless youth are not addressed, many will become homeless adults. The idea of "closing the front door" would resemble looking at what institutions create homelessness and what people are at greatest risk for becoming homeless, and addressing those needs before people ever have the chance of becoming homeless.

in which the campaign will be successful is if it produces "visible, measurable, and quantifiable results"[c] from its recommendations. He stressed that without a plan, things only get worse, but the key is to create outcome-oriented plans that build around a few priorities and get those done. He asserts that with success, new dollars will come. All the politicians who spoke at the press release reiterated the fact that the time for talking is over and it's now time for action. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa spoke about the county's investment of $100 million on improved services for homeless on skid row and the city's $50 million to supportive housing. He assured the audience and media that these figures are not a one-time deal.

The *Bring LA Home* campaign is made up of over 200 specific recommendations, but has a clear structure resting on broad strategies and goals, along with three major themes. The executive committee wanted to create a plan for chronic homeless, homeless families, and the improvement of mainstream systems, while leaving special populations to specific ad-hoc groups for phase II of the campaign to be released in July of 2006. Phase I of the campaign unifies all recommendations with seven guiding principles. From those principles and keeping in line with the idea of a Continuum of Care (CoC)[12], the ten-year plan to end homelessness emphasizes seven goals. The strategies and goals are listed as follows:

**Seven Guiding Principles**
- Prevent homelessness
- Address the structural causes of homelessness
- Sustain the current capacity to serve homeless people and build new capacity where it is needed
- Ensure rapid return to housing for people who become homeless
- Bring alienated homeless people into the mainstream of society

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[12] **Continuum of Care-** a comprehensive and coordinated housing and serve delivery system providing a balance of outreach, emergency, transitional, and permanent housing and service resources, so that homeless persons can make the transition from the streets to jobs and independent living.

- Take a regional approach to the crisis
- Reaffirm that housing is one of the basic human rights

**Goals**
1) Create Housing to Prevent and End Homelessness
2) Improve the Continuum of Homeless Services
3) Increase Income and Improve Economic Stability
4) Improve Health and Human Services
5) Strengthen the Partnership with the Criminal Justice System to Help End and Prevent Homelessness
6) Regional Issues and Priorities
7) Specific Populations

The concerns of service providers who work with homeless youth are whether or not the issue of homeless youth will be taken seriously in the *Bring LA Home* campaign and among L.A.'s stakeholders. Homeless youth are addressed in the campaign to end homelessness but, as a LAHSA representative reaffirmed, "The concern of the youth ad hoc group is, how much are youth *really* on the table?" Many of the recommendations in the campaign could surely benefit the homeless youth population that exists in Los Angeles, but youth advocates fear that the "political will" might ignore the issues specific to youth. The problem with the current recommendations is that they are not developmentally appropriate services. For example, there are very few mental health services provided to homeless youth. Of the mental health services that exist, even fewer employ therapists and techniques that are sensitive and responsive to homeless adolescent's needs. Developmentally appropriate housing is also a huge issue; especially with the focus the *Bring LA Home* campaign has put on supportive housing. Housing that serves the needs of young homeless people has yet to be created on a large scale. Many of the recommendations in phase I of the plan do not adequately address the specific needs of *young* homeless people.

Whether intentionally or not, the campaign highlights the undeniable importance of addressing youth homelessness. Throughout the campaign's text, vignettes of personal stories are inserted in order to personalize the campaign. At the top of goal #2, *Improving the Continuum of Homeless Services,* a vignette tells of a homeless man named Andre, who, after being sexually and physically abused as a child and growing up in a household suffering from parental substance abuse, today finds himself on the streets, bordering on psychosis and, according to outreach workers, eventual death. At age 8 Andre attempted suicide and from there was placed in a group home. He never finished high school and spent time in and out of jail for petty crimes, drug abuse, and prostitution. The vignette continues, "In his early twenties, he was on the streets, homeless, prostituting, addicted to methamphetamine, and involved in a severely abusive relationship."[ci] If Andre was provided with the support he needed and correct services at age 8, or even after he was released from group home in his late teens, could we not say that he would probably not be living on the streets of Los Angeles today?

In describing and defining homeless youth[13], phase I of the *Bring LA Home* campaign does a good job of describing the issues facing homeless youth. But as far as recommendations are concerned, few respond directly to the unique needs of homeless youth and arrive only sporadically throughout the plan. As mentioned above, phase II of the campaign, which includes youth-specific recommendations, will not be officially

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[13] The Bring LA Home campaign defines homeless youth as follows, including definitions for subpopulations of homeless youth as well:
**Homeless youth-** unaccompanied persons, age 12 to 24. Youth may have run away or were forced out of their home and are not in the company of a parent or guardian, and who may not be legally emancipated.
**Emancipated foster youth-** is considered to occur when a youth reaches age 18 or is no longer under the jurisdiction of the court, or is married or has entered military service.
**Transition Age youth-** refers to youth ages 18-25. This group faces particular challenges because they have reached adulthood in legal terms but still require supportive services and housing. Included in this group are youth, who, because they have reached 18 years, no longer can be served by certain child dependency and delinquency systems but nonetheless require help. Pages 107-111

released until July 2006. The youth ad hoc group made their recommendations available to service providers for youth in order to receive feedback. The following chapter discusses the ad hoc group's youth-specific recommendations. In the current campaign, the 7th Goal, *Specific Populations*, gives a good overview of the homeless youth population: the causes, risks, and unique servicing of homeless youth. It mentions their alienation from traditional systems and says, because of this and their unique histories and behaviors, homeless youth "require specialized outreach, services, and housing."[cii] They highlight key recommendations that will be later added and further expanded upon in the July 2006 phase of the campaign.

➢ They call for a comprehensive, countywide approach for service planning and delivery for youth;
➢ Integration planning between public departments and private agencies that serve runaway and homeless youth;
➢ Development of a regionally-based system of crisis services, outreach, emergency shelter, transitional living, and permanent housing for minor youth and transitional age youth 18-24;
➢ Address the educational deficits that many youth have and support their educational and career achievement; and
➢ Provide youth-specific substance abuse and mental health treatment.

This section is further emblematic of the kind of philosophy needed when working with homeless youth. The authors of this section, who are advocates from the Coordinating Council for Runaway and Homeless Youth (CCRHY), believe that in developing these strategies, they must have input from youth in order to "engage [them] in meaningful ways and support them in achieving their full potential."[ciii] Recommendations that serve to leave youth out of the planning process not only undermine the homeless young person's abilities and lower self-esteem, but also fail to take advantage of a crucial vantage point not easily understood from a service provider's or politician's viewpoint.

This section reviews how the *Bring LA Home* campaign addresses youth homelessness in phase I of the campaign. What follows is a list of all the recommendations in phase I that address youth.

- With information gathered from the Homeless Count, the *Bring LA Home* campaign proposes that 50,000 new units of affordable housing be created in the next 10 years. Of the 50,000, the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA), by using the data collected from the Homeless Count, determined 3,360 units would be distributed between youth aging out of foster care, seniors, unaccompanied youth and other singles. Knowing that 50,0000 units is a big commitment, advocates of the campaign also included a more attainable goal of 11,500 units over 10 years to be created through a combination of new construction and vouchers.
    - o Two issues arise here, first, the housing allocations mentioned above for youth, seniors, and other individuals, are based off of estimates gathered from the Homeless Count, which admittedly severely undercounted the homeless youth population in Los Angeles. The campaign does not realistically address homeless youth in terms of affordable housing. Secondly, the number of units for youth, seniors, and other individuals— 3,360—is based on the assumption that 50,000 units will be created in the next 10 years. In their more realistic recommendation, they ask for 11,500 new units. If 3,360 units is 6.7% of 50,000, we can assume that only 773 units (6.7% of 11,500) will be made available to youth if the 11,500 goal is met. Page 5 and 57
- Goal #2, *Improving the Continuum of Homeless Services,* addresses adding interim beds to underserved geographic areas for special needs populations, including unaccompanied youth. Temporary housing, which includes emergency shelters, hotel and motel vouchers, and safe havens are needed in each SPA[14] for unaccompanied youth. Page 6 and 23
- It is mentioned in the plan that successfully ending homelessness will tremendously depend on our ability to address the needs of specific populations, which includes youth. (This is further supported by Andre's account mentioned above). Page 8
- The campaign reads, "In addition to needing specialized services, and interim and permanent housing, these diverse groups require specific policy changes to existing programs to enable providers to more effectively serve them." Not only is there a gap between different definitions of homeless youth, with some including youth only to 18, and others all the way to 24, but many Federal services end or change once a young person reaches the age of 18 or 21. One example of this is Medicaid. Advocates for homeless youth support changes in policy that allow youth to continue receiving Medicaid up until age 24, which proves consistent with what doctors know about the stages of adolescence. Page 8

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[14] **SPA-** Service Planning Areas (There are a total of 8 SPAs in LA County)

- Under Goal #3, *Increasing Income and Improving Economic* Stability, LAHSA advocates for a focused planning process to address employment concerns associated with youth (Specifically focusing on improving accessibility to a variety of transitional employment, training, and permanent employment opportunities). Page 28
- In Goal #4, *Improving Health and Human Services*, the campaign recommends supporting countywide networks for homeless youth (regional service planning) because they feel networks are "essential for specific populations, in order to identify and disseminate best practices in service delivery, understand and remove system barriers, and create needed system-level changes." Page 32
- LAHSA advocates for increasing the number of detoxification and treatment beds for substance use and co-occurring disorders, ensuring the availability of beds for specific populations, such as unaccompanied youth. Page 32
- In addressing the integration of services to special needs populations, the campaign mentions, "expand[ing] programs to connect, or reconnect, emancipated foster care youth (ages 18-21) or eligible minor youth prior to emancipation to Federal Title IV-E services." This recommendation is built off the fact that "existing outreach efforts and service models are not adequate for those youth who have been homeless for any length of time, and do not engage youth who are disconnected from formal service systems. This requires expanded resources and better integration with homeless youth providers." Page 33
- The campaign designates a few recommendations for homeless students. These are useful recommendations if the homeless young person is still enrolled in school, but, as shown by Cauce, et al., "up to three quarters of older homeless youths drop out of school."[civ] These recommendations are worth mentioning, but I am unsure of whether they can capture the more hidden populations of homeless youth. Page 33 and 34
  - The campaign addresses the need for a Homeless Education Advisory Group within LAUSD and LACOE so that homeless children and youth are effectively served.
  - They also recommend the adoption of Homeless Education Program Coordinators who will ensure that schools are following the protections and rights of homeless students which are set forth in the McKinney-Vento Act.
  - In response to the fact that homeless students have limited access to basic services (such as after school care or tutoring) and supplies (such as uniforms), the campaign recommends teachers and administrators become familiar with the special programs and services set up to aid homeless students. They stress that information is made available to *all* students about these services and resources rather than leaving it up to the student to first admit being homeless before being aided.
  - Homeless students often fall behind in school because they frequently move from one district to another without history of their school records. Student Information Systems could do a huge service to homeless students by "effectively tracking service delivery to homeless youth and foster youth as they move from school to school throughout the district."

- o Right now LAUSD has the capacity to employ a one-half time staff person devoted to the LAUSD Homeless Education Program. LAUSD calls for an increase in the number of Pupil Services and Attendance Positions to five full-time positions. (They ask for a significant funding increase to total funding at $1.3 million).
  - o As discussed throughout this paper, varying definitions of homelessness exist everywhere. The Bring LA Home campaign advocates for changing HUD's definition of homelessness to the Department of Education's definition, which includes families who are living "doubled up" or in motels. Another recommendation they could advocate for, which would extraordinarily assist homeless youth, would be to advocate for the adoption of a definition of youth homelessness that includes youth up to age 24.
- The campaign mentions housing types that might be useful for transition age youth. Page 72

| Housing Types for Transitional-Age Youth | |
| --- | --- |
| Low intensity services (ongoing)[15] | **Subsidized** |
| | service-enriched housing[16], including single site and scattered site[17] SRO[18] |
| Moderate intensity services (ongoing) | **Subsidized** |
| | supportive housing[19], special needs housing[20] |

- In continuing to support existing planning processes, the Bring LA Home campaign will draw upon the Los Angeles County Special Needs Housing Alliance and the Strategic Plan they have created for enhancing the supply of service-enriched housing for vulnerable health and human services populations, including emancipating foster youth. Page 82
- The campaign also mentions one funding source specifically for homeless youth. They attest that Federally-funded grants from the Administration of Children and Families provides funding support for over $1.5 million for outreach, shelter, counseling, and transitional living programs for runaway and homeless youth. A problem arises here because Federal dollars are known to come with many rules and oftentimes programs for homeless youth operate outside of the mainstream idea of programming. How can programs for homeless youth, which may not

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[15] Ongoing housing as opposed to time-limited housing
[16] **Service-Enriched Housing-** Housing for families and individuals with no service needs or low or moderate intensity service needs, in which crisis intervention, resources/referral, and time-limited case management are available to all residents.
[17] **Scattered Site-** housing developments or individual units that are not located at one-single location.
[18] **Single Room Occupancy (SRO)-** private rooms that contain either food preparation or sanitary facilities, or both, and are designed for occupancy by a single individual.
[19] **Supportive housing-** Affordable housing that is coupled with supportive services in order to assist individuals and families maintain financial and personal stability and self-sufficiency.
[20] **Special Needs Housing-** Housing developed for and occupied by people with a variety of disabilities who are at risk of homelessness but may not have been literally or chronically homeless.

meet the Federal-funding requirements, get funding for otherwise worthy programs? Page 44

The *Bring LA Home* campaign began four years ago because people concerned with homelessness in L.A., both community members and stakeholders, wanted to create a more comprehensive plan in order to end the growing population of homeless persons in Los Angeles. They needed a strategic plan that held community members and leaders accountable. Today in Los Angeles, the homelessness issue is front-page news. Homelessness affects Los Angeles in a large way, with 1 in 9 homeless persons throughout the U.S. found in Los Angeles.[cv] The *Los Angeles Times* has given considerable coverage to the issue of homelessness, especially with its articles on skid row. Journalist, Cara DiMassa, covered the dumping of homeless persons onto skid row by police and emergency medical technicians;[21] journalist Steve Lopez's five-day coverage of skid row revealed a large number of homeless people suffering from dually diagnosed illnesses and disabilities.[22]

The importance of creating the campaign to end homelessness is that it sets a framework from which real action can begin. It is now the job of those with funding resources and political pull to hold accountable the different organizations responsible for implementing the recommendations. But this is a daunting task and many skeptics question what one person called a "menu of things we need to do; not really a plan." A representative of LAHSA said that in order to implement this plan, there needs to be a huge increase in staff and this representative expressed that she does not know where the money is going to come from in order to hire these staff.

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[21] DiMassa, Cara and Richard Winton. "Dumping of Homeless Suspected Downtown." <u>Los Angeles Times</u> 23 Sep 2005: A1.

[22] Steve Lopez's 5-Day Coverage of Skid Row <u>Los Angeles Times</u> 16th-19th & 23rd Oct 2005: Sec A & B.

In a meeting with the Coordinating Council for Runaway and Homeless Youth (CCRHY) the day after the campaign's release, service providers for homeless youth discussed the campaign's phase II release scheduled for July. A Children's Hospital representative spoke about how they valiantly tried to have youth addressed in phase I of the campaign with arguments about how foster care and probation youth suffer the same discharge mismanagement as homeless adults leaving hospitals and jails. They also illustrated that by not addressing youth now, Los Angeles is only deferring the problem until another time when the young person will be qualified as an "adult."

But, youth specific recommendations were left by the wayside. Representatives of the *Bring LA Home* campaign say youth recommendations were not included because the youth ad hoc group did not to get their recommendations in on time. These same people are confident that phase II of the campaign will receive the same attention as phase I. Others are worried that homeless youth issues will not appropriately integrate into the plan. Phase I of the campaign focuses its attention on the chronically homeless population because HUD funding (McKinney, SuperNOVA, etc) is contingent upon a city having a plan for their chronically homeless. Homeless families attract the political will because society considers family homelessness unconscionable. Finally, systems reform gathered attention due to the *Los Angeles Times'* exposure of homeless dumping onto skid row, as well as an effort to address the mainstream institutions that produce homelessness.

The following chapter covers the youth-specific recommendations created by an ad hoc group formed by the CCRHY. Hopefully the blue ribbon panel and the *Bring LA Home* campaign will support the developmentally appropriate strategies for phase II of the campaign in July 2006.

**Chapter 4) Youth Ad Hoc Group Recommendations**

In December of 2005, Children's Hospital Los Angeles organized an ad hoc youth task force to review the *Bring LA Home* campaign's youth specific recommendations. What resulted is an extremely knowledgeable list of recommendation that is sensitive to the unique needs of homeless youth. To organize their recommendations, the ad hoc task force used the National Partnership to End Youth Homelessness (NPEYH)'s[23] "Ten Essentials Youth Community Needs to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness." (Appendix A) The recommendations call for policy changes, improvements in agency coordination, and increases in funding. Throughout the recommendations the ad hoc group emphasizes the importance of youth input. They explain that it is crucial to "ensure that youth are involved in the design and implementation of the strategies."[cvi] [24] They say that agencies must reach out to youth for their input, in order to grasp perceptions of what are the barriers to traditional services. Every one of the points raised in the youth-specific recommendations are essential to providing seamless services and truly eradicating youth homelessness.

The *Bring LA Home* plan needs to create regionally tailored strategies in order to respond to the specific needs of individual homeless youth. The ad hoc group feels that "in order to maintain positive social supports, keep youth in school, minimize isolation, and decrease vulnerability to exploitation and exposure to the dangers of the streets,"[cvii] it

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[23] **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, and Volunteers of America.

[24] Youth input could be used in many ways. On specific example is in the Project Safe Place program. Began in Kentucky in 1983, Project Safe Place designates businesses that can operate as a "safe place" for youth in crisis to come to and get referred to services. Businesses are marked with a yellow street sign that reads "Safe Place." The youth ad hoc group recommends that youth participation include the identification of fixed sites that they trust and frequent and the development of strategies to better market the program to young people.

is essential to deliver services to young people in their own communities. Strategies need to be youth-specific and youth-friendly. Services have to be available, accessible, affordable and appropriate for homeless youth.

Policy changes aim to include more unaccompanied youth in programs and to qualify more youth for federal benefits. For example, the ad hoc group advocates for the inclusion of young people up to age 24 in the definition of homeless youth. They recommend that Los Angeles adopt the World Health Organization's (WHO) definition, which defines adolescence "as the period of life between 10-19, youth as between 15-24 years and young people, as those between 10-24 years old."[cviii] The youth ad hoc group holds that "current research on the adolescent brain supports a developmentally-based definition of youth." The public often blames homeless young people living on the street for being lazy or avoiding responsibility. Youth advocates, on the other hand, recognize that there are scientific reasons young people may take longer to exit adolescence than others. Brain development and maturational process do not reach completion until age 24 or so. The ad hoc group says, "This incomplete brain development and maturational process indicates that there is a neurological basis for the extended path that many young adults need to attain stability, successful employment and economic independence."[cix] The ad hoc group also recommends that Los Angeles direct funding from the Mental Health Services Act (prop 63 funding) toward youth. Another example of barriers caused by age limit is upper-age eligibility requirements for TLP[25] services funded through the RHYA.[26] The ad hoc group believes that the age eligibility requirements "no longer reflect the needs of the homeless youth population. Communities, including LA, are

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[25] **TLP-** Transitional Living Programs
[26] **RHYA-** Runaway and Homeless Youth Act

experiencing an increased need for longer-term transitional living programs services for older youth than can currently be provided under the Act."[cx]

Agency coordination has to do with inconsistencies in definitions of homeless youth, age cut-offs, seamlessness between school jurisdictions, and cooperation between different counties for foster care. The youth ad hoc group writes that "improved coordination between public and private agencies providing services to runaway and homeless youth," should be used, "in order to maximize impact, avoid duplication, and decrease barriers to publicly funded services."[cxi] They stress focusing in on the deficits that create homeless youth and contribute to long-term homelessness. For example, they recommend the prevention of discharging emancipated youth into homelessness.

Another form of coordination needs to happen within data and information collections. Data collection, for example, is an important tool in assessing the needs of homeless youth. The ad hoc group recommends the use of standard methods "to provide descriptive data…(e.g. length of time on the street, place of origin, substance use, and prior foster care or probation involvement)," in order to "understand the needs and characteristics of youth to better design services, improve outcomes, and prioritize funding."[cxii] They also recommend the integration of the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and the Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System (RHYMIS) so that both systems can share a common format in order to make information more accessible to homeless people and community members.

In terms of recommendations for housing, the ad hoc group recognizes that funding requirements create programs that are too stringent for homeless youth (especially more hard-to-reach youth). They advocate for emergency shelters with greater

flexibility in licensing requirements, saying, "Current licensing requirements are too restrictive and pose barriers to engaging and retaining youth in care."[cxiii] They also recommend an increase in shelter and bed availability. They say, "2500 youth were turned away from RHY Act-funded TLP services in 2003 due to lack of resources, and 4,226 youth were tuned away from Basic Center Programs (RHYMIS)." They believe, "increased funding would allow faith-based and community-based organizations to serve an additional 165,000 runaway and homeless youth annually."[27][cxiv] The ad hoc group also recommends independent living-skill-based classes that could help keep a young person in housing. Classes, for example, could help with landlord selection and preparation, as well as landlord/tenant mediation.

Whatever the recommendation, the ad hoc youth task force expresses the importance of knowing that the same outcomes cannot be expected for all homeless youth. Street youth, as opposed to more stable, newly homeless youth, do not have the same issues as one another. The ad hoc group recommends the *Bring LA Home* campaign create a pilot program that is no-fail, low-barrier, and low-demand housing for chronically homeless street youth. A community of street youth in Jakarta, Indonesia provides such a setting in chapter 7 of this comprehensive project.

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[27] This is if funding is expanded to $140 million in 2007.

*Chapter 5) Interviews with LAHSA, LACEH&H, and*

*Service Providers to Homeless Youth*

I conducted interviews with professionals linked to the *Bring LA Home* campaign and with service providers who work with homeless young people in Los Angeles because I wanted to find out how well the campaign added the needs of homeless youth. My goal was see if professionals linked to the campaign and service providers felt the *Bring LA Home* campaign sufficiently addressed the needs of homeless youth and young adults. If the people I interviewed felt that something was missing, I was interested in what recommendations they had for the campaign and what recommendations they had for programs for homeless youth in general. As I have expressed previously, I feel that homeless young people make up a very unique group of the homeless population for reasons having to do with their adolescence, the extreme risks they are exposed to on the street, and the often-creative ways homeless youth find ways of surviving.

The plan to create a ten-year campaign to end homelessness in Los Angeles began in 2002. The executive board and blue ribbon panel decided to focus the phase I of the campaign on three main groupings: the chronically homeless, homeless families, and the improvement of mainstream programs. Two things worried me about this new campaign. First, by focusing on homeless families, did they not recognize the difference between homeless children, who are usually still with their families, and homeless youth, who are usually living independently? And second, homeless youth require unique services tailored to their diverse needs. Did the *Bring LA Home* campaign respond to the fact that many homeless youth avoid mainstream programs by recommending less traditional programs that might be more effective with homeless youth?

I wanted to speak to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), who took the primary role in the strategic planning process of the campaign, to find out how they defined homeless youth, who they contacted when writing the section about homeless youth, and what youth-specific recommendations they feel need to be included in the campaign. I had similar questions for the Los Angeles Coalition to End Hunger and Homelessness (LACEH&H), who partnered with LAHSA in drafting the campaign. In speaking with service providers who work with homeless youth in Los Angeles, I was interested in finding out if they felt confident that the campaign addresses the needs of homeless youth. I was also interested in hearing what recommendations they had for programs for specific to homeless youth.

Everyone I spoke to had meaningful things to say about homeless youth. Most of the people I interviewed recognized that homeless youth are a unique population with special needs. The representative from LACEH&H was a little unclear about homeless youth when he said that to some extent, phase I of the campaign did address youth by addressing homeless families. Although similar in age, homeless teenagers who are still with their families have different experiences on the streets than homeless youth. I was very impressed with the representative from LAHSA who really stressed that in order to address the needs of homeless youth, the government is going to have to exhibit an emotional connection with the young people and find a way to put love into policies that affect youth.

The service providers I spoke to have a very good grasp on recommendations that would serve the populations they worked with. For example, Project Strife, which works with younger homeless youth, recommended that the Los Angeles County Department of

Children and Family Services (DCFS) increase their staffing. Organizations like My Friend's Place, who work with older youth, have less of a chance of benefiting from DCFS services because most DCFS services stop when youth reach age 18 (some organizations work with young people up to age 25 and 26). This supports a recommendation given to me by the representative from My Friend's Place: the idea that locally based, relevant service centers be set up in order to gauge the needs of youth in different areas and youth with different needs.

Not all the service providers I spoke to were familiar with the *Bring LA Home* campaign. This could mean that in failing to disseminate information thoroughly, the *Bring LA Home* campaign overlooked valuable input from those who best know the population of homeless youth Even those who played an active role in formulating recommendations specific to youth felt they did not have the best handle on the campaign. There was a concern that now that the campaign is created, what will happen? Some service providers said that the special populations did not have enough opportunity to draw up cohesive recommendations for the campaign. There was a sentiment that youth were not properly integrated into the campaign. One service provider pointed out that nothing in the plan really speaks to youth in terms of creating developmentally appropriate services. Another service provider pointed out that whether the campaign addresses youth thoroughly or not, either we'll have a plan that is comprehensive for youth or three years down the line when the 17 year old homeless youth of today is 20 years old and officially enters into their "population" of homeless persons, they'll wonder why their numbers have not gone down. He pointed out that they would look and have to see that the new homeless adults are formerly homeless youth. For him, the *Bring LA*

*Home* campaign will address this problem now or delay it for later. Every service provider I spoke to acknowledged the role the staff at Children's Hospital has had in advocating for homeless youth. A representative from LAYN said that Children's Hospital stepped up and has really become their (as well as all service providers for homeless youth) representative. In the end, it seems as if service providers to homeless youth are either hopeful for July when phase II of the campaign will be released or skeptical, but still holding their breath until July to see what will happen.

Two of the service providers I spoke to were thoughtfully committed and passionate about working with homeless youth. Both brought up the very difficult and disheartening reality that many of these youth do not see a future for themselves. The representative from LAYN said that a lot of these young people do not think they're going to live past the age of 18, so forget trying to become something. She envisions an education system that sets youth up for success and provides them with options. She expresses that without education, young people's minds will not be open to new ideas. The representative at My Friend's Place said that the goal at the agency is not as much about ending youth homelessness as it is about helping the young person secure a sense of autonomy and self-sufficiency, which is undoubtedly critical in lasting success. She believes that human beings need to be inspired to make change and this can only occur with a sense that there is something else out there beyond the present struggle. My Friend's Place creates opportunities for future-orientation for youth and holds that life can be different.

Everyone I spoke to gave meaningful and thoughtful recommendations for homeless youth. I have created a list of them below. The Covenant House representative

felt that all services exist, but what is going on now in LA is an issue of accessibility. He

said that you can find it all, but there is not enough of everything for everyone in need

(For example, the representative from LAYN said that there is approximately 13,000

homeless young people ages 12-17 on the streets in LA, with only 100 shelter beds

available for all). [28]

Recommendations by Organization:

| *LAHSA* |
| --- |
| ▪ Hotline (Something similar to the Department of Mental Health's Hotline, which has been said to work well) |
| ▪ More focus on this transitional age group, specifically when looking at new housing options) |
| ▪ Mental health services |
| ▪ Resources need to be better linked/integrated |
| ▪ Need a transition plan for when young people are released from care |
| ▪ Research the families from which kids are coming and use this information when thinking about prevention |
| ▪ More counseling services directed at homeless young people |
| ▪ Creation of healthy, supportive family connections, whether they be immediately related or just concerned community members |
| |
| *LACEH&H* |
| ▪ Better discharge planning from foster care |
| ▪ Increase age from 18 to 24 for emancipating youth |
| ▪ Focus on housing, education and income while in foster care |
| ▪ Greater outreach and engagement for street youth |
| |
| *Covenant House Los Angeles* |
| ▪ Not enough opportunities for services for all those in need |
| ▪ Need for affordable low-income housing for youth located in decent areas |
| ▪ The age-limit for Medicaid should be extended to age 24 |
| |

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[28] The 2005 LA Homeless Count found that there are 13,291 youth (under 18) living on the streets of L.A. (this includes young people living with their families. Only 1,394 were found to be unaccompanied youth. LAHSA stated that there are fewer than 50 total beds providing emergency shelter for youth in the Hollywood area (LAYN, Angel's Flight, Way-In and Covenant House), and less then 35 beds available for long-term shelter.

| |
|---|
| ***LAYN*** |
| ▪ Provide youth with educational systems that set them up for success and provide real options (Without education, the young person's mind won't be open to new ideas)<br>▪ LAYN proposes the creation of their own school, which would network all the services existing in the Hollywood area. |
| ▪ LAYN proposes one more step after TLPs and before independent living in order to slow the transition down. When graduated from TLPs, LAYN finds that young people still don't have the money to make it on their own. There is one more step before adulthood that needs to be addressed. |
| |
| ***My Friend's Place*** |
| ▪ Set up locally-based, relevant service centers |
| ▪ Create new housing models, especially for those with multiple challenges (who might not yet be ready to let go of some of the coping strategies they use to survive and enter treatment |
| ▪ More emphasis on systems responsibility and holding these services accountable |
| ▪ The Department of Mental Health (DMH) needs Transitional-Age Youth Specialists to help youth navigate system (Something has to be done to make mainstream services more inviting to young people who are already over-labeled and over-medicated and who have no willingness to reenter the service structure)<br>▪ Take advantage of Proposition 63 and make sure that services are developmentally appropriate for youth |
| *Project Strife (Angel's Flight)* |
| ▪ Continuation of counseling even after temporarily housed |
| ▪ Increase in number of emergency shelters |
| ▪ More drug rehabilitation centers for youth<br>(There are always waiting lists. Sometimes young people make an interview in advance and forget to come to their appointment, or when they try to make an appointment, are put on a wait list to even get an interview) |
| ▪ The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is swamped with cases. There needs to be an effort to hire more DCFS workers |
| ▪ Substantial increase in the number of shelters for unaccompanied youth |
| *United Coalition East Prevention Project (UCEPP)* |
| ▪ "District liaison to respond to special needs of homeless students |
| ▪ District-wide system to identify and track homeless youth, ensuring they are receiving services |
| ▪ Create alternatives to suspension and/or expulsion for "behavioral differences" |
| ▪ LAPD change strategy from "zero-tolerance" to "compassionate correction" |
| ▪ Stop criminalizing poverty by targeting youth for petty citations, such as jaywalking and loitering |

| |
|---|
| ▪ Youth liaison offer or Youth Service Officer at handle all youth-related criminal matters in "skid row" |
| ▪ Establish an alternative way to address outstanding tickets, e.g., community service, traffic school or other strategies that do not involve monetary payment |
| ▪ Sliding far scale or free bus transportation for children who meet the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act's definition."[cxv] |

Chapter 6) Model Programming

The goal of working with homeless youth is to encourage autonomy and self-sufficiency through the development of trusting relationships, the reduction of high-risk activities, the process of healing, and the fostering of empowerment.

**Urban Peak in Denver and Colorado Springs, Colorado and New Avenues for Youth in Portland, Oregon, are two model programs in the United States who embody these four characteristics.**

**Urban Peak is an exemplary program for homeless youth. They are committed to superb data collection and the production of real outcomes in order to strategically address the problem of homeless youth. They use the outcomes to create a strategic planning process, "providing a blueprint for the agency to respond flexibly to new opportunities, the changing needs of youth, budget realities, and necessary changes in organizational structure." "Intake and assessment procedures document homeless history, resources, housing barriers, and what would be needed for the youth to leave homelessness."[cxvi]**

Outcome Measures for Urban Peak Denver, 2000–2004

| Measure | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of youth with successful housing outcomes | 308 | 343 | 368 | 426 | 435 |
| Percentage of youth with successful housing outcomes | 48% | 52% | 53% | 65% | 63% |

The programs at New Avenues for Youth in Portland, Oregon, help homeless young people "gain the life skills and support necessary to not only leave streetlife, but lead sustainable lives—and avoid lifelong homelessness."[cxvii] New Avenues goals are to:

"-prevent homelessness among youth by immediately responding to their needs,

-engage homeless youth positively by building trust,

-stabilize youth so they can begin to heal from abuse, and

-educate and train youth so they never have to return to the streets."[cxviii]

| 2003-2004 Outcomes[cxix] | |
|---|---|
| Early Intervention & Prevention: **Reception Center** | |
| **Youth screened at Reception Center** | 1339 |
| *Youth released to parent, responsible adult or other agency* | 92% |
| *Youth released to police, juvenile detention or ran away* | 8% |
| | |
| Stabilization: **Transitional Housing** | |
| **Youth off the streets at 30 days** | 89% |
| *Youth on the streets or unreachable* | 11% |
| *Youth off the streets at one year* | 88% |
| *Youth on the streets or unreachable* | 12% |
| | |
| Stabilization: **Case Management** | |
| *Youth who exited service coordination into a stable living situation off the streets* | 83% |
| | |
| Skill Building: **Job Training** | |
| **Youth who obtained employment** | 79% |
| *Businesses and community-based organizations who partnered with New Avenues to offer training and job opportunities* | 49 |
| | |
| Skill Building: **Education** | |
| **Average number of students participating per day** | 275 |
| *Students who completed their high school education and received their GED certification* | 34 |
| *Students who enrolled in college* | 36 |

**Building Trust**

Homeless youth have been so let down by adults and service programs in their past that they have difficulty trusting those who are truly willing to help them. Past abuses and abandonment in the home create this lack of trust. All too often homeless

youth come out of foster programs or other treatment programs so over-labeled and over-medicated that the last thing they want is to reenter the system.

Outreach programs build relationships by serving the particular needs of different homeless populations. The outreach at Urban Peak in Denver and Colorado Springs, Colorado helps to remove barriers that inhibit young people from accessing services. Urban Peak's Outreach Team "provides services targeted to needs of homeless and runaway youth in the locations where they gather. These locations are constantly adjusted with seasonal variations and input from collaborating partners, such as police and the Downtown Denver Partnership (the business owners of downtown Denver)."[cxx] They conduct late night outreaches each month as well.

This initial contact empowers young people to take the first step of seeking services at a drop-in center. Recreation programs at the center can help break the trust barrier and invite the growth of meaningful relationships. For example, at My Friend's Place, a drop-in center in Hollywood, Cirque du Soleil has a program called Cirque du Monde, which teaches young people the skills of a circus, such as tightrope, stilts, and trapeze. This activity is attractive to young people who may not choose to express themselves through writing or art.

**Reducing High Risk Behavior**

Youth on the street are exposed to so many health problems. They experience irregular diet, sleep, and exposure to the elements, as well as violence and exploitation on the streets. Education is the first step in reducing high-risk behavior. Education can come in many forms and service providers working with homeless youth have to think of creative ways to disburse and distribute the information to young people.

Outreach programs not only operate as the first point of contact with homeless youth, but also serve the extremely important role of bringing targeted education to homeless young people in their own environment. Successful outreach education programs include peer education programs, which serve to not only empower the peer educator, but also disseminate the information to other young people in an understandable and relevant way.

Part of the education must include options for those young people who choose to continue participating in risky behaviors. Resources need to be available at all times so that young people have safer avenues in which to practice risky behavior. Examples of these resources include needle exchange programs, regular STI and HIV/AIDS testing, and access to items such as condoms.

The most important risk-reducing program would be to get young people off the streets and into shelter as soon as possible. This calls for a very committed and innovative way of working with homeless youth because not all homeless young people are quite ready to jump into a group home or transitional living center with a strict, mapped out plan with a caseworker. One example of a program working with the general population of homeless people who are not quite ready to live in a strict environment is Common Ground in New York City. This organization "is launching a program it calls 'First Step' for homeless people who don't wish to use the city's shelter system and are not ready to move into a more permanent home." The program rents rooms for $7/ night to people who "want security, privacy, a place to store their belongings, and no mandatory interviews with social workers."[cxxi] This could be translated into a similar program for hard-to-reach homeless youth.

**Healing[29]**

Many programs struggle with this step because they are so busy providing direct services that they never reach a point where healing can begin to occur. Meaningful programs are unable to service the deeper needs (such as services for mental health and trauma healing) of the homeless young people because the youth they work with are always in a state of crisis. Increased funding for unduplicated programming and networking between different service providers could both help organizations serve homeless youth in a seamless way.

Healing is encouraged in the expression of oneself through non-traditional ways, through one-on-one counseling, and though peer discussion groups. New Avenues for Youth in Portland, as well as The Spot in Denver, have facilities for a music/recording studio. All of the programs also offer art therapy, which is a "non-threatening method of expressing anger, abandonment, substance abuse and other critical issues, while also providing opportunities for positive socialization and engagement into more traditional forms of counseling and psychotherapy."[cxxii] For example, New Avenues for Youth uses a culinary workshop to teach young people about nutrition, effective consumer spending, food preparation and sanitation.

Los Angeles Youth Network (LAYN) in Los Angeles provides many services including housing services. Young people involved in LAYN enter though the outreach and drop-in services and can continue through LAYN's emergency shelter program, 30-day group home, and two-year transitional living center. Throughout this entire time, the

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[29] Healing is used in an all-inclusive and holistic sense. Whether healing be physical, psychological, social, or any other kind of healing, in order to get young people to a level where they can begin to develop trust as well as a sense of dignity and self-esteem.

young person stays with the same therapist.[30] This consistency provides a very meaningful relationship and opportunity for healing.

At New Avenues for Youth in Portland, Oregon, a peer-counseling program meets young people where they are while providing useful leadership skills to young counselors.

**Self-Sufficiency and Empowerment**

Organizations can help youth exert agency by encouraging them to input ideas and lead programs. By providing homeless young people the tools necessary to develop self-worth and leadership, youth can overcome barriers and create, for themselves, their own vision of the future.

Self-sufficiency and empowerment among homeless young people rests on community partnerships, support and funding. Government officials and community and business stakeholders have to think creatively along with opening their heart to understanding the unique issues related to youth homelessness.

Stakeholders and Community Members

If I were to create a similar breakdown of steps stakeholders need to take in order to help homeless youth, it would look similarly like the one laid out for homeless youth. Stakeholders and community members have to learn to put their *trust* in the belief that homeless youth deserve recognition and agency and are able find a positive role in relation to mainstream society. In building trust, businesses and communities could help *reduce the risks* of youth homelessness by fostering partnerships in employment and job training, as well as creative housing opportunities. The education and experience

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[30] LAYN receives a lot of their funding from government grants, such as DCFS, etc. They also receive a good deal of money through Children's Hospital of Los Angeles and some from private foundations and their own fundraising events.

homeless young people could gain from the partnerships and the education business and community partners could gain from working with homeless youth, would help all community members begin a process of *healing*. The healing and new insight would translate into a feeling of purpose for the youth.

Chapter 7) Sanggar Anak Akar

>Sitting around a crowded computer screen, the documentary began.
>  *"Sanggar Anak Akar is a medium of education for marginalized youth founded in 1994 in Jakarta..."*
>  *"...The vision of Sanggar akar is developing a model of education as a cultural movement that respects the dignity of marginalized youth and their need to grow fully into human beings."*
>  "Wow," said Miko, "Can you just stop it right there?" She pointed to the screen, her finger resting on the word "dignity." "...That respects the *dignity* of marginalized children," she repeated. "Now that is unbelievable."
>
> Miko, Former Albuquerque Street Youth

*Dignity:* Whether on the streets of Jakarta, of New Mexico, or of Los Angeles, programs that restore a sense of dignity in a young person will prove successful. It seems like such a small request, but successfully doing so requires an outstanding amount of support and patience. Homeless youth endure a tremendous amount of abuse both before coming to the street and while on the street. In addition to the extreme trauma experienced while living on the street, homeless youth experience a significant amount of social marginalization. Mainstream institutions and power structures remove them from decision-making positions and young people lose their voice. At another essential point leading up to youth homelessness, young people lose the life source that could help them avoid homelessness. This life source is community support and it fails to catch these rejected youth, in turn, striping them of the one thing they have left, and that is their dignity.

Recommendations for youth in the *Bring LA Home Campaign to End Homelessness* need to incorporate a real understanding of the importance of restoring dignity. With dignity comes purpose, and homeless young people will never fully succeed in leaving homelessness (or reentering back into mainstream society, if that is the goal of the *Bring LA Home* campaign), without a sense of purpose and future-orientation.

So, it is the job of the *Bring LA Home* campaign to create a list of recommendations that instate programs and policies whose overarching goals are to restore dignity in homeless youth. Programs and policies which focus on incorporating homeless youth back into a position of power in decisions that affect their lives, in addition to programs and policies that foster community reciprocity and involvement, will help homeless young people grow into full human beings.

A model that Los Angeles might look to for guidance is a "school"[31] for marginalized street youth in Jakarta, Indonesia called Sanggar Anak Akar (Community Children Roots). Sanggar Akar helps to restore dignity among street youth by empowering them to express their strengths, by inviting them to take part in decision-making, and by drawing on the natural resources of the surrounding community. The school could provide as a model for innovative housing options for youth, as well as a model for community members interested in working with the most hard-to-reach homeless youth.

Originally an outreach team made up of concerned community members, Sanggar Akar became a school and community for homeless young people and now helps them realize their potential by helping them develop a purpose within the Sanggar community. Ibe Karyanto (Karyo) found Sanggar Akar in 1994. Sanggar Akar began as an outreach team made up of concerned members of the community who noticed a growth in the number of young people living on the street. They brought services to and conducted study groups in different target communities all over Jakarta. With umbrella funding from the Jakarta Social Institute, Sanggar Akar found a permanent location to serve the

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[31] School in a broad sense of the word—Sanggar Akar is a school, a home, a *buttress*…a community.

needs of their growing clientele. Karyo, along with many other community members, created activities and programs surrounding music and the arts. In 2001, Sanggar Akar broke off from the Jakarta Social Institute to become it's own organization. Activities are conducted in the form of two-week workshops where community members come and share their particular trade, knowledge, or skill with the young people. By respecting and supporting each young person's strengths, as well as including the young people in decision-making, Karyo created an atmosphere of respect and obligation. Each young person fills a role within the Sanggar Akar community, whether it is waking up early to make breakfast for everyone, or sweeping the school at night after others have gone to bed. The young people are dignified with the responsibility of making sure tasks get done, so that the youth, themselves, self-regulate one another and an unspoken order exists throughout each day.

The school offers the young people a multi-purpose environment where they participate in both organized and self-motivated activities. Sanggar Akar houses approximately sixty young people every night, with more coming in and out throughout the day. Using recycled wood, the youth, themselves, built the home in which Sanggar Akar resides. There is a library, a classroom, a music studio, a computer room, and an editing room where the young people make their own videos and newspaper. Sanggar Akar focuses on the development of street kids into full human beings primarily through the expression of theater, music and art. "The kids make their own instruments from waste materials; for example, a piece of wood and a few bottle caps nailed together produces sound,"[cxxiii] reports the Home/Life Project.[32]

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[32] Home/Life Project gave cameras to 121 youth in 11 cities across the world, including youth from Sanggar Akar, in order for them to photograph the world as they see it.

Sanggar Akar is more than a school; it is a community in which homeless youth devise their own self-realization. Sanggar Akar is an agent of change that works with socially excluded, rejected, and marginalized youth, providing them with a socially transforming education. Young people are taught at every level, from basic skills in reading and writing to university-style lectures from visiting community members. They learn how to hold public events and launch public campaigns in order to inform the public about street youth as well as build solidarity with the surrounding communities.

Two characteristics at Sanggar Akar stand out and make the Sanggar community unique: the sharing of decision-making and the utilization of community talent and support. Involving the youth in decision-making encourages them to build trusting relationships through working with others, as well as supports them in their own self-expression. Sanggar Akar provides a nonjudgmental atmosphere in which homeless youth feel safe to experiment and grow. They then empower youth and the community by inviting community members to come share their knowledge and talents, so that young people have a means through which they can realize their own self-actualization.

Sanggar Akar empowers young people by involving them in decision-making. The Home/Life Project wrote, "Karyanto tries to involve the young people in everything. They can make their own plans and do things, such as determine the curriculum."[cxxiv] American bureaucracy can create structures within organizations that obstruct the voice of marginalized groups. Max Weber writes, "[Bureaucracy by] its specific nature…develops the more perfectly the more the bureaucracy is "dehumanized," the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements which escape calculation."[cxxv] This is

exactly opposite of what needs to be going on in an organization fighting to represent socially marginalized populations. Clark and Meloy brainstorm the possibility of an organization unhindered by the cogs of bureaucracy…and imagine Sanggar Akar: "Suppose that one could imagine an organizational structure with the individual as its building block, exhibiting a total regard for persons. Reasonably, this personal model would trade off control for empowerment, domination for freedom, and authority for consent. An organization built on these principles would chose its members and leaders, concern itself with the self-actualization of all is members, share the power tools of the organization, de-emphasize hierarchical relationships, and create opportunities for self-fulfilling jobs."[cxxvi] In nightly meetings at Sanggar Akar, young people decompress from the day's activities as well as discuss administrative and curriculum issues. Distributing decision-making power as well as keeping issues transparent invites young people into an atmosphere that cultivates respect and trust. This sharing of power instills dignity in homeless young people.

Sanggar Akar is also unique in that it takes advantage of human capital, "the idea that ordinary people with ordinary knowledge are the natural resources of the community."[cxxvii] Caring community members and community activists alike donate their time and talents to the youth at Sanggar Akar. They spend as much a two weeks teaching workshops in such areas as "Film Production and Editing" and "Women and Globalization." In this way, the burden of providing a holistic education to homeless young people is distributed among a community of "natural" leaders. But, almost more importantly, the sharing of knowledge between socially marginalized homeless youth and concerned community members provides a mode of inclusion that is essential in the

homeless youth's healing process, at the same time as breaking the barriers and stigmatizations community members may hold about homeless youth.

Young people's dignity is restored everyday with the expectation that they are rational human beings, able and willing to contribute to the Sanggar community. Sanggar Akar respects homeless youth by giving them the skills and tools, in workshops and daily activities, through which they can express themselves and exert their own agency. It encourages youth to build trusting relationships by involving them in decision-making. Homeless young people realize their potential through the building of knowledge and skills shared by volunteer community members. The community partnerships nurture tolerance and build solidarity between the street youth and the surrounding community.

The *Bring LA Home* campaign can emanate the values and characteristics that the Sanggar community uses in order to restore dignity among individual homeless youth. As Los Angeles' first 10-year plan to end homelessness, the *Bring LA Home* campaign must act as an agent of change. Through their youth specific recommendations, they should set standards to ensure youth involvement in decision-making, as well as activities and programs that foster community involvement. The *Bring LA Home* campaign is in a unique position; in July of this year they have the opportunity to make meaningful changes to programs and policies that create barriers to care for homeless youth. The *Bring LA Home* campaign truly has the opportunity to close the front door on homelessness if they are willing to act as agents of change.

Conclusion

*"Hey Windyn?"*

*"Yeah?"*

*"If you see me sleeping on the streets, or maybe, maybe at a bus stop somewhere and you know, I maybe haven't taken a shower in a couple of days or eaten, would you...would you still say hello?"*

*-Reyes, Albuquerque homeless youth*

Homeless young people are stigmatized and misunderstood. In a world that constantly views them as delinquent, non-existent, or hopelessly out of control of their lives, homeless youth have trouble finding footing and purpose in mainstream society. To deny homeless youth agency serves to greatly ignore their, often-creative ways of dealing with desperate situations and extreme conditions. Homeless young people come from many backgrounds and arrive on the street for various and complex reasons. The prevalence of abuse and neglect among homeless youth is significant. Many struggle with the onset of mental illness. Homeless youth participate in high-risk activities in order to survive on the street and these activities put them at a heightened risk of numerous health problems. For example, in response to the dangers faced on the street, homeless youth rationalize their circumstances by numbing the experiences with drugs and/or unhealthy relationships. The challenges young people face on the street makes reintegrating into mainstream society all the more difficult. So what we end up with, to use a quote by James Baldwin, are "...boys and girls are growing into stunted maturity, trying desperately to find a place to stand."[cxxviii]

Homeless youth cannot find solid ground beneath their feet, but service organizations in Los Angeles and model programs in Denver, Colorado Springs, and Portland, try and help young people regain their footing. These organizations first try and

build trust with young people. They then provide education to reduce high-risk behaviors such as needle sharing and unprotected sex. Next they employ various forms of programs concerned with the many stages of healing homeless youth must go through. Finally, organizations strive to provide homeless young people with the adequate support, skills, and opportunities so that they may become empowered and self-sufficient.

The *Bring LA Home* campaign should create recommendations that support the building of trust, reduction of high-risk behavior, process of healing, and road to empowerment. But in addition, the *Bring LA Home* campaign must propose more innovative programs for youth in the areas of housing. Using Sanggar Anak Akar as a model, the *Bring LA Home* campaign needs to support recommendations and programs that express a willingness to include homeless youth in the process of creating new programs. The *Bring LA Home* campaign must create recommendations that set a precedent for community building between the homeless youth population and the surrounding community. This campaign is the first time Los Angeles has attempted to create a long-term plan to address homelessness. As an advocate for change, the *Bring LA Home* campaign must break down the barriers and stigmatizations attached to homeless youth and really encourage community participation in solving this problem. Homeless youth are unique in their resilience, but they are also unique in that they possess the capacity to become incredible human beings. Recommendations for the homeless youth population must create opportunities for youth so that they can realize their potential.

Every homeless youth comes to the streets with complex histories of abuse, neglect and abandonment. These problems are complicated and compounded when survival results in unhealthy behaviors. By really *investing* in addressing these individual

problems <u>now</u>, Los Angeles can achieve what the Director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, Phillip Mangano, refers to as the "front door, back door" policy. We can close the front door to homelessness at the same time as encouraging and providing skills to vibrant young individuals so that they may realize a future with them in it. What can be more worthwhile than that?

**Appendix A:**

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

[33]

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[33] National Alliance to End Homelessness. "Fundamental Issues to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness."
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**Appendix B:**

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

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Information about Organizations

***Covenant House Los Angeles***
Covenant House is a client centered, strength based, and humanistic program that provides a gamete of services to youth ages 18-24.

*Los Angeles Youth Network (LAYN)*

Started in 1986, LAYN practices the delivery of unconditional and nonjudgmental services. They provide a range of services to youth ages 12-17, including outreach, case management, counseling, housing (emergency shelter with 17 beds, 30-day group home with 6 beds, and a 12-bed transitional living program for youths ages 15-19).
LAYN is unique in that young people stay with the same therapist throughout their entire time with the organization. Many young people first come to LAYN through their outreach services and then continue for lengths of up to five year through the transitional living program. The therapist provides consistency and a trusting relationship with the young person.
Of LAYN's clients, in fiscal year 2001-02, "over 75% transited to positive outcomes," which includes family reunification, foster/group home placement, and independent living.

## My Friend's Place

Works with young adults ages 12-24 (sometimes up to age 25 or 26—but these young people receive different services). My Friend's Place is completely privately funded, which gives the organization the ability to be flexible around who and why they are serving. The drop-in center provides young people with a place to receive basic services such as food, clothing, and showers, as well as services such as counseling, physical (Cirque du Monde[35]) and art therapy, intimate partner abuse counseling, and referrals.

## New Avenues for Youth

The programs at New Avenues for Youth in Portland, Oregon, help homeless young people "gain the life skills and support necessary to not only leave streetlife, but lead sustainable lives—and avoid lifelong homelessness." New Avenues goals are to:
"-prevent homelessness among youth by immediately responding to their needs
-engage homeless youth positively by building trust
-stabilize youth so they can begin to heal from abuse
-educate and train youth so they never have to return to the streets."

***Project Strife (Angel's Flight)***
Works with young people ages 10 to17 years old. Project Strife works with families in order to prevent kids from running away. Project Strife clients go to school at the Angel's

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[35] Cirque du Monde is an extension of Cirque du Soleil, which began as a street art form.

Flight school, which is off-site. The classroom holds a maximum of 16 students and the units are transferable to LAUSD.

Angel's Flight operates a short-term (15 to 21 day) shelter program.

## *The Door*

Located in New York City, The Door is a multi-purpose and comprehensive drop-in center—and much more—for both homeless and non-homeless youth. Began in 1972, The Door currently serves 7,346 members ages 12-21, of which 18% are currently or were formerly living in foster care and 28% are currently or were recently homeless or living with friends. The Door provides an incredible amount of integrated services and networking/linking among the existing service system. The Door is so important for young people because they practice a holistic and human approach to services. This approach "helps each individual member to dismantle the complex barriers that often stand in the way of success." The mission of The Door is "to empower young people to reach their potential by providing comprehensive youth development services in a diverse and caring environment."

## *United Coalition East Prevention Project*

Works with young people living on skid row. They are concerned about the lack of recreational opportunities in the area. They have a daily after school care program as well as conduct organizing campaigns with homeless young people.

## *Urban Peak*

Urban Peak, located in Denver, Colorado, is an exemplary program for homeless youth. They are committed to superb data collection and the production of real outcomes in order to strategically address the problem of homeless youth. They use the outcomes to create a strategic planning process "providing a blueprint for the agency to respond flexibly to new opportunities, the changing needs of youth, budget realities, and necessary changes in organizational structure." "Intake and assessment procedures document homeless history, resources, housing barriers, and what would be needed for the youth to leave homelessness.

"…I was too old to be adopted,
too young to be   alone."
-Stacey, Albuquerque Homeless Youth

**Endnotes**

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## Introduction

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## Chapter 1) Literature Review

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**Index of Terms**

**ACF**- Association for Children and Families

**ACYF**- Administration for Children, Youth and Families

**CCRHY**- Coordinating Council for Runaway and Homeless Youth (Promotes interagency collaboration on issues surrounding and affecting homeless youth.)

**Chronically Homeless-** homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.

**Continuum of Care (CoC)**- is a comprehensive and coordinated housing and serve delivery system providing a balance of outreach, emergency, transitional, and permanent housing and service resources, so that homeless persons can make the transition from the streets to jobs and independent living.

**DCFS**- Department of Children and Family Services

**Doubled-up**- temporarily staying with family or friends

**Emancipated foster youth-** is considered to occur when a youth reaches age 18 or is no longer under the
jurisdiction of the court, or is married or has entered military service.

**HMIS-** Homeless Management Information System

**Homeless youth-** unaccompanied persons, age 12 to 24. Youth may have run away or were forced out of their home and are not in the company of a parent or guardian, and who may not be legally emancipated.

**Human costs-** diminished health and well-being of homeless people, the burden on business through impaired access to their goods and services, and the detriment to the general community due to fear and

**LACEH&H**- Los Angeles Coalition to End Hunger and Homelessness

**LAHSA**- Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority

**McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act**- The first comprehensive federal effort to combat homelessness. It originally consisted of fifteen programs providing a range of services to homeless people, including the Continuum of Care Programs: the Supportive Housing Program, the Shelter Plus Care Program, and the Single Room Occupancy Program, as well as the Emergency Shelter Grant Program.[i]

**NAEH**- National Alliance to End Homelessness

**NCHE**- National Center for Homeless Education

**NHCH**- National Health Care for the Homeless

**NISMART**- National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Throwaway Children

**NNY**- National Network for Youth

**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, and Volunteers of America.

**NYAC**- National Youth Advocacy Coalition

**RHYA**- Runaway and Homeless Youth Act

**RHYMIS**- Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System

**SAM**- Society of Adolescent Medicine

**Scattered Site-** housing developments or individual units that are not located at one-single location.

**Service-Enriched Housing-** Housing for families and individuals with no service needs or low or moderate intensity service needs, in which crisis intervention, resources/referral, and time-limited case management are available to all residents.

**Single Room Occupancy (SRO)-** private rooms that contain either food preparation or sanitary facilities, or both, and are designed for occupancy by a single individual.

**SPA-** Service Planning Areas (There are a total of 8 SPAs in LA County)

**Special Needs Housing-** Housing developed for and occupied by people with a variety of disabilities who are at risk of homelessness but may not have been literally or chronically homeless.

**Street children**- Includes youth up to age 18 and is broken up into three categories: children "on" the street, children "of" the street, and abandoned children.

**Survival crimes**- crimes committed in order to secure food, shelter, or clothing.

**Survival sex**- "The selling of sex to meet subsistence needs."[ii]

**Title VII-B**- The Education for Homeless Children and Youth portion of the McKinney-Vento Act. It relies on the "basic standard that homeless children and youth 'should have the same access to elementary and secondary education as children whose parents are fully established residents of the state'."[iii]

**Transition Age youth-** refers to youth ages 18-25. This group faces particular challenges because they have reached adulthood in legal terms but still require supportive services and housing. Included in this group are youth, who, because they have reached 18 years, no longer can be served by certain child dependency and delinquency systems but nonetheless require help.

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ii "This includes the exchanging sex for shelter, food, drugs, or money and is one of the most damaging consequences of homelessness." (Moore, Jan. "Unaccompanied and Homeless Youth Review of Literature (1995-2005)." 18 Jan 2006 <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprevention/download/pdf/Homeless%20Youth%20Review%20of%20Literature.pdf>.)

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*"You get called a bum so many times that you start hanging out with the kids that are fellow bums and it just sort of becomes a fraternity of bums. You know, crusties, gutter punks, you know, slime, larvae—it doesn't matter. Then you start getting great names like "piss." That's when you know you've lost your spark, something's lost in you. Once you get a nickname like that and you prefer to be called by it, then you're lost. Because at that point you've lost a little bit of humanity." –Reptile, Albuquerque Homeless Youth*

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