



A WAY HOME AMERICA

WHO WE ARE: A NATIONAL INITIATIVE TO END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

A Way Home America (AWHA) is a national initiative to build the movement to prevent and end homelessness among young people. Together we are building on Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness. We are homeless youth providers, advocates, researchers, government agencies, philanthropists and young people uniting behind a common goal:

In 2020, prevent and end homelessness among all youth and young adults. Ensure that homelessness among youth and young adults is rare, and if it occurs, experiences of homelessness are brief and one-time.

THE ISSUE: YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN THE UNITED STATES

“ If I were your daughter, your cousin, you wouldn’t want me to be there [experiencing homelessness]. We are trying to come up. ”

— Violet Banks, speaking about her experience of homelessness,
2015 White House Policy Briefing on Youth Homelessness

“ Youth homelessness remains a persistent challenge for our nation. Every night, thousands of unaccompanied young people go to sleep without the safety, stability, and support of a family or a home. In contrast to common perceptions, homelessness is not just an adult phenomenon; youth are resorting to abandoned buildings, park benches, makeshift shelters, and staying with friends and sometimes strangers. ”¹

Despite incredible difficulty, young people experiencing homelessness have strengths and hopes for their own future. We must ensure all young people have access to safe housing and the support to achieve their potential.

IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO PREVENT AND END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS.

PREVALENCE: HOW MANY YOUNG PEOPLE ARE HOMELESS?

Annually **550,000 youth and young adults (under age 24) experience an episode of homelessness longer than one week annually**²

Additionally, as many as 1.6 million minors (under age 18) experience at least one night away from home³

Any One Night **36,907 youth and young adults were experiencing homelessness without a parent or guardian during one night in January 2015**⁴

Efforts are underway across the country to improve the way young people are counted, as this number is commonly understood to be an undercount. We anticipate that many communities will show increases in the numbers of youth experiencing homelessness as counting methodology improves.

Join the effort.
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COMMON CAUSES: WHY ARE YOUNG PEOPLE HOMELESS?

Conflict and/or abuse at home is the number one reason young people cite for experiencing homelessness.

36% of young people who aged out of foster care experienced homelessness for at least one night after exiting the foster care system.⁵

Up to 40% of young people experiencing homelessness are LGBTQ, many of whom encounter rejection from their families or community.⁶

RACIAL INEQUITIES: Due to historical and institutional racism and other structural inequities, overwhelmingly, young people in crisis are disproportionately young people of color.

FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES: While solutions to these common causes are not within the scope of this document, we know that families and coordinated community-wide responses are critical parts of the solution.

WHY ACT NOW?

WE ARE AT A CRITICAL TIME TO LEVERAGE LOCAL, STATE, AND NATIONAL EFFORTS TO END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS. Efforts in local communities throughout the country are underway, efforts which often build on decades of experience with young people. The time is also ripe because federal agencies are addressing this issue in greater coordination than in the past and there is increased philanthropic commitment, research focus and public awareness.

We must work together to leverage this momentum. In the coming year we will:

- » Learn from and authentically engage young people who have experienced homelessness about how to solve the problem.
- » Identify actions and policies necessary to eliminate youth and young adult homelessness. We'll then be able to speak in a collective voice about what is needed.
- » Accelerate our efforts in local communities by launching 100-Day Challenges that set ambitious goals for housing homeless youth and by sharing successful outcomes for replication nation-wide.
- » Elevate the issue of youth homelessness nationally.

TAKE ACTION

JOIN THE EFFORT

Sign up for our newsletter and social networks at www.awayhomeamerica.org

ADD YOUR VOICE

If you are an organization that wants to be involved or has input for our collective effort, email megan@awayhomeamerica.org

2016 AWAH STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Butler Family Fund
Campion Advocacy Fund
Casey Family Programs
Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago
Coalition for Juvenile Justice
Coalition for the Homeless Houston/Harris Co.
Covenant House International
Forum for Youth Investment
Funders Together to End Homelessness
Larkin Street Youth Services
Lighthouse Youth Services
Los Angeles LGBT Center

LUK
MANY Network
Melville Charitable Trust
Multnomah County Oregon
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Network for Youth
Raikes Foundation
Simmons Foundation
State of Minnesota
True Colors Fund

See our full membership at
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- ¹ United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, Framework to End Youth Homelessness: A Resource Text for Dialogue and Action (2013).
- ² National Alliance to End Homelessness, An Emerging Framework for Ending Unaccompanied Youth Homelessness (2012).
- ³ United States Department of Justice, National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway and Thrownaway Children (2002).
- ⁴ The 2015 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (2015).
- ⁵ Courtney, M., Dworsky, A., Lee, J., & Raap, M., Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 23 and 24 (2009).
- ⁶ Durso, L.E., & Gates, G.J., Serving Our Youth: Findings from a National Survey of Service Providers Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth who are Homeless or At Risk of Becoming Homeless (2012).

Join the effort.