



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY HOMELESS YOUTH FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

MAY 2015

Purpose

The homeless youth of San Luis Obispo have long been an invisible population. This report seeks to identify the needs of these youth.

Homeless Services Oversight Council
Ad Hoc Youth Subcommittee

JThomas@SLOCOE.org

1 CONTENTS

2	Tables and Figures.....	2
3	Acknowledgments	3
3.1	Project Planning Team	3
3.2	Special Thanks	3
4	Executive Summary.....	4
5	Background.....	6
5.1	A Look at Our Homelessness.....	6
5.2	Homelessness and Children	6
5.3	Who is Homeless?.....	7
6	Introduction	7
7	Surveys	9
7.1	Overview	9
7.2	Methodology	9
7.2.1	Schools.....	10
7.2.2	Youth One Stop, Homeless Shelters, and Family Resource Centers.....	10
7.2.3	Street	10
7.2.4	Jail.....	10
7.3	Limitations	10
7.4	Key Findings	11
7.4.1	Sleep.....	11
7.4.2	Food	12
7.4.3	Needs.....	13
7.4.4	Services.....	14
7.4.5	Housing.....	15
7.4.6	Open Response.....	15
7.5	Human Trafficking Survey.....	16
7.6	Jail Survey	17
7.7	50Now Survey.....	17
8	Recommendations	17
8.1	Youth Housing	17
8.2	Employment Connection.....	18

8.3	Resources Campaign	18
8.4	Point-in-Time Count	18
9	Definitions & Abbreviations	18
10	Appendix: Definitions of Homelessness for Federal Programs Serving Children, Youth, and Families.....	20

2 TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 1: Quick Facts.....	5
Table 1: Operational definitions of homeless youth by variable attributes.	8
Table 2: Summary of subpopulations included in surveys.	9
Table 3: Where have you slept or are currently sleeping at night?.....	11
Table 4: Do you ever skip meals or go hungry because you do not have enough food to eat?	12
Table 5: Are there barriers that keep you from getting food or having enough to eat?.....	12
Table 6: What do you need?	13
Table 7: Are there any other services or resources you want or need that you have not been able to talk about in this survey?	14
Table 8: How did you hear about services that have helped you?.....	14
Table 9: What keeps you from using services or asking for help?	14
Table 10: What kind of housing would you be most interested in?.....	15
Table 11: Is there anything else you want us to know about what you need, what you struggle with, or what you hope for?	15
Table 12: Human Trafficking of Homeless Youth	16

3 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

3.1 PROJECT PLANNING TEAM

Chair: Jessica Thomas | jthomas@slocoe.org

Program Manager | San Luis Obispo County Office of Education Homeless and Foster Youth Services

Laurel Weir | lweir@co.slo.ca.us

Homeless Services Coordinator | San Luis Obispo County's Department of Social Services

Jennifer Kirn | jkirn@johnmuircs.com

Regional Career Pathways Specialist/John Muir Charter School, Region 4, Central Coast

Report Author: Luke Hickman-Adams | lhickman@calpoly.edu

Special Projects Manager | Cal Poly Federal Work Study, with San Luis Obispo County Office of Education Homeless and Foster Youth Services

3.2 SPECIAL THANKS

Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County, Inc.

Janna Nichols | *Executive Director, 5Cities Homeless Coalition*

Linda Pierce | *Homeless Liaisons, Lucia Mar Unified School District*

LINK Atascadero Family Resource Center

Marci Powers, Coordinator | *SLO Anti-Gang Coordinating Commission*

Martin "Marty" Meltz | *Community Activist*

Melissa Musgrave | *Family Resource Coordinator, San Luis Coastal Unified School District*

Rebecca Turner | *Director, Mountainbrook Abolitionists*

San Luis Coastal Unified School District Family Resource Center

Youth One Stop, Grover Beach

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4 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Homeless Services Oversight Council (HSOC) established the Ad Hoc Youth Subcommittee to investigate the needs of homeless youth in San Luis Obispo County and to report back with recommendations on how to best address their needs.

Homeless youth have long been known to be a highly vulnerable population. They are at high-risk of developing “serious, life-long health, behavioral, and emotional problems.”¹ Compared to their peers, they are known to have higher rates of depression,² attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder.³ Homelessness increases likelihood of abusing drugs and alcohol⁴ and often indicates a past of physical and sexual abuse.⁵ The longer youth are out of school and without proper housing, the more likely they are to become victims of commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking.⁶

This report assesses the current state of the most vulnerable subpopulations of homeless youth in San Luis Obispo County and responds with recommendations derived from an expansive survey and a multidisciplinary team of homeless services providers, educators, and homeless youth advocates, including current and former homeless youth. This report represents the consensus among the authors to recommend the following:

- Work towards the development of ten permanent, supportive housing units for Transitional Aged Youth. Housing should follow best practices for serving homeless youth.
- Help youth obtain identification documents needed for employment and other services.
- Conduct outreach to homeless youth and other homeless persons about services available, including job search and preparation services. Use peers to help conduct outreach to youth.
- Hold a special Youth Point-in-Time Count as part of the 2015 Point-in-Time Count to more accurately determine the number of homeless youth. Use the Count to conduct outreach and engagement.

The needs assessment survey is adapted from a nationally implemented survey developed with the guidance of homeless youth. To adapt the survey to fit our local needs, the subcommittee sought input from various stakeholders, including local youth experiencing homelessness. The

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families Administration on Children, Y. a. (2012). *Report to Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs Fiscal Years 2012 and 2013*. Washington D.C.

² Shelton, K.H., P.J. Taylor, A. Bonner, M. Van den Bree. (2009). Risk factors for homelessness: evidence from a population-based study. *Psychiatric Services*, 60, 465–472.

³ Schneir, A. Stefanidis, N. Mounier, C. Ballin, D. Gailey, D. Carmichael, H. and Battle, T. (2007). Trauma among homeless youth. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network.

⁴ Thompson, S., Barczyk, A., Gomez, R., Dreyer, L., & Popham, A. (2010). Homeless, street-involved emerging adults. Attitudes toward substance use. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 25(2).

⁵ Schneir, A. Stefanidis, N. Mounier, C. Ballin, D. Gailey, D. Carmichael, H. and Battle, T. (2007). Trauma among homeless youth. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network.

⁶ National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2009). *Homeless Youth and Sexual Exploitation: Research Findings and Practice Implications*.

result is two similar surveys designed to target two subpopulations of homeless youth: Unaccompanied Homeless Youth and Transitional-Aged Youth.

After conducting the survey across San Luis Obispo County, we found that youth in school had more access to food and other resources that support educational stability. They were more likely to know about their homeless rights, and more likely to be connected to a positive adult mentor. Youth in school were more likely to request help in obtaining employment and applying to higher education programs. Youth who were not in school listed lack of access to housing and food as their main concerns. Both youth in school and out of school listed lack of available public transportation as a concern. Both sets of youth reported feeling embarrassed or afraid to access homeless services.

In addition to the needs assessment survey, a supplementary human trafficking risk assessment survey was conducted for youth who were found on the streets. The survey was developed using an array of assessment models and with the support of local advocates and survivors of human trafficking.

Our recommendations were also based on an explorative jail survey and a separate survey of the broader homeless community, which included youth.

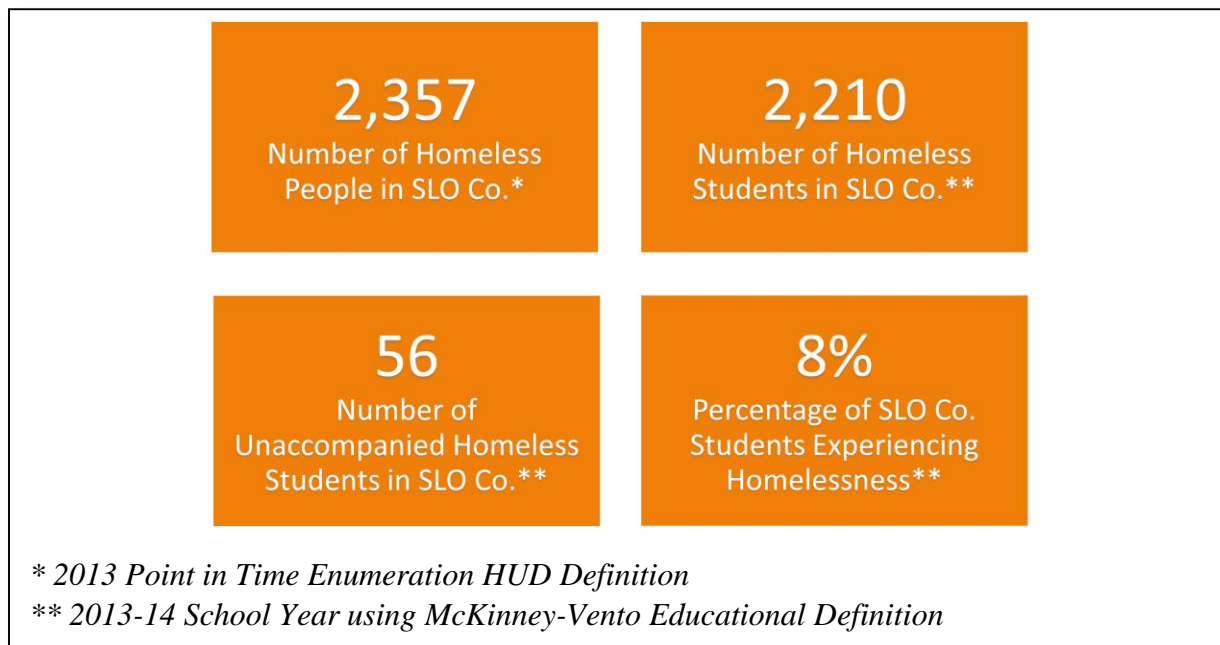


Figure 1: Quick Facts

Homelessness is a critical problem for many people living in San Luis Obispo County. Of particular concern are the homeless youth who often lack the physical resources needed to thrive.

5 BACKGROUND

5.1 A LOOK AT OUR HOMELESSNESS

The National Center on Family Homelessness estimates that nearly 2.5 million children in the United States were homeless at some point in 2013, which is one child in every 30.⁷

California has about one-eighth of the U.S. population yet more than one-fifth of the homeless children, nearly 527,000.⁸ A recent report shows that California has 13,709 unaccompanied homeless children and youth; that's more than three times that of any other state.⁹ The state currently received the third lowest composite ranking of states in the country—only faring slightly better than Mississippi and Alabama. The National Center on Family Homelessness ranked states on preventions, protections, and outcomes of homeless youth. According to Shahera Hyatt, director of the California Homeless Youth Project, the low ranking is a result of the “state’s high cost of living, coupled with insufficient affordable housing.”¹⁰

Nowhere are these two conditions seen more than in San Luis Obispo (SLO) County. A recent report found that SLO County had the lowest multi-family vacancy rate in the nation at 1.9%.¹¹ The lack of available housing inflates the cost of renting, resulting in home prices that are about 70% higher than the rest of the state. The high cost of living, combined with low paying jobs, underemployment, and unemployment all contribute to local families’ difficulty in finding and paying for housing.

San Luis Obispo County has only two homeless shelters, and no homeless youth shelter. The most recently published comprehensive homeless census, found that only 10% of our homeless were in shelters—meaning 2,122 people were living in the river beds, in tents or cars, or under bridges. Compared to all other counties in the nation, SLO County has the fourth highest rate of unsheltered homeless.¹²

5.2 HOMELESSNESS AND CHILDREN

Research shows that homelessness causes severe trauma to children, disrupting their peer-to-peer relationships, putting them in unhealthy and unsafe environments, and delaying their physical and social development. Homeless children are more likely than their peers to experience physical and mental health problems, hunger, and difficulties at school. Studies also show that

⁷ The National Center on Family Homelessness. (2014). *America's Youngest Outcasts: A Report Card on Child Homelessness*. American Institutes for Research.

⁸ The National Center on Family Homelessness. (2014). *America's Youngest Outcasts: A Report Card on Child Homelessness*. American Institutes for Research.

⁹ National Alliance to End Homelessness and Homeless Research Institute. (2015). *The State of Homelessness in America 2015: An Examination of Trends in Homelessness, Homelessness Assistance, and At-risk Populations at the National and State Levels*. Washington D.C.

¹⁰ Leff, D. C. (2014, November 17). *Child Homelessness in U.S. Hit All-time High in Recent Years, New Report Says*. Retrieved from The Washington Post.

¹¹ Action for Healthy Communities. (2014). *Vital Signs: Understanding Homelessness in San Luis Obispo County*.

¹² Applied Survey Research. (2013). *2013 San Luis Obispo Homeless Point-in-Time Census and Survey: Comprehensive Report*. Watsonville.

homeless children are far more likely than their peers to drop out of school or be infected with HIV.¹³ We also see that the lack of education and skills required for employment substantially decreases the youth's prospects for a future of financial and housing stability.¹⁴

5.3 WHO IS HOMELESS?

There are two major definitions of homelessness in use by local agencies. The definition used in education is found in the education section, Subtitle VII-B, of the McKinney-Vento Act. The second definition is used for a broader range of services and comes from the HEARTH Act, which amended the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition in Section 103 of Subtitle I of the McKinney-Vento Act. The definitions overlap and diverge in ways that can cause confusion. The chart in the appendix illustrates the similarities and differences between the two definitions of homelessness.¹⁵ Unless otherwise specified, this report will use the educational definition of homeless youth.

6 INTRODUCTION

San Luis Obispo County has long struggled with homelessness. As we work tirelessly to support those who find themselves unhoused, subpopulations with unique needs are identified. One of these vulnerable populations is homeless youth. Because of this, the Homeless Services Oversight Council (HSOC) established the Ad Hoc Youth Subcommittee to investigate the needs of homeless youth in San Luis Obispo County and to report back with recommendations on how to best address their needs.

A multidisciplinary team of homeless services providers, educators, and homeless youth advocates, including current and former homeless youth determined that the most strategic use of resources would be to focus on two particular subpopulations of youth experiencing homelessness: unaccompanied homeless youth and transitional-aged youth.

The first subpopulation is unaccompanied homeless youth¹⁶ (UHY). These are youth of any age attending school who are experiencing homelessness while not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian (Table 1). These youth live in a variety of unsafe, temporary situations, such as under bridges, in tents or cars, or on an acquaintance's couch. What leads to youth becoming unaccompanied varies by the person, although there are terms to help classify the situations:

¹³ Hyatt, S. (2014). *FAQ: Homeless Students in California*.

¹⁴ Ferguson, K. M., Bender, K., Thompson, S. J., Maccio, E. M., & Pollio, D. (2012). Employment Status and Income Generation Among Homeless Young Adults Results from a Five-City, Mixed-Methods Study. *Youth & Society*, 44(3), 385–407.

¹⁵ National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, N. C. (2010, October). *Definitions of Homelessness for Federal Programs Serving Children, Youth, and Families*. Retrieved from National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE): center.serve.org/nche/downloads/defin_chart.doc

¹⁶ Various definitions exist for UHY. For the purpose of this report and subsequent discussion, we used the educational definition.

- *Throwaway youth*: Youth who have been asked, told, or forced to leave home by parents or caregivers with no alternate care arranged.¹⁷
- *Runaway youth*: Youth who have left home without parental/caregiver permission and stay away for one or more nights,¹⁸ often due to severe family dysfunction, including abuse and neglect.¹⁹
- *Systems youth*: Youth who become homeless after aging out of foster care or exiting the juvenile justice system.²⁰

“Experiencing homelessness” is defined by the McKinney-Vento Act’s (MVA) education section. These are students who lack fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This includes youth who are couch-surfing (sleeping on someone’s couch), doubled-up (living in the house of another person), or living in motels, cars, or shelters.²¹ For more precise definitions, please see the *Definitions & Abbreviations* section and the appendix.

The second subpopulation is transitional-aged youth (TAY). For the purposes of this report, these are youth ages 18 to 24 (inclusive) who are experiencing homelessness while not attending a traditional school²² (Table 1).

The third and final subpopulation, which is not studied in this report, is youth under the age of 18 experiencing homelessness with their family while attending school or not (Table 1). We made the determination to focus on the former two subpopulations, as available research shows they are the most underrepresented, underserved, and at-risk.

Attributes	Homeless Youth		
	Included		Excluded
	UHY	TAY	Other
Lacking fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence	Yes	Yes	Yes
Attending Traditional School	Yes	No	Yes or No
Ages	Under 25	18 to 24 (inclusive)	Under 18
Physical custody of parent or guardian	No	n/a	Yes

Table 1: Operational definitions of homeless youth by variable attributes.

¹⁷ Sedlak, Finkelhor, Hammer, & Schultz, 2002

¹⁸ Sedlak, Finkelhor, Hammer, & Schultz, 2002

¹⁹ The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. (2008). *Using What We Know: Supporting the Education of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth*. Washington D.C.

²⁰ Toro, Dworsky, & Fowler, 2007, Pergamit, 2010

²¹ Hyatt, S. (2014). *FAQ: Homeless Students in California*.

²² In order to form a mutually exclusive operational definition, Transitional-aged youth are defined here as youth ages 18 to 24 (inclusive) who are experiencing homelessness while participating in a traditional educational setting. For example, students attending the John Muir Charter School—a non-traditional academic and vocational training program—fall under the definition of TAY.

7 SURVEYS

7.1 OVERVIEW

The Ad Hoc Youth Subcommittee determined that a survey of homeless youth’s needs would best advise recommendations to the Homeless Services Oversight Council. In order to ensure validity in our survey, we reached out to Legal Director of the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY). She provided us with technical assistance as well as a survey implemented nationally, including in California. This survey was created by youth for youth. To specifically understand the needs of San Luis Obispo County’s homeless youth, we researched other surveys conducted on this population, gathered feedback from partner organizations and agencies, and facilitated panel discussions with local youth who experienced homelessness.

After this stage of survey design, we concluded two surveys were necessary to adequately understand this population and its subpopulations. We began with our base survey for youth 11 to 24 years old. Modifications were made to tailor the survey to transitional-aged youth. This second survey was conducted in locations designated for youth 18 to 24 years old. A summary of the two surveys can be found in Table 2.

	Unaccompanied Homeless Youth	Transitional-Aged Youth
Operational Definitions	Youth experiencing homelessness while attending school and not living with a parent or guardian.	Youth experiencing homelessness while not attending a traditional school.
Ages	11 to 24 years old (Mostly 17 to 19 years old)	18 to 24 years old
Genders	Equal distribution of male and females. One transgendered person.	
Total: 73	36 surveys completed	37 surveys completed

Table 2: Summary of subpopulations included in surveys.

7.2 METHODOLOGY

All youth participating in the survey were given a \$5.00 gift card to a local fast-food restaurant.²³ The youth were informed that they could discontinue the survey at any time or opt to not answer questions and still receive the incentive. They were informed that participation in the survey was completely voluntary and that their services would not be affected.

To better understand the scope of needs of local homeless youth, we identified four groups of youth that could be systematically isolated by location. The locations chosen are schools; Youth One Stop, homeless shelters, and family resource centers; streets; and jails.

²³ Gift cards were donated by 5Cities Homeless Coalition, Youth One Stop, and Mountainbrook Community Church.

7.2.1 Schools

The McKinney-Vento Act requires that each school district designate a homeless education liaison. Part of their duties is to identify youth in their schools who are experiencing homelessness. We asked for the liaisons' assistance in conducting the survey. Most chose to invite the youth to their office or that of a counselor to take the survey through our confidential online portal.

7.2.2 Youth One Stop, Homeless Shelters, and Family Resource Centers

Youth One Stop (which will close June 2015) invited youth that they serve to take a hard copy survey. Homeless shelters and Family Resource Centers invited the youth that they serve to take the survey through our confidential online portal.

7.2.3 Street

A local advocacy group, the Mountainbrook Abolitionists, went to various locations youth are known to frequent throughout the county to distribute flyers advertising locations participating in the survey, as well as dates and times to meet with mobile units of volunteers. Once contact was made either by the youth approaching a trained volunteer or the volunteer approaching someone they believe might be experiencing homelessness, the youth was taken to a private location nearby to assess eligibility for the survey. Once confirmed, the youth were privately surveyed. In addition to the needs assessment survey, a supplementary human trafficking risk assessment survey was conducted for youth who were found on the streets.

7.2.4 Jail

In an effort to determine the frequency of youth in local detention centers currently or recently experiencing homelessness, a sample facility was selected in which inmates were given a revised, shortened questionnaire.

7.3 LIMITATIONS

Although much consideration and effort went into ensuring the most comprehensive understanding of the unique needs of unaccompanied homeless youth and transitional-aged youth in San Luis Obispo County, there are certain limitations identified that prevent us from having conclusive results. The following are limitations we have identified.

Homeless youth or their parents are hesitant to self-disclose their living situations

Possible reasons for homeless youth to not self-identify are the stigma surrounding housing instability and a lack of awareness of the resources available to children experiencing homelessness. Older homeless youth in particular may not self-identify for fear of being reported to law enforcement, placed in the custody of child welfare, or returned to an unsafe family situation if they ask for assistance or make their living status known.²⁵

Homeless students have high rates of dropping out of school

Youth are most likely to be identified as homeless if they are attending school. Homelessness is among the most significant risk factors related to school dropout, beginning in middle school and

²⁵ Wheeler, L. (2014). *Personal Communication*.

continuing into high school, homeless youth may not be attending school and therefore are less likely to be identified.²⁶

As a result, this data likely underestimates the extent of homelessness among youth in our county. Nonetheless, these numbers are the most comprehensive data available which indicate the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth and transitional-aged youth in San Luis Obispo County.

7.4 KEY FINDINGS

Discussions of possible insights and implications are included. These discussions are the result of analysis from various experts familiar with local youth homelessness, including homeless service providers, a psychologist, and homeless youth advocates. They are not intended to be exhaustive, but rather form a basis for the recommendations that follow.

7.4.1 Sleep

Where have you slept or are currently sleeping at night?	
Unaccompanied Homeless Youth	Transitional-Aged Youth
“Couch Surfing” Staying temporarily with friends, relatives, or other people not with parent (54%)	“Couch Surfing” Staying temporarily with friends, relatives, or other people (55%)
“Couch Surfing” Staying temporarily with friends, relatives, or other people with parent (31%)	Car, tent, park (47%)
Motel, camper, 5 th wheel with parent (20%)	Shelter (33%)
In transitional housing or an independent living program (18%)	Motel, camper, 5 th wheel (13%)
Car, tent, park, bus, train station, abandoned building, or other public place not with parent (14%)	Transitional housing (5%)

Table 3: Where have you slept or are currently sleeping at night?

Our survey indicates (Table 3) that TAY are more likely than UHY to have spent time unsheltered, qualifying them as homeless under all current federal legal definitions.

About one in three UHY have experienced homelessness while accompanied by a parent or guardian at some point (Table 3). This finding provides context for their current homelessness. These youth’s homelessness was preceded by past family homelessness.

²⁶ American's Promise Alliance and Center for Promise. (2014). *Don't Call Them Dropouts: Understanding the Experiences of Young People Who Leave High School Before Graduation*.

7.4.2 Food

Do you ever skip meals or go hungry because you do not have enough food to eat?	
Unaccompanied Homeless Youth	Transitional-Aged Youth
No (68%)	Yes (59%)
Yes (32%)	No (41%)

Table 4: Do you ever skip meals or go hungry because you do not have enough food to eat?

Are there barriers that keep you from getting food or having enough to eat?	
Unaccompanied Homeless Youth	Transitional-Aged Youth
Do not have problems getting food (81%)	Do not have a place to cook food (56%)
Do not have a place to cook food, store food, transportation to get to food (6%)	Do not have a place to store food (44%)
Give it to the people I stay with (6%)	Hard to find food that is ready to eat (28%)
Tried to get CalFresh, SNAP, food stamps, but did not qualify (6%)	Some places won't help because of my age (16%)
Share food with my brothers and sisters (3%)	I give my food to the people I stay with (16%)

Table 5: Are there barriers that keep you from getting food or having enough to eat?

UHY appear (Table 5) to have a greater support network to access resources. This may be due to connections with peers and mentors who are not experiencing the same living situations. These peers and mentors often are introduced to the youth through educational or familial settings. Youth in school also have access to the school's free meal program. In Table 9, we find that UHY report a lack of transportation as a barrier to obtaining food less often than TAY, again indicating a larger support network of housed individuals who can provide this access to resources.

TAY appear (Table 5) to lack the network of resources that UHY access. This may be due to the fact that TAY most often are stigmatized and isolated from the society as a whole, which pushes them into small collectives. They learn to support themselves, and when they reach out, they reach to one another.

7.4.3 Needs

What do you need? (check all that apply)	
Unaccompanied Homeless Youth	Transitional-Aged Youth
Job (61%)	Safe, stable place to live (86%)
Clothes and shoes (58%)	Food (69%)
Help paying for college (53%)	Clothes and shoes (60%)
Help getting into college (39%)	Job (57%)
Safe, stable place to live (39%)	Transportation (49%)
Food (33%)	Help getting into college (46%)
Hygiene supplies (31%)	Help paying for college (43%)
Transportation (31%)	Hygiene supplies (43%)
Dentist (25%)	Medical care (37%)
Getting what need to do well in school (25%)	Getting what need to do well in school (34%)
Identification documents (19%)	Dentist (34%)
Medical care (17%)	Identification (23%)
Mental healthcare (11%)	Legal help (23%)

Table 6: What do you need?

Our findings indicate (Table 6) that UHY tend to favor employment and education over stable living conditions and food. This may demonstrate the high priority they place on personal goals. Given the assumption that the UHY and TAY end goal is the same—to enjoy a stable, healthy living environment—and not currently met, then we can discuss the different means by which they believe will allow them to reach their goal.

UHY see employment and education as effective path to stability. This suggests that UHY have a strong self-efficacy, which refers to an “individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments. Self-efficacy reflects confidence in the ability to exert control over one's own motivation, behavior, and social environment.”²⁷ Simply put, UHY believe they can change their situation.

UHY also appear to have an internal locus-of-control, meaning that they believe that they have control over what happens to them. This is evidenced by their high priority of obtaining employment and furthering their education as a means of achieving stability.

Whereas, TAY place educational goals beneath their immediate needs of shelter, food, clothing, and transportation. This is understandable to anyone who has been in a desperate situation in which survival instincts engage. However, TAY may be in state of survival that anything beyond immediate life-sustainment appears unobtainable.

²⁷ Bandura, A. (1997). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 191-215.

Are there any other services or resources you want or need that you have not been able to talk about in this survey?	
Unaccompanied Homeless Youth	Transitional-Aged Youth
"No" response (75%)	"No" response (46%)
<i>Comments</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Latina outreach program - Just getting a house in town with my mom that she can pay for - Food stamps - Help getting my birth certificate, ID, license - Methadone clinic in SLO - Housing, job - Counseling - Health insurance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Federal work study, grants - Privacy - Trust - Illegal camping laws, special areas to camp for reasonable fee - Help looking for housing - Medical Coverage/Hormone replacement therapy - Housing with dogs - Help with applying for benefits

Table 7: Are there any other services or resources you want or need that you have not been able to talk about in this survey?

7.4.4 Services

How did you hear about services that have helped you?	
Unaccompanied Homeless Youth	Transitional-Aged Youth
Teacher, school, counselor, or someone else at school (49%)	Other youth (61%)
Do not get services or help (31%)	Case manager or social worker (36%)
Case manager or social worker (17%)	Church or faith community (21%)

Table 8: How did you hear about services that have helped you?

What keeps you from using services or asking for help? (check all that apply)	
Unaccompanied Homeless Youth	Transitional-Aged Youth
Prefer to stay out of sight (47%)	Feel embarrassed or ashamed of situation (67%)
Do not have transportation (28%)	Do not have transportation (42%)
Feel embarrassed (28%)	Believe there aren't any (29%) or don't know where they are (29%)
Believe there aren't any (16%)	Prefer to stay out of sight (25%)
Don't know where they are (16%)	Safety at agencies
Afraid will be placed in foster care (13%)	Believe police will be called (8%)
Think too young or too old (13%)	Too or too old for services (8%)
Believe DSS, police, CPS, or parents will be called (6%) or sent home (6%)	Don't feel safe at some agencies (8%)

Table 9: What keeps you from using services or asking for help?

7.4.5 Housing

What kind of housing would you be most interested in? (please answer Yes, Maybe, No)	
Unaccompanied Homeless Youth	Transitional-Aged Youth
“Yes” Responses	
Live on my own with someone helping pay rent (69%)	Live on my own with someone helping pay rent (86%)
Live in a house of an adult I know for a long time (34%)	Live in a house of an adult I know for a long time (45%)
Live with my parents, but <i>only</i> if their living situation changed (28%)	Live with my parents (14%)
“No” Responses	
Group home (89%)	Shelter with adults (69%)
Shelter with youth my age (89%)	Live with parents (68%)
Shelter with adults (89%)	Live with parents [not even] if their living situation changed (57%)
House of a safe adult I have not known for a long time (77%)	
Live with parents (61%)	
Live with parents, [not even] if their living situation changed (58%)	

Table 10: What kind of housing would you be most interested in?

7.4.6 Open Response

Is there anything else you want us to know about what you need, what you struggle with, or what you hope for?	
Unaccompanied Homeless Youth	Transitional-Aged Youth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “To find a nice house where my family and I can stay” - “I have depression” - “I have a daughter who is one years old and I am trying to get us by” - “To get a job and have my own place ASAP” - “I really only need help with transportation and clothing” - “Everything is kind of a struggle, but I remain pretty positive. I have hope to get a job –never had one/kick my addictions/find housing” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “I am trying to save money at the shelter. I am NOT disabled, I work at [...] on [...] Street, and I LOVE MY JOB!” - “I have HepC. I am starting treatment soon, am going to be very sick need help with a hotel for three days” - “Struggle with improperly medicated ADHD that docs won’t take seriously, misdemeanors un-dropped” - “I hope to find a job and start renting a room where I am not seen as a child or a burden”

Table 11: Is there anything else you want us to know about what you need, what you struggle with, or what you hope for?

7.5 HUMAN TRAFFICKING SURVEY

In addition to the needs assessment survey, a supplementary human trafficking risk assessment survey was conducted for youth who were found on the streets. The survey was developed using an array of assessment models and with the support of local advocates and formerly trafficked individuals. Volunteers for this portion of the survey received in-depth training on trauma-informed surveying of possible victims of exploitation.

Homeless youth are at significant risk for human trafficking, both in sex trafficking and labor trafficking. Youth who do not have a safe place to go at night are particularly vulnerable to traffickers. Often promised food, clothing, shelter, or love, these youth seem to go willingly, but that is when the exploitation often begins. Through “force, fraud, or coercion”²⁸ youth are made to provide uncompensated labor or perform commercial sexual acts.

According to federal and state law, a youth under 18 performing commercial sexual acts is a “commercially sexually exploited child (CSEC)”²⁹ and a victim of human trafficking. If a youth is 18 years old or older, then there must be force, fraud, or coercion involved. If none of these three means of exploitation are present, but they are receiving any form of compensation for sex acts, then they are said to be engaging in survival sex (Table 12), which is can be simply defined as exchanging sex for survival.

Human Trafficking of Homeless Youth		
	Under 18 years old	18 years old or older
Providing commercial sexual acts—receiving any form of compensation, such as money, food, or shelter	Human Trafficking: Sex Trafficking	Survival Sex
Providing commercial sexual acts with force, fraud, or coercion involved	Human Trafficking: Sex Trafficking	Human Trafficking: Sex Trafficking
Providing labor with force, fraud, or coercion involved	Human Trafficking: Labor Trafficking	Human Trafficking: Labor Trafficking

Table 12: Human Trafficking of Homeless Youth

Fifteen youth were surveyed using the supplementary human trafficking assessment. One-third experienced labor exploitation, possibly labor trafficking. Most were 18 to 24 years old, with one being a minor at 17 years old. Four of the youth were at minimum engaging in survival sex, possibly being trafficked. Eight youth knew of other youth by name who were engaging in at minimum survival sex. Five of the youth had significantly older boyfriends. Two youth reported two other youth in a local city who were trading oral sex for \$15, drugs, or to sleep on a couch for a night. One youth reported a girl in a local city who was being commercially sexually exploited to pay her boyfriend’s court fines while he is in jail. One youth reported a girl in a

²⁸ President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. (2014). *Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking in the United States 2013-2017*. Washington D.C.

²⁹ President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. (2014). *Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking in the United States 2013-2017*. Washington D.C.

different local city engaging in survival sex with a man who her boyfriend gave her to when he went to jail for a gang-related offense. One youth reported that four girls were being commercially sexually exploited (sex trafficked) in a local city at a specified location by their parents. (*Note: In order to ensure the confidentiality of those surveyed and the possible victims, identifying information such as locations and associations is withheld.*)

7.6 JAIL SURVEY

In an effort to determine the frequency of youth in local detention centers currently or recently experiencing homelessness, a sample facility was selected in which inmates were given abbreviated questionnaires concerning their experiences of homelessness.

There were 149 surveys sent out, of which 30 were returned as undeliverable, which means that 119 were successfully delivered. Of those 119 delivered, 75 were completed and returned (63% response rate). We found that 88% of the homeless youth in jail reported that they had been homeless at least once in the past five years. When homeless, most reported being alone or with a non-related other person. Most (64%) were housed in the same jail unit.

7.7 50Now SURVEY

The Homeless Services Oversight council recently conducted a survey series called 50Now. This survey is a research supported assessment of housing needs based on a vulnerability index. The survey was for the general homeless population living in San Luis Obispo Co., although approximately 4% of the homeless surveyed were youth. Of the youth surveyed, the recommendations from the tool were that 36% receive permanent, supportive housing, while the other 64% receive rapid rehousing.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

San Luis Obispo County's over 2,210 homeless youth³⁰ and more than 50 unaccompanied homeless youth³¹ have to strive for success despite the daily struggles to meet their most basic needs. The following recommendations are designed to help the Homeless Services Oversight Council and service providers to come along side one of our county's most vulnerable populations to ensure they can achieve success.

8.1 YOUTH HOUSING

Work towards the development of ten permanent, supportive housing units for Transitional Aged Youth. Housing should follow best practices for serving homeless youth.

³⁰ *Homeless Students in San Luis Obispo County Schools.* (2014).

³¹ *Homeless Students in San Luis Obispo County Schools.* (2014).

8.2 EMPLOYMENT CONNECTION

Help youth obtain identification documents needed for employment and other services.

8.3 RESOURCES CAMPAIGN

Conduct a peer-involved outreach to homeless youth and other homeless persons about services available, including job search and preparation services.

8.4 POINT-IN-TIME COUNT

Hold a special Youth Point-in-Time Count as part of the 2015 Point in Time Count to more accurately determine the number of homeless youth. Use the Count to conduct outreach and engagement.

9 DEFINITIONS & ABBREVIATIONS

Ad Hoc Subcommittee: A subcommittee with a specific focus not governed by the Brown Act.

Coach-surfing: Sleeping temporarily on someone's couch. See also Doubled-up.

Commercially Sexually Exploited Child or Children (CSEC): A minor who has been or is sexually abused for economic or other gain which could be in the form of prostitution, stripping, or pornography.

Doubled-up: Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship.

Family Resource Center: Collaborative partnerships between public and non-profit community agencies to help families and students in need of intensive support beyond what traditional schools regularly provide.

Homeless Services Oversight Council (HSOC): Refers specifically to the Homeless Services Oversight Council of San Luis Obispo County unless otherwise stated. HSOC of San Luis Obispo Co. strives to "ensure that everyone has access to appropriate and affordable housing and to services they need to sustain it."³²

³² HSOC *About*. (2014). Retrieved from San Luis Obispo Homeless Services Oversight Council: <http://slohomeless.com/about/>

Homeless Youth: Defined by the McKinney-Vento Act’s education definition. A student who lacks fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including children and youth who in one of the following circumstances:

- sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship (sometimes referred to as doubled-up)
- living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative housing
- living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar environments
- living in a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, regular sleeping accommodations
- living in emergency or transitional shelters
- abandoned in hospitals
- awaiting foster care placement
- children of migrant workers who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above³³

McKinney-Vento Act’s Education for Homeless Children and Youth: A federal program created under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 to reduce the barriers that homeless children and youth face in enrolling, attending, and succeeding in school.

Runaway Youth: Youth who have left home without parental/caregiver permission and stay away for one or more nights. A runaway episode has been defined as being away from home overnight for youth under 14 (or older and mentally incompetent) and for two or more nights for youth 15 and older.³⁴

SLO: Refers to the city of San Luis Obispo, unless preceding “Co.” or “County.”

SLO Co.: Refers to the County of San Luis Obispo.

Street youth: Youth who have spent at least some time living on the streets without a parent or caregiver.³⁵

Throwaway Youth: Youth who have been asked, told, or forced to leave home by a parent or caregiver with no alternate care arranged.³⁶

Transitional-Aged Youth: Any person who is between the ages 18 and 24, inclusively.

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth: Youth experiencing homelessness while not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.³⁷

³³ Hyatt, S. (2014). *FAQ: Homeless Students in California*

³⁴ Sedlak, Finkelhor, Hammer, & Schultz, 2002

³⁵ Toro, Dworsky, & Fowler, 2007, Pergamit, 2010

³⁶ Sedlak, Finkelhor, Hammer, & Schultz, 2002

³⁷ National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. (2014). *Unaccompanied Homeless Youth*.

**10 APPENDIX: DEFINITIONS OF HOMELESSNESS FOR FEDERAL
PROGRAMS SERVING CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES**

Definitions of Homelessness for Federal Programs Serving Children, Youth, and Families

The two major definitions of homelessness in use by federal agencies are the education definition in Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act, and the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition in Section 103 of Subtitle I of the McKinney-Vento Act. The definitions overlap and diverge in ways that can cause confusion. The following chart illustrates the similarities and differences between federal agencies' definitions of homeless. It should be noted that the HUD definition will soon broaden with the promulgation of final regulations, but the broadening will have conditions that are complex and detailed.

	EDUCATION DEFINITION	HUD DEFINITION – CURRENT	HUD DEFINITION – PENDING REGULATIONS	RHYA DEFINITION
Statutory Reference:	Section 725 of Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act	Section 103 of Subtitle I of the McKinney-Vento Act	Section 103 of Subtitle I of the McKinney-Vento Act	Section 387 of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act
Federal Programs and Agencies Using This Definition:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elementary and Secondary Education (ED) - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (ED) - Higher Education Act (ED) - Head Start Act (HHS) - Child Nutrition Act (USDA) - Violence Against Women Act (DOJ) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Homeless Assistance Programs (HUD) - Emergency Food and Shelter (Homeland Security) - Department of Veterans Affairs (all programs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Homeless Assistance Programs (HUD) 	Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Programs (HHS)
LIVING SITUATIONS COVERED BY THESE DEFINITIONS				
Unsheltered Locations	<p>Yes:</p> <p>“(ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (within the meaning of section 103(a)(2)(C));</p> <p>(iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings”</p>	<p>Yes:</p> <p>“an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.”</p>	<p>Yes:</p> <p>“an individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;”</p>	<p>Yes, if the youth cannot live with relatives and has no other safe place to go:</p> <p>“a youth... for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative, and who has no other safe alternative living arrangement.”</p>
Emergency Shelters and Transitional Housing	<p>Yes:</p> <p>“children and youth who are living in emergency or transitional shelters”</p>	<p>Yes:</p> <p>“a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations”</p>	<p>Yes:</p> <p>“an individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements”</p>	<p>Yes, if the youth cannot live with relatives and has no other safe place to go:</p> <p>“a youth... for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative, and who has no other safe alternative living arrangement.”</p>

	EDUCATION DEFINITION	HUD DEFINITION – CURRENT	HUD DEFINITION – PENDING REGULATIONS	RHYA DEFINITION
Motels and Hotels	<p>Yes, if there are no appropriate alternatives:</p> <p>“children and youth who are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds <u>due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations</u>”</p> <p>(emphasis added)</p>	<p>“an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill);”</p>	<p>Generally, no, except for the following situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “hotels and motels paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations” - “an individual or family who has a primary nighttime residence that is a room in a hotel or motel and where they lack the resources necessary to reside there for more than 14 days, who has no subsequent residence identified; and lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing;” - “any individual or family who is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life threatening conditions in the individual's or family's current housing situation, including where the health and safety of children are jeopardized, and who have no other residence and lack the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing” - “unaccompanied youth and homeless families with children and youth defined as homeless under other Federal statutes who have experienced a long term period without living independently in permanent housing; and have experienced persistent instability as measured by frequent moves over such period; and can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time because of chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance addiction, histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse, the presence of a child or youth with a disability, or multiple barriers to employment. 	<p>Yes, if the youth cannot live with relatives and has no other safe place to go:</p> <p>“a youth... for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative, and who has no other safe alternative living arrangement.”</p>

	EDUCATION DEFINITION	HUD DEFINITION – CURRENT	HUD DEFINITION – PENDING REGULATIONS	RHYA DEFINITION
Staying with Others (“Doubled-Up”)	<p>Yes, if it is due to due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (within the definition of lacking fixed, regular, and adequate living situations)</p> <p>“...individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (within the meaning of section 103(a)(1)); and (B) includes — (i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;”</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Generally, no, except the following situations:</p> <p>“an individual or family who will imminently lose their housing, including housing they are sharing with others, as evidenced by credible evidence indicating that the owner or renter of the housing will not allow the individual or family to stay for more than 14 days, and who has no subsequent residence identified; and who lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “any individual or family who is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life threatening conditions in the individual's or family's current housing situation, including where the health and safety of children are jeopardized, and who have no other residence and lack the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing” - “unaccompanied youth and homeless families with children and youth defined as homeless under other Federal statutes who have experienced a long term period without living independently in permanent housing; and have experienced persistent instability as measured by frequent moves over such period; and can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time because of chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance addiction, histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse, the presence of a child or youth with a disability, or multiple barriers to employment.” 	<p>Yes, if the youth cannot live with relatives and has no other safe place to go:</p> <p>“a youth... for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative, and who has no other safe alternative living arrangement.”</p>

	EDUCATION DEFINITION	HUD DEFINITION – CURRENT	HUD DEFINITION – PENDING REGULATIONS	RHYA DEFINITION
“At Risk of Homelessness”	No such definition.	No such definition.	<p>Defines “at risk of homelessness” to include <u>all</u> families with children and youth defined as homeless under other Federal statutes.</p> <p>(1) AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS.-The term ‘at risk of homelessness’ means, with respect to an individual or family, that the individual or family-</p> <p>(A) has income below 30 percent of median income for the geographic area;</p> <p>(B) has insufficient resources immediately available to attain housing stability; and</p> <p>(C)(i) has moved frequently because of economic reasons;</p> <p>(ii) is living in the home of another because of economic hardship;</p> <p>(iii) has been notified that their right to occupy their current housing or living situation will be terminated;</p> <p>(iv) lives in a hotel or motel;</p> <p>(v) lives in severely overcrowded housing;</p> <p>(vi) is exiting an institution; or</p> <p>(vii) otherwise lives in housing that has characteristics associated with instability and an increased risk of homelessness.</p> <p>Such term includes all families with children and youth defined as homeless under other Federal statutes.</p>	<p>No such definition. However, RHYA does define “youth at risk of separation from family:”</p> <p>YOUTH AT RISK OF SEPARATION FROM THE FAMILY.—The term ‘youth at risk of separation from the family’ means an individual—</p> <p>(A) who is less than 18 years of age; and</p> <p>(B) (i) who has a history of running away from the family of such individual;</p> <p>(ii) whose parent, guardian, or custodian is not willing to provide for the basic needs of such individual; or</p> <p>(iii) who is at risk of entering the child welfare system or juvenile justice system as a result of the lack of services available to the family to meet such needs.</p>

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