

SUMMARY OF MEDIA COVERAGE

Homeless Youth Capacity Building Project Press Conference January 24, 2011

Newspapers

- San Jose Mercury News
- The Bay Citizen
- San Francisco Chronicle
- Chico Enterprise Record
- San Diego Union-Tribune
- Inland News Today
- California Watch
- The Oakland Tribune

Radio

- Capitol Public Radio
- KPBS
- KCBS

Television

- KXTV – TV/ABC, Sacramento
- KSEE – TV/NBC, Fresno
- KGET – TV/NBC, Bakersfield
- Univision 19, Sacramento

SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS

January 24, 2011

Special to the Mercury News: Op-Ed

By John Burton and Carol Liu

California is failing homeless youths

http://www.mercurynews.com/opinion/ci_17153226?nclick_check=1

The California Homeless Youth Project is releasing a study Monday that shines a bright light on a hidden human disaster in our state: Among the growing number of Californians who experience homelessness each year are more than 200,000 young people, ages 12 through 17. There are many thousands more between the ages of 18 and 24.

These youths are alone, unaccompanied by parents, and fending for themselves to find food, clothing and shelter anywhere they can. Yet, sadly, most shelters for the homeless only serve adults; young people are either turned away or choose to stay out in the cold for fear of their safety or the security of their few belongings. Those youths who were never in foster care -- somehow missed by the Child Welfare system -- fare the worst.

The report by the California Homeless Youth Project, an initiative of the California Research Bureau, found that less than one-third of California's 58 counties have even a single shelter bed specifically for unaccompanied homeless youth. Our most vulnerable young Californians deserve better.

Making matters worse is the ailing economy. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, unemployment among youth age 16 to 24 has reached 19.1 percent nationally, the highest rate on record since 1948. As older workers take jobs traditionally held by younger workers, youths are pushed out of jobs and onto the street.

Who are the 200,000 youths who are homeless? Studies have found that many leave home to escape abuse and neglect. Without access to a safe place to live, they fall into a cycle of unemployment, poor health, substance use, crime and ultimately adult homelessness. Outcomes such as these aren't just sad; they are expensive for California. The current annual cost of incarcerating an adult in California has topped \$50,000, and the annual cost of homelessness is close behind. A 2009 study by the University of Southern California pegs the annual cost of health care, shelter and other public services at \$48,000 per homeless individual.

Homeless youth can be safely housed at a fraction of the cost while offering them a chance for a better life as adults. That was the case for a 16-year-old girl from the Sacramento area, who found shelter last winter at Wind Youth Services after living for months in her car. Her mother's serious untreated mental illness made life at home unbearable. With the support

of Wind Youth Services, she graduated from high school, secured affordable housing, and enrolled in American River College, where she is studying to become a pharmacy technician.

While programs such as Wind Youth Services are changing lives, the California Homeless Youth Project report shows there simply are not enough of them. Furthermore, youth shelters around the state have seen a massive funding reduction. Over 20 percent of programs serving homeless youth in California have been forced to cut services or staff hours.

Today, homeless youths from around the state will converge on the State Capitol in Sacramento to educate legislators about three important legislative proposals. The first will create the first-ever statewide strategy to reduce youth homelessness. The second will preserve more than \$6 million in federal funds for California's homeless youth by creating a state licensing category for youth shelters; and the final piece of legislation will ensure that the needs of homeless youth are considered in the development of permanent, affordable housing.

Will these strategies end youth homelessness immediately? No; but they are an important step forward. Meeting the basic needs of California's homeless kids is something all Californians should care about. Today, we embrace this responsibility.

JOHN BURTON, former president pro tem of the California Senate, is founder and chair of the John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes. CAROL LIU is a state senator representing 21st District in the Los Angeles area. They wrote this article for this newspaper.

THE BAY CITIZEN

January 24, 2011

By Aaron Glantz

Report: 200,000 Homeless Kids, Little Help Bay Area counties have few shelters and services for homeless kids without families

<http://www.baycitizen.org/homeless/story/report-200000-homeless-kids-little-help/>

This year, more than 200,000 kids between 12 and 17 will be homeless--and alone--for at least one night in California, but the state has just 1,000 beds to take care of them.

That's the finding of a new report released today by the California Homeless Youth Project, a grant-funded research and policy initiative of the California Research Bureau, the State Library and New America Media.

"There is no state agency or department that has any kind of responsibility for these kids," said Ginny Puddefoot, who runs the project from her office at the California Research Bureau.

"We have shelters that exist for chronically homeless adults," but when homeless teenagers show up they are often turned away or harassed, Puddefoot said.

What services do exist are managed by local governments and nonprofits, the report said, and almost two thirds of the state's 58 counties have no services focused on unaccompanied homeless children.

Locally, the report said, Napa and Solano counties provide no services to homeless children without parents.

Alameda County has five programs; San Francisco and San Mateo counties have three programs; Contra Costa County has two programs; while Santa Clara, Marin, and Sonoma Counties all have one program.

After researchers announced their report today at a press conference in Sacramento, homeless advocates and formerly homeless young people walked the halls of the state capital trying to build support for three newly proposed pieces of legislation.

Among them is a proposal by State Sen. Carol Liu (D-La Cañada Flintridge), which would declare homeless youth to be a priority, special needs group and require the California Emergency Management Agency to develop a statewide plan to reduce youth homelessness.

Amy Lemley of the John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes, said advocates were mindful of the state's \$26.3 billion budget deficit.

"The legislation calls on the Emergency Management Agency to develop that strategy so we have it in place when the economy gets better and we have more money," she said.

Tasharra Shackelford, 23, said lawmakers received her positively.

Shackelford, of Richmond, was homeless for three months in 2007 after her mother threw her out of the house.

"I was homeless because I wasn't ready for life," she said.

Shackelford said her story shows what is possible when young people have access to programs.

After her mother threw her out, Shackelford first landed at Calli House, a special youth shelter run by the Contra Costa County Department of Health Services.

Since then, she's moved on to supportive housing services in El Sobrante and San Pablo, where she is working on an associate's degree in criminal justice studies at Contra Costa Community College.

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

January 26, 2011

By Joanna Lin

Most counties lack programs for homeless youths

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2011/01/26/BA8M1HE5GL.DTL>

Nearly two-thirds of California counties have no services targeted toward the state's estimated 200,000 homeless youth, according to a state survey released this week.

The California Homeless Youth Project found only 53 programs in 20 counties offering services such as outreach and transitional housing for homeless children ages 12 to 17. Statewide there are just over 1,000 beds available for homeless youth.

The majority of homeless youth are not part of the foster care or juvenile justice systems and therefore lack state supports in those programs, the project found. Many say they end up on the street because of family conflict, abuse, neglect or rejection over sexual orientation. They are at greater risk for mental and physical health problems, sexual exploitation, physical abuse, substance abuse and death.

Grant-funded research

The project is a grant-funded research and policy initiative of the state research bureau, state library and New America Media, a national collaboration of ethnic news outlets and a California Watch partner. The programs it surveyed do not include those serving homeless families or adults, or current or former foster care youth.

Programs are clustered primarily in the Bay Area, Los Angeles and San Diego, with some services in Northern and Central California. Services are lacking or absent in the state's inland and rural regions - areas that are seeing spikes in youth homelessness, said Amy Lemley, policy director for the John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes.

Lack of public transportation in the Central Valley and Inland Empire mean kids cannot reach services and often stay in unsafe living situations, Lemley said.

The findings were presented at the state Capitol, where Sen. Carol Liu, D-La Cañada Flintridge (Los Angeles County), and Sen. Alan Lowenthal, D-Long Beach, announced legislation aimed at helping homeless youth.

"Our state has no coordinated program to address their needs, leaving them invisible and underserved," Liu said at a media briefing.

One bill would create a state licensing category for emergency youth shelters in order to maintain nearly \$7 million in federal funding.

Currently the state licenses and regulates children's group homes - mandatory, long-term placements for youth in protective custody. Emergency youth shelters, which are voluntary and temporary, end up adopting inappropriate standards so they can meet licensing and funding requirements, advocates say.

Another bill would declare homeless youth a priority, special-needs population and would call on the California Emergency Management Agency, whose budget for homeless youth services is less than \$500,000, to develop a plan to reduce youth homelessness. A third bill proposes an annual \$2 billion investment in public-private partnerships that build affordable housing.

The Senate Human Services Committee is expected to hear the legislation supported by the John Burton Foundation in February.

Funding challenge

Funding these initiatives and expanded services will be a challenge, Liu and Lowenthal acknowledged.

"We cannot live in denial any longer. There are 200,000 youth on the streets," Lowenthal said. "You have to crawl before you can walk. Right now the state is doing nothing."

The problem has only worsened in recent years, with unemployment among teens and young adults reaching record highs during the recession. Unemployment insurance, a safety net for many older, out-of-work adults, is not available for teens and young adults struggling to enter the workforce for the first time.

Before the recession, the unemployment rate among 16- to 24-year-olds hovered around 10 percent, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. That figure, now 18.1 percent, climbed to as high as 19.5 percent in April last year and lags far behind the nation's overall rate of 9.4 percent.

In California, unemployment is even higher and is expected to remain above 10 percent for three more years, according to a projection released yesterday by the Business Forecasting Center at the University of Pacific.

CHICO ENTERPRISE RECORD

January 27, 2011

By Larry Mitchell

Bill aims to shelter more homeless youth

http://www.chicoer.com/news/ci_17213245

Butte County has a shelter to house homeless youngsters, but most California counties do not, according to state Sen. Alan Lowenthal, D-Long Beach.

He has introduced a bill in the Legislature that aims to garner federal funds for emergency youth shelters.

The shelter in Butte County is located in Chico and is operated by Youth For Change, a nonprofit organization, in collaboration with Butte County Behavioral Health.

The local shelter, Coleen's House Youth Shelter, can house as many as six youngsters between the ages of 14 and 17, said Tracy Kelly, the facility's program coordinator.

"It is used quite a lot — we're frequently busy," she said in a phone interview. "People I talk to don't seem aware that we have so many homeless youth."

It's hard to know how many homeless youngsters there are locally. In the 2009 and 2010 homeless censuses conducted in Butte County, people surveyed were asked their age, but youth were not asked if they were homeless and out on their own or with their families, said Meagan Meloy, coordinator of the Butte Countywide Homeless Continuum of Care.

In the 2011 census, which is being conducted today, youngsters will be questioned further, so there will be a count of "unaccompanied youth," she said.

On average, Kelly said, youth stay about 10 days at the local shelter, although they can stay as long as 30 days.

The shelter staff tries to help them connect with family members, she said. If they ran away from home because they were abused, the shelter will contact Children's Services.

Youth For Change, in conjunction with Behavioral Health, also runs a drop-in center on Sixth Street in downtown Chico. It is for homeless young people between the ages of 14 and 24.

It's a place where they can take a shower, have a meal and learn about services that might help them, Kelly said.

A news release from Lowenthal's office said he introduced Senate Bill 119 this week.

It would create uniform rules for licensing youth shelters throughout California.

"The current system is a mess," Lowenthal was quoted as saying in the release. "Today each county has a different licensing process, often creating unintended barriers for kids to access these shelters. Because of a lack of a uniform licensing policy, shelters (in California) cannot compete for \$6 million available every year in federal funds."

His release stated that a recent study, "Programs Serving California's Homeless Youth: A Point-in-Time Survey" by the California Research Bureau, found just 555 beds available for 200,000 homeless youngsters.

The report also stated that only 20 of the state's 58 counties had shelters to temporarily house minors.

Besides offering housing, food and clothing, the release stated, "youth shelters may also provide counseling or therapy and case management."

"We know that of the kids who receive housing and support services and complete programs, 76 percent exit street life," Lowenthal was quoted as saying in the release.

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SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE

January 21, 2011

Op-Ed

By Walter Philips

Homeless youth in San Diego deserve better

<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/2011/jan/21/homeless-youth-in-san-diego-deserve-better/>

As I was walking downtown with my wife one recent Saturday night, dozens of homeless individuals lined the sidewalks with their sleeping bags. Cheri lived this life at age 15 when she ran away from home to escape her stepfather's repeated physical violence. Cheri was further traumatized by the streets, where she was repeatedly victimized and commercially sexually exploited. "When I was homeless, I felt worthless, hopeless and I was really scared," Cheri remembers of that time.

Cheri is one of the more than 200,000 youth ages 12 to 17 who experience homelessness each year in California. It is estimated that 2,500 of them at any given time call the streets of San Diego their home. Furthermore, over 7,500 youth each year run away from home in San Diego County. Many, like Cheri, are escaping abuse, only to be further victimized on the streets by adults.

A new study by the California Research Bureau shows that only a third of California's 58 counties have even a single bed appropriate for these unaccompanied homeless youth. In those counties that do have services, programs are feeling the effects of the economic downturn. Though the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth are rising, the study found that 20 percent of the programs that support them have had to cut services or reduce hours. In San Diego County, there are only 85 beds targeted for homeless youth on their own.

We know that when homeless youth are able to find age-appropriate services and shelter, they usually fare well. In our program, 93 percent of youth who came to our shelter transitioned to a safe living situation. In addition, over 85 percent were enrolled in school and 87 percent demonstrated improvement in life skills critical for future success. Cheri is now 18 and successfully completed her stay in a long-term group home, graduated from high school, has a steady job and will soon be moving into one of our transitional housing units.

For young girls who are unable to find the resources and help that Cheri received, the risk of commercial sexual exploitation is growing. Many of these girls were victimized by earlier traumas, like sexual and physical abuse, and find themselves in situations on the streets where they are forced into prostitution. Over the last year, 63 teens were arrested for

prostitution in San Diego, an increase of 40 percent. Despite this growing problem, there are minimal services and resources available for these girls.

It is imperative that the state and county invest in services for homeless youth. Despite the fiscal crisis in which the state finds itself, the cost of not providing these services is staggering. The average annual cost of incarcerating a youth in one of San Diego's juvenile institutions is over \$75,000. Youth like Cheri can receive shelter and comprehensive services in programs like ours at a fraction of that cost (approximately \$30,000 per year). We can either invest in youth like Cheri, helping them become successful, contributing members of society, or we can pay for the high human and financial costs when they end up in emergency rooms, psychiatric wards or jail cells.

Now is the time for San Diegans, and all Californians, to declare homeless youth a priority. We must work together to stop the victimization and exploitation of youth as well as the other complex issues created from youth homelessness. There is hope for these youth emerging in Sacramento: we need to support a trio of proposed legislation to create the first-ever statewide strategy to reduce youth homelessness; to preserve over \$6 million in federal funds for California's homeless youth by creating a state licensing category for youth shelters; and to ensure that the needs of homeless youth are considered in the development of permanent, affordable housing.

Philips is the chief executive officer of San Diego Youth Services, a nonprofit organization that seeks to stabilize the lives of runaway, abused and at-risk youth in San Diego County.

INLAND NEWS TODAY

January 25, 2011

Study: 200,000 homeless youth in California

<http://www.inlandnewstoday.com/story.php?s=17616>

SACRAMENTO – A new study released Monday underscored the need to improve the safety net for homeless youth in California.

The California Homeless Youth Project found an estimated 200,000 unaccompanied minors aged 12 to 17 experience homelessness each year in California

Studies of homeless youth have found that they are among California's most vulnerable residents, showing an elevated risk of mental health problems, including anxiety disorders, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicide due to increased exposure to violence while living on the street. (INT)

CALIFORNIA WATCH

January 25, 2011

By: Joanna Lin

State services lacking for homeless youth, survey finds

<http://californiawatch.org/dailyreport/state-services-lacking-homeless-youth-survey-finds-8250>

Nearly two-thirds of California counties have no services targeted toward the state's estimated 200,000 homeless youth, according to a state survey released yesterday.

The California Homeless Youth Project found only 53 programs in 20 counties offering services such as outreach and transitional housing for homeless children ages 12 to 17. Statewide there are just over 1,000 beds available for homeless youth.

The majority of homeless youth are not part of the foster care or juvenile justice systems and therefore lack state supports in those programs, the project found. Many say they end up on the street because of family conflict, abuse, neglect or rejection over sexual orientation. They are at greater risk for mental and physical health problems, sexual exploitation, physical abuse, substance abuse and death.

The project is a grant-funded research and policy initiative of the state research bureau, state library and New America Media, a national collaboration of ethnic news outlets and a California Watch partner. The programs it surveyed do not include those serving homeless families or adults, or current or former foster care youth.

Programs are clustered primarily in the Bay Area, Los Angeles and San Diego, with some services in Northern and Central California. Services are lacking or absent in the state's inland and rural regions – areas that are seeing spikes in youth homelessness, said Amy Lemley, policy director for the John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes.

Lack of public transportation in the Central Valley and Inland Empire mean kids cannot reach services and often stay in unsafe living situations, Lemley said.

The findings were presented at the State Capitol, where Sen. Carol Liu, D-La Canada Flintridge, and Sen. Alan Lowenthal, D-Long Beach, announced legislation aimed at helping homeless youth.

"Our state has no coordinated program to address their needs, leaving them invisible and underserved," Liu said at a press briefing.

One bill would create a state licensing category [PDF] for emergency youth shelters in order to maintain nearly \$7 million in federal funding.

Currently the state licenses and regulates children's group homes – mandatory, long-term placements for youth in protective custody. Emergency youth shelters, which are voluntary and temporary, end up adopting inappropriate standards so they can meet licensing and funding requirements, advocates say.

Another bill would declare homeless youth a priority, special-needs population and would call on the California Emergency Management Agency – whose budget for homeless youth services is less than \$500,000 – to develop a plan to reduce youth homelessness [PDF]. A third bill proposes an annual \$2 billion investment in public-private partnerships that build affordable housing [PDF].

The Senate Human Services Committee is expected to hear the legislation, supported by the John Burton Foundation, in February.

Funding these initiatives and expanded services will be a challenge, Liu and Lowenthal acknowledged. But getting youth homelessness on the state's radar was a necessary first step, they said.

"We cannot live in denial any longer. There are 200,000 youth on the streets," Lowenthal said. "You have to crawl before you can walk. Right now the state is doing nothing."

The problem has only worsened in recent years, with unemployment among teens and young adults reaching record highs during the recession. Unemployment insurance, a safety net for many older, out-of-work adults, is not available for teens and young adults struggling to enter the workforce for the first time.

Before the recession, the unemployment rate among 16- to 24-year-olds hovered around 10 percent, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. That figure, now 18.1 percent,

climbed to as high as 19.5 percent in April last year and lags far behind the nation's overall rate of 9.4 percent.

In California, unemployment is even higher and is expected to remain above 10 percent for three more years, according to a projection released yesterday by the Business Forecasting Center at the University of Pacific.

THE OAKLAND TRIBUNE

January 22, 2011

Inside Bay Area: Reader's Forum

By: Reed Connell

We must not abandon our homeless youth

http://www.insidebayarea.com/ci_17159625?source=most_email

You've seen them, crouched near a building with a few coins in a paper cup at their feet, too young to stay out late, much less be homeless. A girl we'll call Ana spent years trying to care for her drug-addicted mother. From time to time they slept on the streets together. Eventually, her mother's addiction escalated, and, at 17, Ana showed up at the doorstep of DreamCatcher, Alameda County's only shelter for teenagers.

Each year, more than 200,000 youth ages 12 to 17 experience homelessness in California. The majority have fled or been kicked out of families torn apart by abuse and neglect. For many, the trauma of their rocky upbringing is compounded by debilitating mental health issues. A disproportionate number are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. They find themselves on the streets, no safer than before, struggling to survive rather than learning to thrive.

We know that many of these youth are not able to find appropriate shelter and services. In fact, more than two-thirds of California's 58 counties do not have even a single bed for unaccompanied youth under 18. In Alameda County, DreamCatcher has only eight shelter beds for young people like Ana. According to Nika St. Claire, DreamCatcher's Director, those who arrive after the last of the eight beds are filled are given air mattresses and couches.

How does a teen get back into school when he's living in an abandoned building? He doesn't.

Instead, he must think about what he can find to eat and whether he will make it safely through the night. "It's not day to day," says one young person who turned 18 while homeless. "It's minute to minute."

For years, the Foster Youth Alliance and other advocates have worked hard to address the crisis of homelessness among former foster youth ages 18-24 in California. Now is the time to apply what we've learned from developing services for former foster youth to the 200,000 homeless youth who are not in foster care: Providing shelter and services to homeless youth today prevents expensive stays in emergency rooms, psychiatric wards and jails. When young people like Ana get help, they take the first crucial step toward safe housing, a return to school and preparing for a stable future.

To be sure, California is mired in a fiscal crisis of unprecedented proportions. The governor's budget calls for drastic cuts, including reducing the availability of housing for former foster youth. Yet even in these grim economic times, an investment in age-appropriate services and housing for homeless youth is not only a moral imperative, but a crucial investment in our state's fiscal future.

State Sen. Carol Liu, D-Los Angeles, is leading the way by introducing three legislative proposals. The first will create the first-ever statewide strategy to reduce youth homelessness. The second will preserve more than \$6 million in federal funds for homeless youth by creating a state licensing category for youth shelters. The final piece of legislation will ensure that the needs of homeless youth are considered in the development of permanent, affordable housing.

Please contact your legislators today to encourage them to support Sen. Liu's legislation. A phone call takes a moment of our time, but can make a world of difference to those young people we too often see holding up tattered cardboard signs.

Reed Connell is the Executive Director of the Alameda County Foster Youth Alliance.

CAPITAL PUBLIC RADIO

January 24, 2011

New bills focus on state's homeless youth

<http://www.capradio.org/articles/2011/01/24/new-bills-focus-on-state's-homeless-youth/default.aspx>

KPBS

January 24, 2011

Report by Ida Lieszkovsky

New bills target California's homeless youth

<http://www.kpbs.org/news/2011/jan/24/new-bills-target-californias-homeless-youth/>

KCBS SAN FRANCISCO

January 24, 2011

CBS Local

Report by Doug Sovern

Lack of services for homeless youth in California

<http://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/2011/01/24/lack-of-services-for-homeless-youth-in-california/>

KXTV (ABC) - TV

January 24, 2011

**Sacramento, CA
News 10**

<http://www.news10.net/>

KSEE (NBC) - TV

January 24, 2011

**Fresno, CA
KSEE24 News**

<http://www.ksee24.com/>

KGET (NBC) – TV

January 24, 2011

**Bakersfield, CA
17 News**

www.kget.com

UNIVISION – TV

January 24, 2011

**Sacramento, CA
Univision 19**

<http://univisionsacramento.univision.com/noticias/video/2011-01-24/piden-mas-recursos-para-jovenes>