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Youth Who Are Homeless: A Closer Look

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Youth Who Are Homeless: A Closer Look

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Consequences of Life on the Street for Homeless Youth

- Increased likelihood of high-risk behavior
- Greater risk of mental illnesses, poor health and nutrition, and low self-esteem
- Increased likelihood of exchanging sex for food, clothing, and shelter (also known as “survival sex”). Or, dealing drugs to meet basic needs
- Difficulty attending school due to transportation or lack of necessary enrollment records

Homeless youth are typically defined as unaccompanied young people ages 12 and older who do not have a permanent place to stay and who are living in shelters, on the streets, in cars or vacant buildings, or are “couch surfing” or living in other unstable circumstances.

Voice of Youth Count Survey, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago
Chapin Hall. (2017). Retrieved from <https://voicesofyouthcount.org/chapin-hall/>

As many as 1 in 10 young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 experience homelessness over a 12-month period.

About half of this is “couch surfing,” which could include crashing at a friend’s house for a few days between apartments but typically involves more long-term housing instability.

The other half is “explicit” homelessness, such as sleeping in cars, sheds, or under bridges. The study found that rural youth were just as likely to have experienced homelessness as youth in cities.

**END
YOUTH
HOMELESSNESS**

Homeless Youth - Causes

Family issues: family intolerance of sexual and gender issues, sexual and physical abuse

Systemic issues: gentrification, racism, unstable temporary housing

Economic issues: poverty and family financial crises

Often homeless youth are underreported and difficult to track.



Statistics and reality are miles apart.



Homeless Youth – National Stats

- Overall, unaccompanied homeless youth represent 6% of the total homeless population in the United States (HUD, 2017).
- There are approximately 35,686 unaccompanied homeless youth throughout all of the United States (HUD, 2017).
- 89% or 31,862 individuals are youth between the ages of 18 and 24 (HUD, 2017).
- 11% or 3,824 individuals are youth under the age of 18 (HUD, 2017).
- Overall, unaccompanied homeless youth represent 6% of the total homeless population in the United States (HUD, 2017).

Homeless Youth - Race and Ethnicity

38% identify as African American

25% identify as Hispanic

8% identify as White

20% identify with two or more races

Serving Homeless Youth

With a lack of resources and increased need, it is becoming increasingly challenging for social workers to balance the youths’ risks and the youths’ self-determination due to mental illness, suicide, substance abuse, transient population, and marginalization.

A strong foundation in ecological theory would assist the social worker with understanding of the youths’ micro and macro systems and their feelings of self-oppression.