**Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population in Central New York**

**Housing and Homeless Coalition of Central New York**

**April 22, 2017**

**By Hannah Johnson**

# Report: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population of Central New York

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Introduction:** This study reports the results of a gaps and needs survey given to the homeless youth population of Central New York, consisting of Onondaga County, Cayuga County, and Oswego County. The report will be presented to the Housing and Homeless Coalition of Central New York. This report will be used to better serve the needs of the homeless youth population in Central New York.

**Methods:** The data were collected from an online survey, which was provided to various homeless shelters, youth programs, and the Syracuse City School District. 15 surveys were collected. There are questions raised about the representativeness of the respondents in this survey.

**Findings:**

1. 80% of youth respondents reported that they had not participated in any form of prostitution. (n = 15)

2. 80% of youth respondents reported that they had never been involved in foster care. (n = 15)

3. 47% of youth respondents reported that they were currently living in a shelter. (n = 15)

4. 60% of youth respondents reported to be homeless for three months or less. (n = 15)

5. 36% of youth respondents reported they were homeless because they were “kicked out”. (n = 15)

6. 45% of youth respondents reported to have struggled with mental health, substance abuse, or alcohol use. (n = 15)

7. 17% of youth respondents reported to be lacking the basic need of education. (n = 15)

8. 67% of youth respondents reported to have not felt discriminated against at any point. (n = 15)

9. 75% of youth who reported they felt they had been discriminated against, felt discrimination in school. (n = 4)

10. 62% of youth reported to have been helped with general support or housing/economic support while experiencing homelessness.

**Introduction**

This study reports the results of a gaps and needs survey given to the homeless youth population of Central New York, consisting of Onondaga, Cayuga, and Oswego County. The report will be presented to the Housing and Homeless Coalition of Central New York. This report will be used to better serve the needs of the homeless youth population in Central New York.

**Methods**

**Instrument Design:** The survey was designed by the author, the Housing and Homeless Coalition of Central New York, with consultations from the Salvation Army, ACR Health, Samaritan Center, CanTeen, Syracuse City School District, and the Children and Family Services – Youth Bureau.

**Data Collection Method:** Homeless shelters, youth centers, and the Syracuse City School District were given the online survey at the end of February 2017. Respondents were given until April 8, 2017 to complete the survey.

**Target Population and Sample:** The target population consists of all homeless youth in Central New York (Onondaga, Cayuga, and Oswego County) under the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness. The target population number is unknown. The survey was given to homeless shelters, youth centers, and the Syracuse City School District (sampling frame). A total of 15 responses (sample) were collected.

**Quality of Data**

**Representativeness:** There are questions raised about the representativeness of the sample to the target population, as the target population number is unknown. Additionally, homelessness can be everchanging, with the youth population transitioning in housing over time. Under the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness, this includes children staying with a friend or family member, along with transitional housing, shelters, staying in a hotel or motel, or being unsheltered.

The following tables and graphs provide the reader with the attributes of the sample.

**Figure 1**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Age Range of Homeless Youth Population** | |
| **in Years (Central New York) (n = 15)** | |
| Age Range | Percent |
| 14-17 | 40% |
| 18-21 | 47% |
| 22-24 | 13% |
| Total | 100% |

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

**Figure 2**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Current Counties of Homeless Youth Population** | |
| **(Central New York) (n = 15)** | |
| County | Percent |
| Cayuga | 13% |
| Onondaga | 87% |
| Total | 100% |

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

**Figure 3**

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

**Figure 4**

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

**Figure 5**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Gender Identity of Homeless Youth** | |
| **Population (Central New York) (n = 15)** | |
| Gender Identity | Percent |
| Female | 67% |
| Male | 27% |
| Transgender | 7% |
| Total | 100% |

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

**Figure 6**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Sexual Orientation of Homeless Youth Population** | |
| **(Central New York) (n = 15)** | |
| Sexual Orientation | Percent |
| Heterosexual | 73% |
| Bisexual | 7% |
| Other | 20% |
| Total | 100% |

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

**Accuracy:** There are multiple parts of the survey that could provide inaccurate data. Several questions ask respondents to provide personal information that may be considered acts of deviance by society, and therefore individuals may choose to answer more favorably. One question asks respondents if they have participated in any form of prostitution. As this is something generally looked at as a deviant act, it is possible that some respondents may have inaccurately reported. An additional question asks individuals to report if they have had problems with substance abuse, alcohol use, mental health, sexual abuse, violence in the home, considered suicide/self-harm, been convicted or arrested for a crime, or struggle with literacy. Each option has negative connotations and can be related to bad habits, behavior, or situations not commonly reported or discussed. Because of this, there is a possibility that some respondents may have inaccurately reported. Additionally, due to the number of individuals who reported to struggle with reading and writing, there is the possibility that some surveys are inaccurate due to issues understanding the questions.

**FINDINGS**

1. 80% of youth respondents reported that they had not participated in any form of prostitution. (n = 15)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Percent of Homeless Youth Population Participating** | |
| **in Prostitution (Central New York) (n = 15)** | |
| Prostitution | Percent |
| Yes | 7% |
| No | 80% |
| Don't Know/Prefer Not to Answer | 13% |
| Total | 100% |

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

2. 80% of youth respondents reported that they had never been involved in foster care. (n = 15)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Involvement in Foster Care of Homeless Youth** | |
| **Population (Central New York) (n = 15)** | |
| Foster Care | Percent |
| Yes | 20% |
| No | 80% |
| Total | 100% |

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

3. 47% of youth respondents reported that they were currently living in a shelter. (n = 15)

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Current Living Situation of Homeless Youth Population** | |
| **(Central New York) (n = 15)** | |
| Living Situation | Percent |
| In a Shelter | 47% |
| Staying with Friends/Family | 29% |
| Transitional Housing | 27% |
| Total | 102% |

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

Comment: Totals to 102% due to rounding.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Current Living Situation of Homeless Youth Population by Age Range (Central New York) (n = 15)** | | | |
| **Age Range** | **Current Living Situation** | | |
| In a Shelter | Staying with Friends/Family | Transitional Housing |
| 14-17 | 13% | 13% | 13% |
| 18-21 | 20% | 13% | 13% |
| 22-24 | 13% | 0% | 0% |
| Total | 47% | 27% | 27% |

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

4. 60% of youth respondents reported to be homeless for three months or less. (n = 15)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Length of Time (in Months) of Current Living** | |
| **Situation for Homeless Youth Population** | |
| **(Central New York) (n = 15)** | |
| Months | Percent |
| <1 Month | 27% |
| 1-3 Months | 33% |
| 4-6 Months | 13% |
| 7-9 Months | 13% |
| 10-12 Months | 7% |
| Not Sure | 7% |
| Total | 100% |

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

5. 36% of youth respondents reported they were homeless because they were “kicked out”. (n = 15)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Reasoning for Homelessness for Homeless Youth Population** | |
| **(Central New York) (n = 15)** | |
| Reason for Homelessness | Percent |
| Kicked Out | 36% |
| Unhealthy/Abusive Relationship | 23% |
| Ran Away | 9% |
| Substance Abuse | 9% |
| Other | 9% |
| Eviction | 5% |
| Jail | 5% |
| Violence at Home | 5% |
| Total | 100% |

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

Comment: Respondents were able to select more than one answer.

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

Comment: Respondents were able to select more than one answer.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Reason for Homelessness by Age for Homeless Youth Population (Central New York) (n = 15)** | | | | | | | |
| **Age Range** | **Reason for Homelessness** | | | | | | |
| Jail | Kicked Out | Eviction | Unhealthy/Abusive Relationship | Violence at Home | Ran Away | Substance Abuse |
| 14-17 | 0% | 5% | 0% | 20% | 0% | 10% | 10% |
| 18-21 | 5% | 30% | 0% | 5% | 5% | 0% | 0% |
| 22-24 | 0% | 5% | 5% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Total | 5% | 40% | 5% | 25% | 5% | 10% | 10% |

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

Comment: Respondents were able to select more than one answer.

6. 45% of youth respondents reported to have struggled with mental health, substance abuse, or alcohol use. (n = 15)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Current and Past Life Circumstances for Homeless Youth** | |
| **Population (Central New York) (n = 15)** | |
| Circumstance | Percent |
| Alcohol Use | 15% |
| Substance Abuse | 15% |
| Mental Health | 15% |
| Struggle Reading/Writing | 12% |
| Arrested/Convicted of a Crime | 12% |
| Considered Suicide/Self-Harm | 9% |
| Sexual Abuse | 9% |
| Currently Pregnant | 6% |
| Have Children | 6% |
| Violence in the Home | 3% |
| Total | 100% |

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

Comment: Respondents were able to select more than one answer.

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

Comment: Respondents were able to select more than one answer.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Top Barriers for Homeless Youth Population by Age (Central New York) (n = 15)** | | | |
| **Age Range** | **Barriers for Youth** | | |
| Substance Abuse | Mental Health | Arrested/Convicted |
| 14-17 | 13% | 7% | 7% |
| 18-21 | 20% | 27% | 13% |
| 22-24 | 0% | 7% | 7% |
| Total | 33% | 40% | 27% |

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

Comment: Respondents were able to select more than one answer.

7. 17% of youth respondents reported to be lacking the basic need of education. (n = 15)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Basic Needs Not Being Met for Homeless Youth Population** | |
| **(Central New York) (n = 15)** | |
| Basic Need | Percent |
| Education | 17% |
| None | 17% |
| Clean Clothing | 13% |
| Hygiene | 13% |
| Food | 10% |
| Weather-Appropriate Clothing | 10% |
| Medication | 10% |
| School Supplies | 7% |
| Doctor's Appointments | 3% |
| Total | 100% |

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

Comment: Respondents were able to select more than one answer.

8. 67% of youth respondents reported to have not felt discriminated against at any point. (n = 15)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Discrimination Against Homeless Youth Population** | |
| **(Central New York) (n = 15)** | |
| Discrimination | Percent |
| Has Not Been Discriminated | 67% |
| Been Discriminated | 33% |
| Total | 100% |

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

9. 75% of youth who reported they felt they had been discriminated against, felt discrimination in school. (n = 4)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Locations Homeless Youth Population** | |
| **has felt Discriminated Against** | |
| **(Central New York) (n = 4)** | |
| Location | Percent |
| School | 75% |
| Unsure | 25% |
| Total | 100% |

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

10. 62% of youth reported to have been helped with general support or housing/economic support while experiencing homelessness.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Self-identified Help Provided to Homeless Youth Population** | |
| **(Central New York) (n = 11)** | |
| Help Provided | Percent |
| General Support | 31% |
| Housing/Economic Support | 31% |
| Mental Health | 15% |
| No Help | 15% |
| Unsure | 8% |
| Total | 100% |

Source: Gaps & Needs Survey of Homeless Youth Population, Data Collected by Hannah Johnson for PAF 490, 2017

Comment: Open-ended question – respondents could provide more than one answer.

**APPENDICES**

**Table of Contents**

**Appendix I Blank Survey File**

**Appendix II Disaggregated Data**

**Appendix I**

**Blank Survey File**

**Youth Gaps & Needs Survey**

**Age Range:** **Gender Identity:** **Sexual Orientation: County:**  
\_\_13 and under \_\_Male \_\_Heterosexual \_\_Onondaga  
\_\_14-17 \_\_Female \_\_Lesbian/Gay \_\_Cayuga  
\_\_18-21 \_\_Transgender \_\_Bisexual \_\_Oswego  
\_\_22+ \_\_Don’t Identify as Any Gender \_\_Other

**Race:**  **Ethnicity: Involvement in Foster Care:**\_\_American Indian/Alaska Native \_\_Hispanic \_\_Yes  
\_\_Asian \_\_Non-Hispanic \_\_No  
\_\_Black or African American  
\_\_Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander   
\_\_White

\_\_Other

**Current Living Situation:**  
\_\_In a Shelter \_\_In a Hotel/Motel   
\_\_Transitional Housing/Shelter Program \_\_Staying with friends/family  
\_\_Awaiting Foster Care \_\_Unknown  
\_\_Unsheltered (street/car/park/campground/abandoned building)

**Length of Time in Current Living Situation**: \_\_\_\_\_ (open-ended)

**Reasons for Homelessness (Check All that Apply):**

\_\_Ran Away \_\_Eviction  
\_\_Difference in Religious/Cultural Beliefs \_\_Violence at Home   
\_\_Kicked Out \_\_Other (**will include text box**)  
\_\_Conflicts around Gender Identity/Sexual Orientation  
\_\_Unhealthy/Abusive Relationship at Home or Elsewhere

**Check All That Apply (Current or Past):**  
\_\_Currently Pregnant \_\_Alcohol Use \_\_Struggle Reading/Writing  
\_\_Have Children \_\_Substance Abuse \_\_Mental Health

\_\_Arrested/Convicted of a Crime \_\_Sexual Abuse \_\_None of the Above  
\_\_Considered Suicide/Self-harm \_\_Violence in the Home  
  
**Do you ever do things like exchange sex for money, food, drugs, or a place to stay, run drugs for someone, have unprotected sex with someone you don’t know, share a needle, or anything like that?**  
\_\_Yes  
\_\_No  
\_\_Don’t Know/Prefer Not to Answer

**Are Any of Your Basic Needs *Not* Being Met? (Check All That Apply):**\_\_Food \_\_Weather-appropriate Clothing (Example: Winter Coat)  
\_\_Education \_\_School Supplies   
\_\_Clean Clothing \_\_Hygiene  
\_\_Medication \_\_Doctor’s Appointments (including dental and vision)  
\_\_None of the Above \_\_Other

**Have you ever been discriminated against?**\_\_Yes  
\_\_No

**If “Yes”, in what ways?**  
(text box)

**What type of help (if any) have you received while you have been homeless?**

(text box)

**Appendix II**

**Disaggregated Data**











