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# Housing Instability Among Young People in Prince George's County

A Technical Report to the Department of Social Services

**Nan Marie Astone**  
**Ross Pologe**



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County Executive



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## Introduction

At the request of the Prince George's County Department of Social Services (DSS), the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health's Center for Adolescent Health (CAH) provided technical assistance for an investigation into the nature and scope of the population of homeless and unstably housed young people (under 25) in the County. The purpose of this activity was to design programming to assist young people experiencing homelessness and/or unstable housing.

The CAH personnel who provided technical assistance were Nan Astone and Ross Pologe. Astone is an associate professor in the Department of Population, Family and Reproductive Health in the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the faculty associate of the CAH who heads up the homeless youth activities. Pologe is the chair of the CAH Community Advisory Board, as well as the director of Fellowship of Lights and a co-leader of the Baltimore Homeless Youth Initiative. He has 36 years of experience as an adult serving homeless and unstably housed youth.

The specific aims of this activity were:

- to estimate the number of homeless and unstably housed people under the age of 25 through surveys; and
- to identify through focus groups the needs that young people ages 16 to 24 perceive as most urgent in order to begin to design programming for them.

To accomplish the first aim, service providers who serve young people in Prince George's County gathered information from a survey administered to all the young people they served. This is called a provider-based enumeration. Pologe facilitated the participation of many of these providers. Most participating agencies interviewed young people whom they had served between 6 June 2011 and 19 June 2011, but one (Sasha Bruce) sent outreach workers to places where young people who are unstably housed congregate and interviewed them. Astone consulted on developing the survey instrument and provided technical assistance in the analysis of the data.

To accomplish the second aim, DSS and its partner providers recruited young people from among their caseload and conducted seven focus groups. Astone provided technical assistance in the analysis of transcripts of the focus groups.

## Executive Summary

The *provider-based estimation* identified 185 young people, of whom 28% were under 18. Three-quarters were African-American and 60% female. Just under a fifth of the young people were gender minorities, that is, they either: 1) identified their gender as transgender or intersex; or 2) reported their sexual orientation as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Two-fifths did not have a secondary degree, and the same fraction had children of their own.

A quarter of the young people slept in what they called “their own home” the night before the survey, but over a third of them were not sure they could continue to do so in the immediate future. Roughly 25% of those who spent the last night at home had stayed there less than three months, while 40% of those who stayed with family or friends had spent less than three months there. Those under 18 were more likely to have spent the night in a situation provided by an agency, while those 18 and older were more likely to have fended for themselves.

When asked the reasons why they were not able to stay at home, roughly 20% of the respondents reported that a combination of problems with housing, parents, and their own behaviors were *all* reasons why. One-third of respondents under age 18 either refused to name or could not name the reason for their unstable situation, whereas the majority of those 18 and above were able to do so.

Approximately 40% of the young people mentioned working to support themselves, and a similar percentage mentioned borrowing money. One-fifth said they received resources from service agencies, a response that was much more common among those who were over 18. Each sector of the informal economy (legal and illegal activities) was mentioned by more than 10% of the young people as their source of support. Young men were more likely than young women to work, less likely to get resources from services, more likely to get resources from the informal economy (including illegal activities), and less likely to get resources in other ways. The same percentage of young men and young women engaged in transactional sex (about 5% each). Almost 20% of gender minorities engaged in transactional sex.

Findings from the focus groups include:

- Recommendations about strategies to reach unstably housed youth. These should include both traditional methods of advertising (e.g., fliers at gas stations, metro, liquor stores, etc.), as well as new technologies (Facebook, Twitter). Face-to-face outreach should also be used, particularly at schools.
- The need for more long-term housing services that are focused toward young people and do not have age restrictions or time limits.
- A persistent theme of all focus groups was the need for one-on-one mentoring that is targeted to a young person’s individual needs.
- Job training should include, or even focus on, “soft skills,” such as how to interview, write a resume, fill out a job application, etc.
- Logistical problems, like getting information (about jobs, scholarships, other opportunities) and transportation, are areas where young people need help.
- Young men believed that in order to receive services, one had to be in trouble with the law or otherwise connected with some public system.
- Homeless and unstably housed LGBTQ young people face additional challenges owing to a general lack of both supports and safe and appropriate resources.

***Recommendations based on the analysis include:***

1. Conduct information campaigns that identify available resources in order to raise awareness that there are services for young people who are experiencing housing instability.
2. Develop strong working relationships among homeless youth providers, Prince George's County Public Schools, and Prince George's County Community College that include establishment of outreach to ALL young people and parents, and that provide supports and identify available resources.
3. Alert service providers who have contact with youth or young adults experiencing stressful circumstances or who exhibit behavioral problems to the high possibility of housing instability among these young people. Service providers should receive training to connect these young people with appropriate services.
4. Develop a mentoring program for unstably housed young people that would recruit and partner caring adults with these young people in order to provide ongoing support and connections.
5. Identify Service Navigators to function as mobile case managers for homeless and unstably housed young people who are not otherwise connected with programs or agencies in order to assist those young people in identifying and accessing services, systems, and needed supports.
6. Identify Workforce Development programming to assist young people in developing the skills and confidence to successfully seek and gain employment.
7. Establish Youth Development services specifically geared to young men who are not involved in the child welfare, juvenile, or criminal justice systems.
8. Forge linkages with the LGBTQ youth task force to bring further attention to homeless and unstably housed LGBTQ youth and young adults and ensure development of safe and appropriate services for this population.
9. Identify and link all local systems involved in serving transition-aged youth and young adults in order to best coordinate resources that include and accommodate homeless and unstably housed youth and young adults, ages 16–24.
10. Include in the continuum of care the provision of enrichment opportunities for young people in addition to meeting basic needs.
11. Prince George's County DSS and the Homeless Youth Work Group should continue to conduct provider-based enumerations on an annual basis to consistently gather information for macro analysis and planning, and encourage stakeholders to use that data to assist their program planning.
12. Prince George's County DSS and the Homeless Youth Work Group should use other available sources to collect information on unstably housed youth, such as the number of students identifying themselves as homeless and filing Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) applications.
13. Prince George's County DSS and the Homeless Youth Work Group should work closely with Prince George's County Schools to provide assistance to unaccompanied homeless students and the staff who work with students.
14. Prince George's County DSS and the Homeless Youth Work Group should work with the Homeless Services Partnership to encourage investment in and development of additional services focused on homeless youth and young adults.

## Data Collection Activities

There were two sets of data collection activities.

### *Provider-Based Estimation*

DSS recruited a number of agencies working in the county to participate in a provider-based enumeration of unstably housed young people using a survey instrument (included as Appendix A).

### *Focus Groups*

DSS recruited young people to participate in seven focus groups, as follows:

8 June 2011	20- to 24-year-old women in transitional housing (7)
9 June 2011	16- to 24-year-old custodial mothers in emergency housing (10)
15 June 2011	20- to 24-year-old LGBTQ (2)
16 June 2011	20- to 24-year-old men (8)
20 June 2011	16- to 21-year-old incarcerated young women (4)
21 June 2011	18- to 21-year-old young women in foster care (10)
21 June 2011	18- to 21-year-old young men in foster care (6)

The focus groups lasted for an hour and were tape-recorded and transcribed. Two questions were posed during the groups: 1) Where and how can DSS reach unstably housed young people? 2) What are the greatest needs of unstably housed young people?

## Results: Service Provider Estimation

### *Descriptive Characteristics*

The street count yielded surveys from 185 people. Table 1 contains information on the basic characteristics of this group, first separated into respondents who were under 18 years of age and those who were 18 or older, and then merged for totals. The group breaks down roughly in thirds by age, with approximately 28% of the respondents under 18 and two-thirds under 21. Since preliminary analysis had revealed a number of differences between those under 18 and those 18 and older, most of the data were stratified by this age grouping.

**Table 1. Characteristics of the Young People by Age (under 18 and 18 and older)**

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Younger than 18</i>		<i>18 and older</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Ethnicity						
African-American	46	90.2	92	69.2	138	75.0
Caucasian	0	0.0	11	8.3	11	6.0
Latino	2	3.9	23	17.3	25	13.6
Other	3	5.9	7	5.3	10	5.4
Gender						
Female	29	56.9	83	62.4	112	60.9
Male	16	31.4	43	32.3	59	32.1
Transgender	6	11.8	5	3.8	11	6.0
Intersex	0	0.0	2	1.5	2	1.1
Sex Orientation						
Straight	40	76.9	94	70.7	134	72.4
Gay	8	15.4	15	11.3	23	12.4
Lesbian	2	3.9	9	6.8	11	6.0
Bisexual	0	0.0	1	0.8	1	0.5
Refused to answer	2	3.9	14	10.5	16	8.7
Education						
Less than hs	28	57.1	43	33.3	71	39.9
HS grad or GED	18	36.7	78	60.5	96	53.9
Some college	2	4.1	8	6.2	10	5.6
AA	1	2.0	0	0.0	1	0.6
Parent						
No kids	42	80.8	74	55.6	116	62.7
Live with kids	4	7.7	44	33.1	48	26.0
Other	6	11.5	15	11.3	21	11.4
Arrested						
No	34	66.7	93	72.1	127	70.6
Yes	17	33.3	36	27.9	53	29.4
Foster Care						
No	48	96.0	111	85.4	159	88.3
Yes	2	4.0	19	14.6	21	11.7
Runaway						
No	39	76.5	100	79.4	139	78.5
Yes	12	23.5	26	20.6	38	21.5



Three-quarters of the respondents were African American. Among those who were younger than 18, there were no European American respondents. A majority of the respondents (61%) were female. More than 7% were either transgender or intersex, and only 72% were straight. It is clear from these large percentages of sexual minorities that LGBTQ issues are of paramount importance for unstably housed young people.

Table 1 also shows that very few of the respondents had any post-secondary education. The total figures indicate that 40% did not have even a GED or high school diploma. Of course, many of the 51 respondents under age 18 would not yet have earned a diploma even if they had been in the right grade for their age. Nevertheless, this population is clearly educationally disadvantaged.

Almost 40% of the respondents were parents, and most of those who had children lived with them. In tables not shown, we find these respondents were almost all women. One-third of the respondents had been arrested, 10% had been in foster care, and a fifth had run away. In tables not shown, we discovered that the population was, according to their own self-reports, quite healthy, with fewer than 15% indicating that they suffered from any physical or mental health condition.

### *Recent Housing*

The respondents answered three questions about their recent housing. They told us where they stayed: 1) last night, 2) within the last two weeks (could give multiple answers), and 3) within the last three months (could give multiple answers). They were offered 12 options (including a catch-all “other”), which for both substantive reasons and the frequency with which an option was reported were regrouped, as shown in Table 2.

***Table 2. How Questionnaire Items Regarding Places Stayed Were Regrouped***

<i>New Category for Where Stayed</i>	<i>Questionnaire Category</i>
Own home	Own home
Family or friends	Family or friends
Service provider	Transitional housing Youth program Permanent supportive housing Hotel or motel paid for by an agency voucher
Other (organized by the young person)	Hotel or motel paid for by you Out of doors Adult shelter Treatment center Jail Other

Unstably housed young people, in contrast to homeless adults, can usually find a place to sleep for the night, with three-quarters sleeping either at home or with family and friends. Panel a of Table 3 shows that three-quarters of the young people slept either in their own home or with family and friends, and this did not differ for the underage and those 18 and over. This finding, which is typical of studies of unstably housed young people, illustrates that this population, in contrast to their older counterparts, have not completely broken with their families and are still embedded in social networks. Only 65% of the young people were sure, however, that they could continue to sleep at home for the next two weeks. This percentage is substantially higher than the percentages for the other locations, but it is still the case that *a third of the young people who slept at home the night before could not be sure they could continue to do so, even for an immediate period of the future*. Table 3 also reveals that those under 18 were more likely to have spent the night in a situation provided by an agency, while those 18 and older were more likely to fend for themselves. The numbers are very small for these categories, however, and we must be cautious about over-interpreting these age differences. Changing the time frame of the recent housing question does not appreciably alter the distribution of where young people stayed, as can be seen from panels b and c of Table 3.

**Table 3. Places Young People Stayed Recently**

**a. Places Young People Stayed Last Night and the Percent Who Are Sure They Can Stay There for Two Weeks**

Places	Younger than 18			18 or Older			Total		
	n	%	% that are sure can stay for 2 weeks	n	%	% that are sure can stay for 2 weeks	n	%	% that are sure can stay for 2 weeks
Own home	15	28.8	66.7	34	25.6	64.7	49	26.5	65.3
Family and friends	23	44.2	69.6	72	54.1	26.4	95	51.4	36.8
Services	4	7.7	25.0	3	2.3	33.3	7	3.8	28.6
Other	1	1.9	0.0	13	9.8	30.8	14	7.6	28.6
Would not say	9	17.3	44.4	11	8.3	81.8	20	10.8	65.0
Total	52	100	59.6	133	100	41.4	185	100	46.5

**b. Places Young People Stayed in the Last Two Weeks (could stay in more than one place)**

Places	n	%	n	%	n	%
Own home	11	21.2	28	21.1	39	21.1
Family and friends	20	38.5	69	51.9	89	48.1
Services	7	13.5	9	6.8	16	8.7
Other	3	5.8	15	11.3	18	9.7
Would not say	11	21.2	12	9.0	23	12.4

**c. Places Young People Stayed in the Last Three Months (could stay in more than one place)**

Places	n	%	n	%	n	%
Own home	10	19.2	32	24.1	42	22.7
Family and friends	22	42.3	63	47.4	85	46.0
Services	6	11.5	9	6.8	15	8.1
Other	3	5.8	18	13.5	21	11.4
Would not say	11	21.2	11	8.3	22	11.9

Table 4 shows how long young people had been staying at whatever place they slept last night. The table shows that 23% of those who spent the last night at home had stayed there less than three months, while 40% of those who stayed with family or friends had spent less than three months there (slightly less among the younger respondents).

**Table 4. Time Spent in Place Stayed Last Night by Place and Age**

Place Stayed Last Night	Length of Time Spent in Place Stayed Last Night					Total
	Less than 2 weeks	Greater than or equal to 2 weeks and less than 1 month	Greater than or equal to 1 month and less than 3 months	Greater than or equal to 3 months and less than 1 year	Greater than 1 year	
<b>a. Total</b>	%	%	%	%	%	%
Own home	8.2	6.1	8.2	51.0	26.5	100
Family or friends	12.6	14.7	13.7	34.7	24.2	100
Services	28.6	57.1	0.0	0.0	14.3	100
Other	64.3	14.3	14.3	0.0	7.1	100
Refused	35.0	5.0	15.0	30.0	15.0	100
<b>b. Younger than 18</b>						
Own home	13.3	0.0	6.7	53.3	26.7	100
Family or friends	8.7	0.0	21.7	60.9	8.7	100
Services	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100
Other	0.0	100	0.0	0.0	0.0	100
Refused	55.6	0.0	22.2	0.0	22.2	100
<b>c. 18 and Older</b>						
Own home	5.9	8.8	8.8	50.0	26.5	100
Family or friends	13.9	19.4	11.1	26.4	29.2	100
Services	0.0	66.7	0.0	0.0	33.3	100
Other	69.2	7.7	15.4	0.0	7.7	100
Refused	18.2	9.1	9.1	54.6	9.1	100

### *Reasons for Housing Instability*

The reasons why young people are unstably housed are complex and do not lend themselves to easy summary. The intent of the questionnaire was that young people would be asked to identify the *one main reason* for their housing problems and would then go on to list other issues that were part of the reason. The young people, however, often provided more than one main reason. It is not clear if this was due to their refusal to identify one main reason or if the people administering the questionnaire did not understand. In any case, over 50% of the respondents provided more than one “main reason” for their housing instability. Given this response, we did not separate out the “main” reason answers from the “part of the reason” ones, but rather tabulated, for each respondent, all the reasons they gave, whether “main reason” or “part of the reason.” In Table 5 we explain how we collapsed the 18 possible reasons into four categories: housing issues, parental behavior, young person’s own behavior, and other issues.

***Table 5. How Questionnaire Items Regarding Reasons for Housing Instability Were Regrouped***

<i>New Category for Where Stayed</i>	<i>Questionnaire Category</i>
Housing issues	Family lost housing Evicted with nowhere to go House was too small Could not contribute to rent Left foster care with nowhere to go
Parental behavior	Parents not meeting basic needs Drugs or alcohol use by parents Crime in the household Violence in the household Intolerant of young person’s sexual orientation
Young person’s own behavior	Refused to follow parents’ rules Fighting with parents Young person’s delinquent behavior Young person’s own drug or alcohol use Someone in the house young person could not stand Pregnancy
Other issues	Migrated with no place to go Other reason

In panel a of Table 6, we show all combinations of reasons that young people reported. The most common response (reported by almost 20% of the respondents) was that problems with housing, parents, and the young person all contributed to housing instability.

Panel b of Table 6 summarizes and adds to the information in panel a. Housing was cited by two-thirds and their own behavior was cited by two-thirds. Two-fifths cited parental behavior. This pattern differed quite sharply by age, however, with younger respondents being less likely to report housing or their own behavior than those who were 18 and older. The other important result from Table 6a and 6b is the fact that fully one-third of respondents under age 18 either refused or could not name the reason for their unstable situation. This was a very rare response among those 18 and above.

In panel c of Table 6, we illustrate that most young people cited multiple reasons for their housing instability.

**Table 6. Reasons for Housing Instability**

	under 18		18 and older		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<b>A. Summary of Reasons</b>						
No reason given	19	36.5	4	3.0	23	12.4
Housing issues only	6	11.5	21	15.8	27	14.6
Young person's behavior only	9	17.3	18	13.5	27	14.6
Other issues only	0	0.0	5	3.8	5	2.7
Housing issues and parental behavior	3	5.8	6	4.5	9	4.9
Housing issues and young person's behavior	0	0.0	23	17.3	23	12.4
Housing issues and other reasons	0	0.0	1	0.8	1	0.5
Parent behavior and young person's behavior	2	3.9	10	7.5	12	6.5
Parent behavior and other issues	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Young person's behavior and other issues	0	0.0	1	0.8	1	0.5
Housing issues, parent behavior, and young person's behavior	5	9.6	31	23.3	36	19.5
Housing issues, parent behavior, and other issues	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Housing issues, young person's behavior, and other issues	0	0.0	1	0.8	1	0.5
Parent behavior, young person's behavior, and other issues	1	1.9	2	1.5	3	1.6
Housing issues, parent behavior, young person's behavior, and other issues	7	13.5	10	7.5	17	9.2
Total	52	100	133	100	185	100
<b>B. Percent Who Claimed Each Type of Reason</b>						
Housing issues	21	40.4	93	69.9	114	61.6
Parent behavior	18	34.6	59	44.4	77	41.6
Young person's behavior	24	46.2	96	72.2	120	64.9
Other issues	8	15.4	20	15.0	28	15.1
No reasons	19	36.5	4	3.0	23	12.4
<b>C. Number of Reasons</b>						
0	19	36.5	4	3.0	23	12.4
Only 1	15	28.9	44	33.1	59	31.9
At least 2	18	34.6	85	63.9	103	55.7
At least 3	13	25.0	44	33.1	57	30.8

The way young people support themselves is as complex as the reasons why they experience housing instability. In Table 7 we show how we have re-categorized the items that young people could endorse as to how they were getting money and resources at the time they were interviewed.

**Table 7. How Questionnaire Items Regarding Getting Resources Were Regrouped**

<i>New Category for Getting Resources</i>	<i>Questionnaire Category</i>
Work	Full-time work Part-time work Temporary work or day labor
Services	Assistance from an agency Food stamps
Borrowing	Borrowing money
Informal economy, legal activities	Pawning items Selling blood Begging
Informal economy, Illegal activities	Selling drugs Transactional sex Stealing
Other	

The majority of young people (60%) reported only one way of getting resources. Among those who get resources in at least two ways (panel c), two-thirds get money from work and fully a quarter engage in illegal activities.

In panel a of Table 8, we show how many young people reported each of the ways of getting resources. Panel a shows that approximately 40% of the young people reported working, and a similar percentage reported borrowing. One-fifth get resources from services, but this was much more common among those who were over 18. Each sector of the informal economy (legal and illegal activities) was reported by more than 10 percent of the young people. While there was no age difference in illegal activities, fewer people under age 18 reported begging, selling blood, or pawning to get money.

**Table 8. Strategies to Get Money and Resources**

	under 18		18 and older		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<b>a. Overall and by Age</b>						
Get resources from full-time, part-time, and temporary work	14	26.9	59	44.4	73	39.5
Get resources from food stamps or agency assistance	2	3.9	40	30.1	42	22.7
Get resources from borrowing	28	53.9	41	30.8	69	37.3
Get resources from pawning items, begging, or selling blood	4	7.7	16	12.0	20	10.8
Get resources from selling drugs, stealing or transactional sex	6	11.5	17	12.8	23	12.4
Get resources from other activities	9	17.3	24	18.1	33	17.8
<b>b. Among Those Who Get Resources Only One Way (n=111)</b>						
Get resources from full-time, part-time and temporary work					31	27.9
Get resources from food stamps or agency assistance					13	11.7
Get resources from borrowing					37	33.3
Get resources from pawning items, begging, or selling blood					2	1.8
Get resources from selling drugs, stealing or transactional sex					7	6.3
Get resources from other activities					21	18.9
<b>c. Among Those Who Get Resources More Than One Way (n=66)</b>						
Get resources from full-time, part-time and temporary work					42	63.6
Get resources from food stamps or agency assistance					29	43.9
Get resources from borrowing					32	48.5
Get resources from pawning items, begging, or selling blood					18	27.3
Get resources from selling drugs, stealing or transactional sex					16	24.2
Get resources from other activities					12	18.2

In Table 9 we show how strategies of getting resources vary by sex and gender. In panel a, we distinguish between male and female respondents (i.e., neither transgender nor intersex) regardless of sexual orientation. In panel b, we distinguish between gender minorities and others. We considered people to be gender minorities if they identified as transgender, intersex, lesbian, gay, or bisexual (non-gender minorities are straight people who identified as either male or female).

Panel a shows that young men were more likely than young women to work, less likely to get resources from services, more likely to get resources from the informal economy (including illegal activities), and less likely to get resources in other ways. One possible explanation for the latter is that the questionnaire did not offer forms of work in the informal economy that are common among young women—for example hair styling, manicuring, and unlicensed child care. A notable finding (though the numbers are small, and therefore the tables are not shown) is that the *same percentage of young men and young women engaged in transactional sex*; the percentage is about 5%. The sex difference in the illegal activities shown in Table 9 is due to the greater participation of young men in stealing and selling drugs. Among gender minorities, almost 20% (10 out of 51) engaged in transactional sex, and their participation in the informal economy was higher than others'. In addition, gender minority people appear to be less likely to get resources from services.

**Table 9. Strategies to Get Money and Resources by Sex, Gender**

	<i>Young Men (n=59)</i>		<i>Young Women (n=112)</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>a. By Sex (n=163)</b>				
Get resources from full-time, part-time and temporary work	33	55.9	36	32.1
Get resources from food stamps or agency assistance	4	6.8	37	33.0
Get resources from borrowing	25	42.4	40	35.7
Get resources from pawning items, begging, or selling blood	8	13.6	9	8.0
Get resources from selling drugs, stealing or transactional sex	9	15.3	7	6.3
Get resources from other activities	4	6.8	27	24.1
<b>b. By Gender Minority Status</b>				
	<i>Not Gender Minority (n=134)</i>		<i>Gender Minority (n=51)</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Get resources from full-time, part-time and temporary work	53	39.6	20	39.2
Get resources from food stamps or agency assistance	35	26.1	7	13.7
Get resources from borrowing	52	38.8	17	33.3
Get resources from pawning items, begging, or selling blood	8	6.0	12	23.5
Get resources from selling drugs, stealing or transactional sex	9	6.7	14	27.5
Get resources from other activities	23	17.2	10	19.6



## Results: Focus Groups

Members of the focus groups were asked to address two questions:

- Where and how can DSS find and reach out to unstably housed young people?
- What are their greatest needs?

### Where Are the Unstably Housed Young People?

There were a number of suggestions about where to find young people who are unstably housed. One set of responses concerned the places where young people sleep when they have no place to go. Some of the responses included places where homeless adults often go, like parks and abandoned buildings.

*"I've seen people sleep in laundry rooms."*

*"Right. Laundry rooms or in the hallway of buildings."*

*"Recreation centers. Rec centers, and just even parks, sometimes you'll just see people just laying around parks. Soup kitchens. Salvation Army."*

Most of the young people who participated in the focus groups thought that service providers should do more outreach to young people. This conversation occurred in the young men's group:

*"But I mean, that's how this stuff don't be advertised or nothing. You know what I'm saying? They advertise liquor, sex, or whatever on TV. Good as well on that. You know what I'm saying?"*

*"Yeah, that's a big thing."*

*"That's their job."*

*"I think man. They let who they want to know about it."*

*"For real for real, yeah."*

*"Cause you never hear no advertisement over the radio or nothing. Your car radio, nothing. You know what I'm saying. There's big programs people be getting into."*

*"If I hear about programs, it's through someone else. It's not through no social worker or nothing like that."*

The young people thought there should be fliers informing them about resources. They had many ideas about where they should go.

*"Outside of the liquor store, I guess."*

*"Six Flags."*

*"Metro Stations."*

*"The Go-gos."*

*"Everybody go to malls."*

*"Convenient stores."*

*"Clubs, because the people do go there."*

They also suggested both traditional and new social media.

*"Radio stations. Everybody listens to radio stations. Advertise on radio stations about different stuff."*

*“Or have like on TV maybe, a commercial. I mean, everybody watches TV, they might watch TV so a commercial would be good.”*

*“A Facebook page, use social media, yeah, a lot of people are on Facebook, so you can reach a lot of people on Facebook. Like make a Facebook page for young people that are in need and I think you'll get a lot of feedback.”*

*“Facebook. Twitter. And what are the other websites, like BGC [Black Gay Chat].”*

They also suggested that there be opportunities for young people to find out about services face to face. The young women from foster care had a very animated exchange about this, as follows:

*“Host events. You could even do like some communities have block parties, you could do stuff like that. And then just put it out there, that your organization wants to reach out and help people that are in need, and I think you'll get a lot of feedback....Like people that are like she says, she just does hair, she's in hair school, I'm interested in nursing. Try to give them information on the different stuff that they're interested in. Because some people they just don't have resources. We're lucky that we have resources, but there's other people out here that are in need.”*

Another young woman continued:

*“Like set up different booths just explaining it, I think you'll get a lot of feedback. Because I know a lot of people that aren't in the system and they could use some help. But they want to know, ‘How do I get my resources?’ I'm like, ‘Well, I'm on assistance so I can't really have you go the way I go,’ but they do need assistance and need help.”*

*“There's the little booths...”*

Another woman answered:

*“Yeah, those little kiosks. In the mall.”*

*“Yeah, in the mall.”*

*“Oh, yeah, they can set up when they do like conferences, like when some communities do or churches do, like women conference or men conference and stuff like that. Because you never know, even though that person might not be there, it might be somebody who knows somebody that's in that situation, and they can pass it on to them.”*

*“Like an expo. They do something like that for...”*

*“The Teen Expo.”*

*“Yeah, exactly.”*

## **Outreach in Schools**

The young people were also very clear that there should be an outreach presence in schools. This exchange occurred among the foster care young women.

*“Well, when I heard you ask this question, the first thing I thought about was school. Like you can go to high schools, people are homeless before they get out of high school. Then college is different sometimes, so they need those resources.”*

*“Yeah, because I know that when I was in school, there were people that were at school that had a lot going on at home. Or they even could be homeless, and their only shelter is to go to school. Because that's where they're going to get a meal, that's where they're going to be able to interact with people. So, they just go to school, but once they leave school, they're basically on their own. So, if they go to school and can get those resources, yeah.”*

The young women in transitional housing also talked about outreach in schools:

*“Or a way that you can get to it through the schools. The school promotes it, you know what I'm saying? You go to this program that's in the community and it'll help you do this and that. I think it should be something like that. Find out about it through a lot of different ways, especially through school.”*

*“You can actually find them [unstable housed young people] in school. People... kids in our school... I know a lot of people that I graduated with that didn't have a stable place to live. So if you started to*

*outreach in the schools, people can feel like, 'Oh, these are the people that I can come to who can help me, assist me get somewhere to stay. Or they may be able to help me,' like you were saying, the smaller needs, the clothing, the hair situation or whatever. Those are real concerns. So they may be able to help me with that or something like that. You can go find them in schools."*

## **Other School Issues**

Some of the young people regretted that they had not had better experiences in school. Among the custodial mothers, two young women related how undiagnosed and untreated learning disabilities prevented them from getting what they needed during their school years:

*"I had a learning disability as a child. So, I didn't learn everything everybody else learned. I was never on the same level as everybody else until I got in middle school. I feel like the system failed me completely, because I didn't know anything. Seriously, I never read until I got to seventh grade. I never read. That's why to this day I like to read, because I never read. It was like, 'OK, how did I make it from kindergarten to sixth grade and never read?'"*

*"I opened books all the time and I was look, I had ADHD, and this was my problem. No one ever really sat down and helped me focus in class. So, I never really paid attention. When I had conversations with people, they don't understand it. OK, you may speak of something I don't even know what you're talking about, because you learned that in elementary school and I didn't learn it."*

This was echoed by young women in another group, one of whom said:

*"But at the same time, a lot of kids' learning ability is very challenged in the school system today, especially with the testing things that you have to accomplish in order to graduate. But most kids need excessive time for that. Like most kids need excessive time for that. But in school it's like you're put on a time schedule. Like you have to have this and this and you have to have this amount of hours or credits by this time. I feel like a lot of kids are rushed, because it's like, This is what I have to do, so I can't do that. I do this so I can pass the test. With a lot of people, their attention span is not yet that broad."*

*"It's like they need assistance with that, and I feel like there's not a lot of assistance to help with that. It's just the No Child Left Behind thing, and it's like, OK, no child can be left behind, so you have to do this by this year in order for you to make it to your next year. And then pass this test by this time."*

*"But it's not really assistance. You're not really helping me. You're just telling me what I need to do."*

The young men felt that their original schools had let them down and not emphasized the things they needed to know. This exchange is an example:

*"I mean, you know, like for instance I had got expelled from my school. And I went to Green Valley. And I learned more about, you know, writing a check, managing money, and all of that. And there I have learned, you know if that is the school I went back to, but I learned more there about accounting stuff and managing money than I ever learned in growing up."*

*"You cannot go on a job and be like, you know I read my biology book and duh, duh, duh, duh, duh. You know what I am saying?"*

*"That is all I have to do is basically get you ready for college."*

*"College, yeah."*

*"At the same time college ain't for everybody. And everybody ain't going to go to college."*

*"Right."*

*"I never even attended high school. I dropped out at eighth. I just had to find my own ways. Learn stuff on my own and I am trying to study on my own, so."*

Not all school problems concerned academics. One young woman in transitional housing said:

*"One of the big reason why people tend to drop out is, 'I don't have anything to wear. I'm tired of wearing these same old clothes. And it seems like nobody cares.' Or, 'I need my hair done. I'm tired of going to*

*school and everybody else has their hair done, and I don't have it done.' It's the simplest reasons. It's the simplest ways. Because I know that's why I dropped out of school; part of the reason that I dropped out of school. My mom couldn't afford a lot of stuff. She wasn't there backing me up when it came down to education.*

*"So after a while, if I could just stay at home with her and complain about what I don't have, and she didn't go out and get it, I didn't go to school. But my situation did change. So I still got my GED when I was still kind of young; when I was younger."*

## **Perverse Incentives**

One of the most striking things about the young men was the conviction that there was nothing for them unless and until they got in trouble.

*"Why do you have to be doing something bad to get help?"*

*"Before I even went to jail I didn't get no food stamps, but when I come out of jail I had got food stamps -- all types of other stuff."*

*"I had to go do time to get all that..."*

*"You've got to have some type of criminal background or be in the system."*

*"You got to mess up first."*

*"I had to get locked up to get me a job."*

*"Me, too."*

*"I'm not lying. If I didn't ever get locked up I wouldn't have no job right now."*

A related issue was the perception that there were more resources for parents (especially mothers) than there were for non-parents. The young women from the county jail spoke the most about this.

*"A lot of young women get pregnant to get stuff."*

*"That's right."*

*"That's the way."*

*"I wonder what the boys do?"*

Like the young women in jail, the young women in the foster care group also noted their perceived absence of programs for young men.

*"And I sometimes feel like single fathers don't have as much resources and stuff as single women."*

*"Yeah single mothers. Because they go through so much..."*

*"Just like men do."*

*"No, I think they go through more because they're dads. But the women, they go through a lot, but not as much as the men. Because I guess the social services might think, oh you're a man so you should have already got it."*

The boys also commented on their perception that to get services one needed to be a parent.

*"I went to the social service place and they told me that they couldn't help me unless I was 22 and I had to have a child."*

The value of a child was not simply the value of the (perceived) extra services that being a parent might provide. Children also served as a motivator for reform. Two mothers had this conversation:

*"That's everything [my child]. That's what I'm working for now. If it weren't for her, I probably wouldn't be here."*

*“Right.”*

*“You’d be with somebody else.”*

*“I’d be moving house to house...”*

*“House...mm-hm.”*

*“Probably, because I could do that. But I can’t do that with her.”*

*“Not with a baby.”*

*“It’s hard for single ladies to find out what to do. Because then they end up in those bad situations.”*

## **Needed Services: Housing**

Among the young women in transitional housing, there was a feeling that the program was set up for families and for older people and not for young people who needed education.

*“Especially this program where we only had one to two years, it kind of falls on the back burner. Education especially because you have to find housing. You have to have a job. Everything else comes before that. I think it should be a program that has time for that.”*

*“Not necessarily, longer but more targeted to where it allows time to develop a better education. Just like they were saying, like a college degree. If you wanted to go for a full college degree then I think it takes four to five years to actually transition out of that in a full-length time.”*

*“You have to leave and you’re in between goals like that it could set you back. You could start to fall right back where you started, basically because you never got that more stable program where you can keep going, keep going, it’s set in place and not have to worry about everything.”*

*“The older people, they still need transitional housing. But if you’re young it’s like you need more time. You need more time to finish your goals and basically grow into the programs, complete your goals, all that. So I think it should be something that extends. Even if it has housing; something that has housing, everything, all the supportive... everything. I think it should be something that extends.”*

*“Honestly, I don’t feel that two years is long enough for somebody to even be OK. They may be OK in the program, but that’s because the program is here. But what happens after the program? What happens if they’re just getting their mind to that point where it’s just like, ‘OK. Well, I’m content right now.’ But maybe they don’t feel that they’re content enough to finish out. Like, ‘I’m content right now because I just started.’ But what happens...? I just started and I have to go. So I don’t have that motivation anymore to keep going, to push forward or anything.”*

The issue of time limits came up with the LGBTQ group as well, in reference to foster care as in this conversation:

*“I wouldn’t exactly put a time limit on it, because when you put youth in a certain spot and because I am in foster care. I’m 19. I’m dealing with the struggle of the 21, because as soon as you hit 21 you’re on the street.”*

*“Right.”*

*“It scares you, when you put a time limit on it. If you’re 20, then they give you at 21. You’ve only got a certain amount of months before you’re back out there. A time limit makes people scared. I’d say putting a time limit on it wouldn’t be the best thing. But I’d say, while they’re in.”*

## **Needed Services: Mentoring**

In nearly every group, the young people expressed a need for a mentor who would be an expert on them as individuals, who would be their advocate and help them get what they need. Two aspects emerged. One, which was particularly reported by the young women in jail, was someone who would

nag them and follow up with them to keep them on task. One young woman in transitional housing said:

*“One-on-one mentoring. Case management that involves aggressive one-on-one time to make sure that... Because me, I know I have a problem with getting off course with my goals. Just somebody there over a long period of time to make sure that goals are being met and things are being needed, things are getting done.*

*“I know with certain programs there are certain stipulations that they say, ‘Well, we’re not your babysitter. We’re case management. We’re trying to empower you.’ Then they really do certain things. But that whole concept, sometimes, of responsibility, sometimes things slip through our hands and we still need somebody to help cover us. Because it’s really easy to get caught back up into peer pressure and just go in the opposite direction of where we need to be, to stay focused.*

*“So just constantly having, like if you can find an outreach that is somebody who wouldn’t mind coming to look for you when you’re in trouble. Or just basically a constant friend. That really helps, because it shows you that somebody really cares.*

*“And that’s one of the hardest things out here, when if you get yourself in trouble or if you have to sleep in an apartment building over lunch. And you feel like nobody really cares. You need the services that show, ‘Yes, we do care. We are going to be here for you. We are going to help you get through this.’ That means a lot. That means a lot.”*

Another woman in the same group echoed this sentiment.

*“People don’t wake up and be like, ‘I’m just not going back to school.’ They might want to go to—not just school in general, just anything. You might want to finish school, but you might feel like you don’t have no support or you feel like my social worker, she doesn’t really care. Either I go or I don’t. But if you have somebody that actually does care or that they’re there to support you. They’re not there because the law said that you must go to school. They’re there because they generally agree that you must go to. Somebody you can confide in.”*

And another added.

*“Somebody, yeah, you can trust.”*

One of the custodial parents spoke about a service provider who gave her this kind of attention and she described it this way:

*“I had help from, like my case manager in Shepherd’s Cove. And her helping me was just basically motivation. ‘Oh, you know, I know you’re busy,’ this that and the other. She would help remind me here and there, but basically, by her reminding me, ‘Don’t forget you gotta do this, ...’ ‘...don’t forget you gotta do that, don’t forget you gotta do this. This is coming up.’ She would send me different fliers and information that was out here that I didn’t have access to, which was a big help.*

*“It was the communication. She was good at communicating with me. That’s why I said you have to be good at communicating. That’s because if she’s relaying all the stuff to make it to me and I’m absorbing it but I’m not acting upon, then it’s not effective. But she was polite in the way that she gave everything. She would come and she would leave messages or notes. Do you know what I mean? The communication process was really well there. That’s what I think the problem is a lot nowadays because you can’t communicate with everybody the same.”*

One of the LGBTQ young people said

*“I think the more accurate term would be a job coach.”*

## **Logistics: Information and Transportation**

In all the groups, there was talk of how complicated it was to get around and how complex it was to try to navigate the different services and to get the information that people needed. Here is a sample of what different young men from both men’s groups said:

*“Travel. You got to travel.”*

*“So, it don't never come across nobody that prescribe you to the junk that, oh, yeah, how are they going to pay for transportation. You know what I'm saying? So, boom you're still dibbling and dabbling. You know what I'm saying? Doing your thing, but at the same time you've got to focus on the GED program. You know what I'm saying? It just is a whole lot. It just is a whole lot.”*

*“They don't even, like, reimburse you the money. You know what I'm saying? The program might be free, but the bus isn't free. I can't get on there and be like I've somewhere to go.”*

*“This was one of our biggest things...you know what I'm saying...”*

*“And say I still got to pay for that bus, all right. I think.”*

*“Yeah, nobody wants to be waiting for the bus with this hot weather coming either. Then, if you're working somewhere, you get a good job and the job you're looking for, that you really want, sometimes it won't be in your local area. So you definitely want that reliable transportation to get you somewhere because you don't want to be on a bus. You don't want to be relying on somebody else. Sometimes they might not be able to get in.”*

*“Back in that time, I really should have been thinking about saving up and trying to get a car. So think back to around the time, with you being younger... What would be some ideas to put into place for them. I wish somebody had told me stuff like saving up for a car, because right now I wouldn't have to be in such a hassle.”*

One of the mothers agreed.

*“It's just hard for me to get a job because of my two kids. But then I would have to go and get them from daycare and then sometimes I might not have a way to take them to daycare or do this and that. Same way transportation too.”*

For the young people who had recently been incarcerated, the logistics of getting the required drug tests were overwhelming, both financially and logistically.

*“And you've got to pay for urine. I did.”*

*“I had to pay, like, \$100 up front.”*

*“Yeah, but it's about...hey, I paid \$20 a urine.”*

*“They told me I had to pay \$100 up front, and then I had to pay court costs, all that was accumulated in the court costs.”*

*“See this was an issue; before we came home we asked the dude, so if you'll tell us we can't get a job for the first 30 days, how're we supposed to get money to get back and forth, you know what I'm saying, to take that urine?”*

*“I pay \$40 a month.”*

In most groups there were complaints about information not being distributed in a helpful way and service providers not knowing as much as they should regarding opportunities. For example, a member of the LGBTQ group said regarding the exit from foster care:

*“I'd say that there is a lot more that they can do, because as of you turning 21, they need to actually make sure that you are ready to do this. If you're not, they need to direct you to some place that is going to give you that help. Or to let you know this is what you could do. This is how you could find housing. Find food help. Find money help. You can go about and here's some job listings. Here's some places, because they're always getting places that are hiring on the spot. But they give them out willy-nilly. I just got a thing for Taco Bell the day before, so I had to rush there.”*

The custodial mothers also complained about how they were treated by some service providers.

*“It's not really that we have the problem with the fact that they have the attitude. It's the fact that they have the attitude and they don't want to give information. I've spoken to somebody that blatantly lied in my face. Just lied completely. Told me that I couldn't do something. I was at some office trying to get some*

*information about a ticket. I got a ticket over here for parking in my complex. So, I'm trying to get some information and I'm like, 'I had got this notice. I'm trying to figure out who I need to speak to.'*"

*"Yeah, like, take their time and don't try to rush nobody with nothing. The last places I went to, they weren't really helpful. They put a piece a paper in your face and just yelled."*

One of the foster care young men said:

*"To be honest, everything's there. It's just how to get information out there for staff to know exactly what each individual wants, or what they need. Because stuff that we may need, it may be in our files, but sometimes people don't pay attention to it. Understand, they don't pay attention to it."*

## **Soft Skills**

In all groups the need for good jobs was a theme. Specifically, however, there was a hunger among the young people for training in the "soft skills" needed for getting a job, such as training in , techniques for interviewing and filling out applications. Here is one conversation among the young men:

*"We don't have, a lot of us don't have, interviewing skills, you know what I'm saying. Go to interviews, freeze up, you don't know what you're saying."*

*"I attempted to fill out an online application, but it ain't what it's cracked up to be."*

*"Yeah. The process is too long. It's about an hour to fill out one of the jobs."*

*"Trick questions, too. Like if you see someone stealing, would you tell on them?" [laughter]*

*"Like if I've seen someone stealing, would I tell on them?"*

*"Like character questions and stuff like that."*

*"And honestly, it makes it hard for people to get jobs, just because it's online. You've got to fight, for these big people, fight for that job, because there ain't nothing like no central computer that's... You put up an application, and you go in there and they can actually see your face and, to make a first impression. It is going on there, what's on the resume."*

The young women also felt this way and remarked particularly on tests one takes to get jobs and how the job training is inadequate.

*"They give you a practice test. They give you two sheets of paper and everything but that ain't nothing. There's some sample questions and everything but that ain't nothing, anybody can ace those sample questions. That ain't nothing, that ain't the full test. You need stuff that's concrete that you can relate to the test you're going to take and everything. Sample questions aren't nothing. It would be all the easy stuff to make it seem like it's easy, it's going to be a cake walk, then you get the real test and it's something completely different or something."*

In the LGBTQ group they replied as follows when asked about job training:

*"Doing resumes, cover letters, helping you look for a job."*

*"I think the more term would be a job coach. A person to help the youth work on getting on the inside of the business, and when they get into the interview, help them out on what they're supposed to say. And what they're supposed to look out for. Because a lot of times that's how things happen. And you mess up at interviews, because you don't know what to look out for."*

*"Yeah, because a lot of people mess up on their interviews. And certain things are said. That it's not to cause harm or to cause complication. But it's said. And when the interviewer notices whatever is said, then certain things pop up. A job that you could have got; you lost."*



## **Other Information**

Some other important insights from the focus groups include accounts of job discrimination among the LGBTQ young people, as well as accounts of a perceived increase in suicidality among LGBTQ young people. The LGBTQ group was the only group where there were explicit accounts of transactional sex. Finally, the young women in jail claimed that they needed anger management work and what was provided was inadequate. In one young incarcerated woman's words:

*"It's got to be more than watching 'What's Love Got to Do with It?' FIFTEEN times."*

## Recommendations

### **1. Conduct information campaigns that identify available resources in order to raise awareness about services for young people who are experiencing housing instability.**

Young people report a low level of awareness about resources for unstably housed youth. Since such services are available for young people who are having trouble with housing, they should be widely advertised. Young people who are unstably housed but can often find a place to sleep do not identify as homeless. The message should be:

Are you going from house to house because you don't have a regular place to stay?

Do you have one place where you can keep all your stuff?

Are you so busy making sure you have a bed for the night that you get behind in school or work or have trouble looking for a job or keeping the job?

There are services that might help you!!! Call this number:

### **2. Develop strong working relationships among homeless youth providers, Prince George's County Public Schools, and Prince George's County Community College that include outreach to ALL young people and parents, provide supports, and identify available resources.**

Part of this message should be the same as in No.1 above. In high schools, however, a message should also be targeted toward young people who might be *hosting* unstably housed youth. These hosts, and their families (through PTO meetings, etc.), should be alerted to the fact that when a young person repeatedly asks to sleep over, it may indicate housing instability. Host families could be given information as to how to assist the unstably housed young person, for example by connecting them with services. At the Community College, we have the opportunity to reach a broad audience that may include those directly experiencing housing instability and other family members who may be aware of someone in this circumstance.

### **3. Service providers who have contact with youth or young adults experiencing stressful circumstances or who exhibit behavioral problems should be alerted to the high possibility of housing instability among these young people. Service providers should receive training to connect these young people with appropriate services.**

It is clear that behavior problems and family conflict are the most often cited reasons that young people are homeless or unstably housed. It is equally clear, however, that young people do not identify themselves as being homeless, and they may also not readily share that information.

Therefore, it is imperative that service providers, who may see their main task as addressing other needs of a client, should be aware that part of the treatment plan may include ensuring that the client or any children do not experience housing instability. Housing histories should be solicited by providers who work with young people.

**4. A mentoring program should be developed for unstably housed young people that would recruit and partner caring adults with those young people in order to provide ongoing support and connections.**

A case management approach, rather than a compartmentalized approach to the continuum of care, was suggested. The focus groups expressed a nearly universal longing for the guidance of a person who, like a parent, would provide both positive and negative feedback, with the goal of keeping the young person on track to success.

**5. Identify Service Navigators to serve as mobile case managers for homeless and unstably housed young people who are not otherwise connected with programs or agencies in order to assist them in identifying and accessing services, systems, and supports.**

Homeless and unstably housed young people are already disconnected from a lot of supports and may find it hard to access services in a formal setting. Service Navigators can meet young people where they are in the community, at less threatening locations such as libraries or community centers, and conduct assessments of needs and provide information and referrals to services. This low-barrier accessibility can help increase trust and confidence in young people that there are services available for them.

**6. Identify Workforce Development programming available to assist young people in developing the skills and confidence to seek and gain employment.**

Young people expressed the need for training on the skills necessary to get a job—specifically interviewing, resume writing, and information on how to fill out online job applications.

DSS may also want to explore relationships with employers who would be willing to hire and mentor homeless youth.

**7. Establish Youth Development services specifically geared to young men who are not involved in the child welfare, juvenile, or criminal justice systems.**

The perception exists that the only way for males to gain the attention of helpers is to be in trouble. They requested a proactive approach to assist them. In response, interested providers of services should consider adopting the Dare to Be King Curriculum developed by the Urban Leadership Institute, based in Baltimore. Training workshops,

including a Train-the-Trainer, are available. The model challenges the mindset, values, and life styles that contribute to violence among males.

**8. Forge linkages with the LGBTQ youth task force to bring further attention to homeless and unstably housed LGBTQ youth and young adults and ensure development of safe and appropriate services for this population.**

LGBTQ young people are disproportionately represented in most accountings of homeless and unstably housed youth populations. They are often disconnected from familial supports and may experience further alienation from other community systems because of their sexual orientation. Special attention must be paid to developing competent service models to include this population.

Providers should study nationally recognized models and organizations, specifically the National Alliance to End Homelessness and Lambda Rising's Best Practices for Serving LGBTQ Homeless Youth; and the Ali Forney Center and Green Chimneys Programs, both in New York City.

**9. Ensure that in addition to meeting basic needs, the continuum of care must include the provision of enrichment opportunities, such as cultural and recreational activities, and effective life skills education with real applications and practice.**

This is of particular importance during two critical periods.

First, during middle school and the early high school years, young people must be provided with outlets for their energy, and they must be given *attention* and more tangible rewards when they participate. The most important reward is clearly a connection with a caring adult.

Second, both younger and older youth who have been brought through crises (for example, young people who have been settled into transitional housing) need opportunities for recreation and self-development. For example, the availability of vouchers to young people in transitional housing to use for Prince George's Parks and Recreation programs should be more widely advertised and promoted.

**10. Continue to conduct provider-based enumerations on an annual basis to consistently gather information for macro analysis and planning, and encourage stakeholders to utilize data to assist their program planning.**

Following this initial surveying, researchers can expand the reach of the survey distribution and gather additional data on homeless and unstably housed youth and young adults. We know that the Prince George's County Homeless Services Partnership already serves several hundred young adults, under age 25, within existing services. We should consider adding those individuals in our survey.

Prince George's Public Schools should also fully participate and collect and share data on the population of unaccompanied homeless youth who are students. Data should be analyzed and shared in order to best inform individual providers and the larger system.

**11. Identify and link all local systems involved in serving transition-aged youth and young adults in order to coordinate resources to include and accommodate homeless and unstably housed youth and young adults, ages 16–24.**

Many initiatives across systems focus on young people approaching the transition to adulthood. These systems include Child Welfare, Mental Health, Juvenile Justice, Disabilities, and Education. DSS should help coordinate services and invite these other systems to collaborate and develop a strategic plan together, institutionalizing a county Homeless Youth Work Group.

**12. Use all available sources to collect information on homeless and unstably housed youth, such as the number of students identifying themselves as homeless and filing Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) applications.**

Work with First Generation College Bound, Prince George's Community College, University of Maryland–College Park, Bowie State University, and other groups to gather this information to expand understanding about unstably housed young people and post-secondary educational opportunities.

**13. Work closely with Prince George's County Schools to provide assistance beyond just educational supports to documented unaccompanied homeless students and the staff who work with students.**

Homeless students may have considerable additional needs beyond the educational supports generally recognized under McKinney-Vento Homeless Education practices. Partnerships between service providers and the school system can ensure that young people do not fall through the cracks between systems.

**14. Work with the Homeless Services Partnership to encourage investment in and development of additional services focused on homeless youth and young adults.**

As the Homeless Services Partnership considers the alignment of resources, advocates for homeless youth and young adults should make the case for support of services focused upon the population described in this report.