

# YOUNG AND HOMELESS:

A Look at  
Homeless  
Youth in  
New York City

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March 2006

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Citizens' Committee for Children on New York, Inc. (CCC) would like to take this opportunity to extend our gratitude to the homeless youth providers who participated in our work. *Young and Homeless: A Look at Homeless Youth in New York City* could not have been completed without your help and guidance. CCC would also like to extend a special thank you to the 88 homeless and at-risk young people who took the time to share their stories with us, painfully honest and uncensored, in an effort to help us understand the critical needs of this population.

CCC also thanks its Task Force volunteers and YouthAction NYC members for their capable assistance conducting over 100 surveys and informational interviews in order to develop recommendations for policy improvements included in this report.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The temporary living arrangements of homeless youth who live place to place and do not seek publicly subsidized shelter makes it difficult to estimate how many young people experience episodes of homelessness and why. According to the most recent data published by the United States Department of Education (DOE) in 2000, 930,200 school-aged young people under 18 years of age experienced homelessness.<sup>1</sup> For the past 25 years, point in time estimates of the number of homeless youth under the age of 21 in New York City have ranged from 15,000 to 20,000, based primarily on estimates of the number of young people served by homeless youth providers.<sup>2</sup> Unlike the single adult and family homeless system, there is no central intake facility for homeless youth and no comprehensive data on this population is collected, impeding a full understanding of the magnitude of the homeless youth crisis in New York City.

Federal and state law and regulation guide programs and services for homeless youth<sup>3</sup> and contracts funded by state and city runaway and homeless youth dollars are administered locally by the Department of Youth and Community

Development (DYCD). Federal funds are administered directly by the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Both DYCD and HHS provide program oversight for their respective contracts – DYCD based on state guidelines and HHS based on federal guidelines. A significant amount of funding is also provided by private sources. Programs supported by federal and state statute include emergency and long-term residential services including crisis shelter and transitional living programs and non-residential services and support including street outreach and drop-in services, among other basic needs.

In 2002, CCC created a Task Force to study homeless youth and learn about the service needs of this population. Our goal was to identify programs, policies and practice that may help prevent episodes of youth homelessness, assist homeless youth in returning home to a family member or guardian or to transition to permanent housing on their own. CCC's findings and recommendations, supplemented by independent research and discussions with city agency representatives, suggest the need for system-wide reforms and improved coordination among city agencies to help eliminate program shortfalls that contribute to the number of young people experiencing homelessness on their own. Among our findings:

- DYCD's runaway and homeless youth policies and service models are not informed by data collection and analysis. No means for collecting and synthesizing data on homeless youth currently exists.
- No single city agency is responsible for the coordination of services to runaway and homeless youth. Poor coordination and collaboration among city agencies including DYCD, the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), the Department of Homeless Services (DHS), the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) and the Department of Education (DOE) contributes to the number of young people who experience homelessness.
- Homeless youth are more likely to have history of foster care or involvement in the juvenile justice system. Thirty percent of youth surveyed reported having a foster care history and 31 percent aged out of foster care at 18 years old with no permanent housing arrangement. Twenty-six percent of youth surveyed reported previously being placed in a juvenile detention facility or being incarcerated in an adult facility.

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<sup>1</sup> United States Department of Education. Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. *Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program Title VII, Subtitle B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: Report to Congress Fiscal Year 2000*. Also Note: This number includes both school-aged homeless children living with a family who is homeless and young people living away from a family member or guardian. It does not include homeless youth over 18 and under 21.

<sup>2</sup> *The Runaway and Homeless Youth Problem in New York State: A Compendium of Information About Runaway Services*. Prepared cooperatively by the New York State Division for Youth (now the New York State Office of Children and Family Services) and the New York State Coalition of Youth and Family Services. 1977. Also *Homeless Youth In New York City: Nowhere To Turn*. Prepared jointly by: Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc., Coalition for the Homeless, and Runaway and Homeless Youth Advocacy Project. 1983. Also *Supportive Housing for Youth: A background of the issues in the design and development of supportive housing for homeless youth*. Prepared by Cooperation for Supportive Housing. 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Under the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) Title III of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 (as amended by the Missing, Exploited, and Runaway Children Protection Act P.L. 106-71), "runaway youth" is defined as: Any young person under the age of 18 who has run away or has a history of running away and/or whose parent/guardian is unwilling or unable to provide for their basic needs and a "homeless youth" is defined as: A young person who is not more than 21 who has no safe environment to reside. Under the state the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, "runaway youth" is defined as: A young person under the age of 18 who is absent from his or her legal residence without the consent of his or her legal guardian and a "homeless youth" is defined as: A young person under the age of 21 who is in need of services and is without a place of shelter where supervision and care are available. (Subpart 182 – 1 of New York State Rules and Regulations). Definitions as compiled in: *The Runaway and Homeless Youth Problem in New York State: A Compendium on Information About Runaway Services*.

- Family relationships among homeless youth are complicated but often exist while residing in a residential facility (i.e. crisis shelters or transitional living programs). One third of all young people surveyed stated having a good relationship with a parent or family member, speaking with them on a daily or weekly basis and/or having overnight and daytime visits at the home.
- Homeless youth under 21 years old with no option of returning home have limited temporary and permanent housing options available to them.

Lessons learned from CCC's work will help to frame a conversation around city and state policy changes necessary to identify ways to prevent young people from becoming homeless, provide adequate services to homeless youth in shelter, help them return home to a parent or family member upon discharge, and when appropriate, ensure permanent housing options for homeless youth who cannot or do not return home. Among our recommendations:

- DYCD should improve methods of data collection and analysis to inform public policy around prevention activities and service needs for homeless youth.
- DYCD should appoint a homeless youth coordinator responsible for collecting and synthesizing DYCD data and data collected from other agencies that serve young people.
- Interagency collaboration should be strengthened to ensure that city agency policies and practices do not result in young people becoming homeless.
- When appropriate, opportunities for family counseling and mediation should be encouraged and provided to young people in residential and non-residential programs, regardless of whether homeless youth plan to return home.
- Designated staff from ACS and DYCD should form a working group to collaborate on effective prevention methods that may reduce youth homelessness.
- To increase the temporary housing options available to young people, New York City and New York State should provide start-up grants and technical assistance for service providers to become state certified by the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to enable them to qualify for state/city runaway and homeless youth funding.

- New York City and New York State should increase the number of supportive housing units available to homeless youth and increase funding to provide operating expenses for supportive housing development.

The following report provides an overview of federal and state runaway and homeless youth law and illustrates the continuum of care and services available for this population. With little statistical data available, this report contributes to an on-going discussion among advocates, city agencies and elected officials around the need for an improved and systematic collection of homeless youth data and to identify ways New York City and New York State can create and enhance programs and policies that help homeless youth move towards independent living or return to a stable home.

## METHODS

In the Fall of 2002, CCC created the Task Force on Homeless Youth to study New York City's homeless youth population. To begin, CCC held a policy briefing with invited speakers Margo Hirsch, Executive Director of the Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services and Marya Gwadz, Principal Investigator at the National Research and Development Institutes. CCC's invited speakers gave a historical perspective of homeless and runaway youth law and funding on the federal, state, and city level and discussed the barriers and issues presented by homeless youth residing in youth shelters and/or accessing non-residential programs.

The Task Force decided that in order to learn more about this population, it would be important to speak to both service providers and homeless youth about their experiences and needs. Background information gathering meetings were held with homeless youth providers in the Fall of 2002 to learn more about the programs available to homeless youth and to inquire about the feasibility of youth participation in our fieldwork. CCC met with a total of six providers prior to our survey development and received enthusiastic responses from all providers about the work that the Task Force was undertaking. Most service providers pledged participation in our future survey work.

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In early 2003, the Task Force developed five different surveys, four for homeless youth providers and one for homeless youth. The four homeless youth provider surveys were developed to survey crisis shelters, transitional living programs, drop-in centers and outreach services. The surveys posed questions regarding program capacity, number of young people served, funding, intake procedures, service delivery, education and training opportunities, homeless youth needs and discharge planning. From April thru July 2003, the Task Force surveyed a total of ten (N=10) different programs representing eight different service providers. Specifically, we interviewed the site directors of two crisis shelters, four drop-in centers, and four transitional living programs. We were unable to receive approval to survey any outreach service programs. For the purposes of this and all of CCC's work, providers were surveyed confidentially.

CCC's YouthAction NYC<sup>4</sup> program assisted in the second phase of the Task Force work to interview homeless youth. Six homeless youth programs agreed to allow the young people they served to participate in our work and CCC provided a \$5 stipend to compensate them for their time. The Task Force and YouthAction NYC members interviewed 88 young people (N=88) including 26 homeless youth in crisis shelters, 45 homeless youth in transitional living programs and 17 at risk and homeless youth at drop-in centers. The survey asked questions about why young people sought services at residential and non-residential facilities, the circumstances and reasons why they left home and the available services they utilized. The goal was to learn more about why young people sought shelter or other supports and to identify what services were needed to help move young people towards a goal of independent living or return home.

CCC was not granted permission to survey every provider and a few limitations are worth noting. First, several service providers that serve homeless youth from special populations, most notably, gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, transgender and questioning youth (GLBTQ) did not participate in our work and therefore this population may be underrepresented in our findings. Service providers interviewed spoke about

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<sup>4</sup> CCC's YouthAction NYC program is open to high school students from public and private schools throughout New York City. Through YouthAction NYC, young people get involved in making New York City a better place and ensuring that every child is healthy, housed, educated and safe, in part by participating in CCC task force work alongside adult volunteers.

how young people gravitate towards programs that make them feel most comfortable and accepted. As such, individual service providers spoke only about the characteristics of the young people they served which may not always represent New York City's homeless youth population as a whole. Second, homeless youth providers serve young people under the age of 21 including minor youth under the age of 18. CCC interviewed both young people over and under 18 years of age. Services available to minor youth under 18 are different from services available to older youth between the ages of 18 and 21. Whenever appropriate, findings and recommendation take into consideration these differences.

In the 2004-2005 program year, CCC's formal survey results were translated into findings and preliminary recommendations were developed and refined with the help of CCC Task Force volunteers. In an effort to further strengthen these preliminary recommendations, CCC met with a number of homeless youth service providers, city agency commissioners and representatives and elected officials to gather feedback. In addition, CCC staff and volunteers had an opportunity to meet with DYCD Commissioner Mullgrav and staff to discuss its runaway and homeless youth concept paper outlining a proposal for a new and improved continuum of care for runaway and homeless youth.<sup>5</sup>

The first part of this report discusses risk factors associated with youth homelessness and illustrates the spectrum of services available to homeless youth and young people at risk of becoming homeless in New York City as defined under federal and state law. Findings and recommendations are based on a culmination of background research, discussions with service providers, city agency representatives, experts in the field and CCC's formal survey of homeless youth and service providers. Recommendations focus on identifying a means to: improve service delivery to homeless youth, create a prevention strategy to reduce youth homelessness and ensure homeless youth who do not return home have access to support that foster independent living.

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<sup>5</sup> DYCD released a concept paper entitled: *The Department of Youth and Community Development Residential and Non-Residential Runaway and Homeless Youth Services Homeless Youth Concept Paper* on August 26, 2005. This paper provided a framework for an improved continuum of care for young people at risk of homelessness and youth seeking services at runaway and homeless youth residential facilities. DYCD published this concept paper in anticipation of a new Request For Proposal (RFP) for runaway and homeless youth services. An RFP was released on December 21, 2005.

# INTRODUCTION

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Young people nearing adulthood in New York City face a multitude of challenges that are compounded by family poverty, poor health, failing schools, unemployment, drugs, crime and violence.<sup>6</sup> Although youth at-risk indicators have improved overall with respect to teen births, youth unemployment, foster care placement, and juvenile crime, there are community districts throughout New York City where high risk factors still exist. For example, one in five young people are teen parents in Mott Haven, Morrisania, and the Hunts Point section of the Bronx; the number of children placed in foster care is ten times higher in the East Tremont section of the Bronx and the East Harlem section of Manhattan, than the rest of the city; and one in five students in the Bronx and one in three students in Brooklyn do not reach state and city reading and math standards.<sup>7</sup> A recent study by the Center for Law and Social Policy, suggests that there are a number of high risk factors that young people exhibit that increase their likelihood of entering foster care, being incarcerated and becoming homeless. These risk factors are echoed in much of CCC's data research. Risk factors include:

- Lack of high school education (or low educational achievement);
- Pregnancy and being a teen parent;
- History of incarceration (or court involvement);
- History of family poverty;
- History of foster care;
- English as a second language; and
- History of physical and/or mental disabilities.<sup>8</sup>

The effect of homelessness and housing instability on children and youth is profound. It uproots them from their communities, and brings uncertainty into their lives. Young people experiencing homelessness face numerous barriers to school attendance, school enrollment and academic success.<sup>9</sup> Inadequate housing increases the likelihood of involvement with the child welfare system, and the placement and

retention of children in foster care.<sup>10</sup> Children with foster care histories are more likely to experience homelessness as young adults. Homeless children and youth often suffer from poor health including chronic illnesses such as asthma and anemia and more mental health problems. They are also twice as likely to experience hunger and poor nutrition and are four times as likely to be developmentally delayed, than children living in permanent housing.<sup>11</sup>

Homeless youth providers in New York City receive funding from federal, state, local and private sources to provide both residential and non-residential services to this population of young people. Providers must apply directly to the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to receive federal funding, while state and local funding is available through the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD). Both residential and non-residential services are generally provided through contracts with non-profit social service providers.<sup>12</sup>

## FEDERAL RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH ACT

The federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, later renamed the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA), enacted the first formal policy guidelines to develop services for runaway, homeless and at-risk young people and their families.<sup>13</sup> Federal RHYA competitive grants are administered by HHS and support the development of youth basic centers (crisis shelters) and transitional living programs. Youth basic centers are residential facilities of no more than 20 beds for homeless youth under 18 for up to 15 days with unlimited extensions. Transitional living programs are residential facilities of no more than 20 beds for homeless youth from 16 to 21 years old for up to 18 months. In

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<sup>10</sup> White, Ruth Ann et al. Child Welfare League of America Journal of Policy, Practice and Program Special Issue. *Housing and Homelessness*. September/October 2004.

<sup>11</sup> Better Homes Fund. *Homeless Children: America's New Outcasts*, 1999.

<sup>12</sup> In addition to the primary runaway and homeless youth policy and funding described in this document, the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and the Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services have prepared an excellent resource guide that describes these and other federal and state programs and funding available to serve homeless youth. *The Runaway and Homeless Youth Problem in New York State: A Compendium of Information about Runaway Services*. See [www.empirestatecoalition.org](http://www.empirestatecoalition.org).

<sup>13</sup> 42 USC 5701

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<sup>6</sup> *Keeping Track of New York City's Children, Millennium Edition*. Citizen's Committee for Children of New York, Inc.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> *Leave No Youth Behind: Opportunities for Congress to Reach Disconnected Youth*. Center for Law and Social Policy. July 2003. Citizens Committee for Children of New York, *Keeping Track of New York City's Children, Millennium Edition* 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Redlener, Irwin, MD and Dennis Johnson. *Still in Crisis: The Health Status of New York's Homeless Children*,

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addition to residential services, this Act supports street outreach, crisis intervention, counseling, referral to housing or homeless youth residential facilities, health and mental health services, educational or training opportunities, and alcohol and substance abuse services. Lastly, the Act supports the development of a National Runaway Switchboard and provides funding to grantees for training and technical assistance, the creation of demonstration projects, and for data collection, reporting, monitoring and performance measuring.<sup>14</sup>

Recent changes in the federal RHYA in 2003 addressed a shift in service needs by allocating a greater share of runaway and homeless youth funding to more long-term shelter options. This change increased funding for transitional living programs intended to help homeless youth build independent living skills necessary to live on their own or return to a parent or guardian upon discharge. Other changes include federal transitional living program guidelines that now allow homeless youth to extend their maximum length of stay for another 180 days if, at 18 months, youth are under 18 years old. This change addresses the fact that homeless youth under 18 may not be ready to be on their own and may not have the option of returning home when discharged from a transitional living program.

In federal fiscal year 2006, an estimated \$48.8 million will be available to the states to support youth basic centers.<sup>15</sup> The average grant is currently \$128,000 per program.<sup>16</sup> Federal grants may fund up to 90 percent of a crisis shelter. In 2005, New York State received federal funding to help support 26 crisis shelter programs in New York State including three programs in New York City. In federal fiscal year 2006, an estimated \$49.9 million will be available to the states to support transitional living programs.<sup>17</sup> The average grant is currently \$195,000 per program.<sup>18</sup> Federal grants may fund up to 90 percent of a transitional living program. In 2005, thirteen transitional living programs received federal funding in New York State. None of these programs were located in New York City.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> 42 USC 5701. Also Note: No more than 10 percent of the total appropriation for the RHYA can fund these activities.

<sup>15</sup> See The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance at [www.cdfa.gov](http://www.cdfa.gov).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Family Homelessness Special Master Panel EAU and Eligibility Determination Report. June 2004.

## NEW YORK STATE RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH ACT

The New York State Runaway and Homeless Youth Act of 1978 (RHY) sets its own limits for temporary shelter and services for homeless youth and at risk young people. DYCD administers RHY competitive grants for crisis shelter, transitional living programs and non-residential services including drop-in centers and outreach services. The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) must certify all RHY programs.

State funded crisis shelters and transitional living programs are limited to 20 beds under state regulation although waivers have been made available to programs who serve more than 20 homeless youth in a residential setting.

State funded crisis shelter is limited to homeless youth under 21 years old for a maximum of 30 days, with one 30 day extension if approved by the county runaway and homeless youth service coordinator<sup>20</sup> and agreed upon by the youth and the parent or guardian. Recent changes in state law, enacted in 2005, mirror the federal statute's 18 month maximum length of stay for transitional living programs for homeless youth between 16 and 21 including an extension of up to 180 days if a youth is under 18 years old after 18 months in the program. Residential facilities certified by OCFS must provide directly or through referral the following services including: shelter; food; clothing; individual and group counseling; transportation; medical, mental health and dental care; legal assistance; and assistance obtaining vital documents.

In State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2006, New York State provided \$5.3 million to support these programs. In City Fiscal Year 2006, New York City provided \$4 million in drug prevention and runaway and homeless youth funding. This includes a New York City Council enhancement of \$1.2 million from the prior fiscal year to expand the availability of residential services to homeless youth including gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth. This enhancement represents one of the largest increases in city (and state) funding for

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<sup>20</sup> The Runaway and Homeless Youth Service Coordinator is defined in Section 532-A of New York State Executive Law as: "a person designated by a county whose duties shall include but not be limited to answering inquiries at any time concerning transportation, shelter and other services available to a runaway or homeless youth or a youth in need of crisis intervention or respite services".

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this population of young people. State funding can fund up to 60 percent of a RHY program, with the remaining 40 percent provided by a combination of local funds, in-kind (private) and by the program agency itself.<sup>21</sup>

## FEDERAL MCKINNEY-VENTO ACT

The federal McKinney-Vento Act, reauthorized in 2001, created the Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program to ensure equal access to public education for children and homeless youth in transitional housing placements. Funding is provided to states on a formula basis. In addition, states are then able to solicit grant applications from a State Educational Agency (SEA) or a Local Educational Agency (LEA) to provide direct support and/or services to homeless youth to ensure educational equity and to provide indirect support by providing training and professional development for school personnel working with homeless youth. This funding also supports an establishment of a Coordinator of Education of Homeless Children and Youth on the local level.

In federal fiscal year 2004, \$50 million in federal funding was available to states to ensure that homeless children enroll, attend and achieve success in school. \$5.3 million was available to New York State in fiscal year 2004. The state Department of Education provides this funding through a competitive bid process. Grantees are eligible to receive up to \$100,000 per application for funding. Only four community school districts in New York City received funding in 2004.<sup>22</sup>

## NEW YORK CITY PROGRAMS SERVING HOMELESS YOUTH

Under the guidance of federal and state law and regulations, New York City's programs that serve runaway and homeless youth make available a broad range of services and supports to at-risk young people living at home and homeless youth living on the streets, place to place, or in shelter. Providers work to engage young people through a variety of methods including street outreach, youth hotlines, and drop-in centers. In addition to addressing basic needs such as food, clothing and emergency shelter, homeless youth services

provide crisis intervention, mental health services and referral, medical services and referral, and counseling. To encourage homeless youth to consider long-term goals and acquire skills to live independently, a number of additional services are offered including budgeting, parenting skills, job-readiness, job search and referrals to education and training programs and alcohol and substance abuse services.

### I. Crisis Shelter

Emergency crisis shelter provides temporary shelter and services to homeless youth between 13 and 21 years of age who:

- Run away from a permanent home or long-term living arrangement with a parent, legal guardian (including foster care) or other household member;
- Are thrown out of a permanent home or long-term living arrangement with parent, legal guardian or household member;
- Are released from a juvenile (or adult) detention facility and under 21 years of age with no permanent home or long-term living arrangements;
- Are discharged from the foster care system with no permanent home or long-term living arrangement; or
- Leave a permanent home or long-term living arrangement after 18 years of age with consent from a parent, legal guardian or household member with no permanent or long-term living arrangements.

There are seven crisis shelter providers in New York City with an approximate capacity of 391 beds including 45<sup>23</sup> beds for young mothers and their children. (See page 15 for a list of crisis shelters). The two crisis shelters included in CCC's survey have a total capacity of 310 homeless youth per day and served a total of 4,842 homeless youth in 2002.

Young people can enter an emergency crisis shelter twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Providers complete an abbreviated intake assessment at the time young people present themselves to determine age, why they are seeking emergency shelter, and to evaluate immediate needs. Providers will accept any young person into emergency shelter as long as there is no threat of harm to other youth in

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<sup>21</sup> No more than 50 percent of the non-state aid can be derived from in-kind sources.

<sup>22</sup> See Appendix A of Family Homelessness Special Master Panel EAU and Eligibility Determination Report. June 2004.

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<sup>23</sup> A total of 90 beds are set aside for young mothers including 45 for mothers and 45 for children. According to the Mayor's Management Report (2005), DYCD directly contracts to provide 60 crisis shelters. Additional beds are funded through other city, state, federal and private sources.

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the shelter.<sup>24</sup> After immediate needs have been met, a more complete assessment is done for each youth, that takes into account long-term needs and goals such as independent living, returning home or returning to or entering foster care.

Crisis shelter providers that accept federal funding can provide services to homeless youth up to age 18 for up to 30 days with an unlimited number of extensions. Providers that accept state funding can provide shelter for homeless youth up to age 21 years old for up to 30 days with only one extension. Crisis shelter providers often use a combination of federal, state, city and private funds in order to be able to provide services. Of the two crisis shelters CCC surveyed, a total of 78 percent of funding came from private sources, 2 percent from federal funding and 20 percent from city/state funding.<sup>25</sup>

Based on information collected by CCC's formal survey of homeless youth providers, a number of services are made available to young people in crisis shelter either on-site or through referral. On site, there are several services available to help homeless youth with immediate needs such as food, clothing, and help obtaining identification necessary to enroll in school, find employment and apply for other government benefits. In addition, services may include legal assistance, health and mental health services including enrollment in educational programming, referral, employment training and job search, counseling, substance abuse services, and transitional living program referrals. Although homeless youth are strongly encouraged to take advantage of these services while in emergency crisis shelter, providers generally do not require youth to do so for fear of discouraging youth from seeking services in the first instance. The emergency crisis shelter setting provides a valuable opportunity to engage homeless youth and encourage them to take advantage of the more long-term services that are available to them.

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<sup>24</sup> Providers have an obligation to protect other youth in their facilities and may consider not allowing youth to enter shelter that, for example, have acted out in violence or may be under the influence of an illegal substance at the time they present themselves.

<sup>25</sup> Providers surveyed could not break down funding received by City Tax Levy (CTL) from DYCD and state funding administered by the DYCD. State funding for homeless youth programs in 2004-05 was \$5.13 million and city funding for these programs (among other youth services) was approximately \$3 million.

## II. Transitional Living Programs (TLP)

There are six transitional living program providers in New York City with an approximate capacity of 359 beds including 42<sup>26</sup> beds for young homeless mothers and their children. (See page 15 for a list of TLPs).<sup>27</sup> The four transitional living programs in CCC's survey have a 250 bed capacity and served a total of 243 homeless youth in 2002. Upon intake, all youth are given a full assessment to determine why they have become homeless<sup>28</sup> and his or her immediate and long term needs. The full assessment includes a discussion of independent living plans.

Based on information collected by CCC's formal survey of homeless youth providers, guidelines for transitional living programs differ. Some transitional living program providers require youth to come from crisis shelter into a transitional living program placement while others allow youth to come from a variety of referrals including parents, legal guardians, school, adult shelter, outreach workers, police departments, religious institutions, medical professionals, family court, or even self-referral. Transitional living program providers that accept federal funding may provide services to homeless youth from 16 until the age of 21 for 18 months. Providers that accept state funding may provide services to homeless youth from 16 thru 21 years of age for 18 months.<sup>29</sup> Similar to funding for crisis shelter, some transitional living program providers use a combination of funding sources, including private funds, to gain greater flexibility in providing services.<sup>30</sup>

Transitional living programs provide similar services that are available to homeless youth in crisis shelter. Unlike crisis shelter however, homeless youth in a transitional living

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<sup>26</sup> A total of 84 beds are set aside for young mothers and children including 42 for mothers and 42 for children. According to the Mayor's Management Report (2005), DYCD directly contracts to provide 88 transitional living program beds. Additional beds are funded through other city, state, federal and private sources.

<sup>27</sup> Although transitional living programs permit youth ages 16 to 20 to enter, some providers in New York City only accept youth 18 or older.

<sup>28</sup> Not all young people who enter a transitional living program can be defined as homeless by federal or state regulations. Providers surveyed do allow youth to come directly from a permanent housing arrangement if it is determined that the youth can no longer stay there and there is no other place to go.

<sup>29</sup> A recent change in New York State law in 2005 extended the maximum length of stay for youth from 12 months to 18 months.

<sup>30</sup> All programs surveyed discussed the use of federal, state, local and private funding sources but they were unable to tell us the breakdown of funding by source.

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program are required to participate in a number of services available to them during their stay. For instance, a young person is expected to attend high school or work towards completion of a GED (if not already completed) and find employment. Some programs require participating youth to save a portion of their earnings so that they may be better prepared to secure an apartment after leaving the program. Although the core standards for these programs are the same across the city, providers have the ability to set different requirements for program participation.

### III. Drop-In Centers

Non-residential services are generally available to all young people at risk of becoming homeless or homeless youth living on the streets, in shelter, or place to place. The primary goal for many of these programs is two-fold. First and foremost, they provide a safe environment for young people to come and feel safe while being able to fulfill some basic needs including meals, a shower and perhaps a change of clothing or laundry facilities. Second, they engage young people and either encourage them to address their at-risk behavior or seek services to help them to return home, deal with family issues, or enter shelter. This is done through the use of group or individual counseling sessions and through frequent one on one contact with the young person.

Drop-in centers are available to all young people up to 23 years of age.<sup>31</sup> The four drop-in centers in CCC's survey reported they had provided services for approximately 13,100 individual young people in year 2002.<sup>32</sup> The drop-in center program providers we surveyed reported their capacity to be 475 young people per day with an average of 344 youth seeking services at the program site daily. All centers have an initial intake process to determine the immediate needs of a youth coming into their program. Like residential crisis shelter, all young people are eligible to come to the program if space is available and if no danger is presented to other young people in the program. There are no time limits for

drop-in centers<sup>33</sup> and young people can access services through more than one drop-in center at a time and while in a residential program. Funding for these programs comes from federal, state, local and private funding sources.<sup>34</sup>

### IV. Outreach Services

Outreach services are available to all young people in different locations in the five boroughs, 24 hours a day and seven (7) days a week. Outreach workers are responsible for identifying and engaging homeless youth and young people at risk of becoming homeless and encouraging them to access services either through drop-in centers or by entering a residential setting. CCC sought permission to interview outreach services programs (and the youth they serve) but were not given permission to do so.

### V. Adult and Family Shelter Services

Adult and family shelter and services are governed under a complex framework of federal, state and local law and regulations.<sup>35</sup> In addition, there are several court orders that govern services and support for homeless families and single adults in New York City.<sup>36</sup> The adult and family shelter system, administered by the Department of Homeless Services (DHS), is the largest provider of transitional housing for homeless youth primarily because of its capacity. In fiscal year 2005, there were 1,249 single adults and 3,121 young families under 21 in the DHS adult and family shelter system.<sup>37</sup>

Homeless families are required to apply for shelter through one of two central intake offices to undergo an investigation to explore viable alternatives to shelter, if any, and confirm homeless status.<sup>38</sup> Family homeless shelters provide counseling, program

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<sup>31</sup> Some programs provide services to youth up to 24 years of age with private funding.

<sup>32</sup> Although drop-in centers have estimated a large number of young people being served, it should be noted that often times youth are also receiving (or have access to) services at the residential facility that they reside in. This redundancy adds to the difficulty in determining how many youth are homeless in New York City.

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<sup>33</sup> Although there are no time limits to how long a young person can access services at a drop-in center, the availability of these services are limited to certain days and hours. There is only one drop-in center in New York City with 24 hour, seven day a week access.

<sup>34</sup> All programs surveyed discussed the use of federal, state, local and private funding sources but they were unable to tell us the breakdown of funding by source.

<sup>35</sup> See Appendix A of *Family Homelessness Special Master Panel EAU and Eligibility Determination Report*. June 2004.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Unpublished data Department of Homeless Services 2005.

<sup>38</sup> Families who have never applied for shelter before may apply at the Prevention Assistance and Temporary Housing (PATH) office to receive assistance. Families who reapply for shelter at any time must apply at the Emergency Assistance Unit (EAU).

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referral, child care, and other supports necessary to help families regain stability. Homeless families in shelter are assisted in securing housing subsidies and relocating to permanent housing as quickly as possible. Single adults must enter shelter through one of four centralized intake offices (one for men and three for women) located throughout the boroughs. Single adult shelters provide counseling, case management, employment training, mental health rehabilitation, specialized services for veterans, substance abuse treatment and various programs for the elderly.<sup>39</sup>

## HOUSING OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO HOMELESS YOUTH

### I. Rent assistance

Low-wage earning workers have difficulty securing permanent housing in New York City's expensive housing market. Youth people discharged from transitional living programs face these challenges as well. Until recently, homeless youth transitioning from residential facilities were eligible to receive a federal Section 8 housing choice voucher based on priority status.<sup>40</sup> To address a shortfall in federal Section 8 program funding and disincentivize shelter entry, the city ended priority status for all homeless populations on October 19, 2004. Although final federal appropriations maintained funding for Section 8 vouchers that are currently being used, the city speculates that a very limited pool of recycled vouchers will be available in future years.

In an effort to increase the number of housing subsidies available to families and singles, DHS (in cooperation with the Human Resources Administration [HRA]) implemented a new rent subsidy program through the authority provided by the OTDA regulations, amended in November 2003. *The Housing Stability Plus* (HSP) program, implemented in November 2004, provides a five-year time-limited rent subsidy for families and single adults on public assistance. This subsidy is reduced 20 percent each year and is available to families immediately and to singles, including homeless youth, after nine months in a residential setting. With \$58 million in funds annually (\$19 million city), this plan represents the single largest commit-

ment by the city and state to fund a housing security program. However, most homeless youth do not qualify for this subsidy because most do not qualify to receive public assistance.<sup>41</sup>

### II. Supportive Housing

For many young people, the transition to permanent housing from a residential setting may represent the first time they are on their own. Many young people who have been discharged from residential facilities have limited employment history and no support network within the community from which they came. Supportive housing provides services and supports for residents to be able to live more stable lives. It is less expensive than shelter and provides youth with a supportive environment in either private apartments or apartment share situations with support services to help youth gain the skills necessary to live independently. Unlike family and adult supportive housing programs, many supportive housing programs that serve young adults are often time-limited with the primary goal of helping them gain the skills necessary to live independently. Supportive housing provides a viable option for youth who have aged out of foster care or who may have reached their time limit in a transitional living program but are unable to secure and maintain permanent housing on their own.

Funding for supportive housing in New York City has increased significantly under Mayor Bloomberg. In 2003, the Mayor announced the development of 12,000 new units of supportive housing in the next five years with units set aside for young adults aging out of foster care. To help achieve this goal, the Mayor and the Governor announced the creation of a New York/New York III agreement<sup>42</sup>, a partnership between the city and the state to provide supportive housing for single adults including young adults and families with children.

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<sup>41</sup> Single young adults must report a gross monthly income below \$651.38 in order to qualify for public assistance. A young person would need to be making minimum wage and working less than full time in order to qualify for public assistance under these guidelines.

<sup>42</sup> The original New York/New York agreement was signed in 1990. This agreement implemented a fiscal partnership between New York State and New York City to provide funds to develop 3,600 units of supportive and service enriched housing for single adults. In 1999, the New York/New York II agreement was implemented that led to the development of 2,300 units of housing for mentally ill single adults. In 2005, the city and the state implemented the New York/New York III agreement with plans to develop 9,000 units of supportive and service enriched housing for single adults including young adults, and for families.

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<sup>39</sup> <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dhs/html/homeless/adultserv.shtml>

<sup>40</sup> In an effort to contain the growing federal Section 8 voucher waiting list, New York City limited vouchers to homeless families and youth in shelter in 1994.

## EMERGENCY, TRANSITIONAL AND PERMANENT HOUSING OPTIONS FOR HOMELESS YOUTH<sup>43</sup>

| Program Name   | Program Type                               | Youth Capacity   | Age/Population   | Maximum LOS  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Covenant House</b>                                | Crisis Shelter                             | 114 beds (Ages 13 to 18)<br>136 beds (Ages 18 to 21)                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coed</li> <li>• Ages up to 21</li> </ul>  | • 30 days <sup>44</sup>  |
| <b>Covenant House</b>                                | Crisis Shelter                             | 75 beds<br>(37 mothers, 37 children)                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mother/Child Program</li> <li>• Ages up to 21</li> </ul>  | • 30 days <sup>45</sup>  |
| <b>Seamen’s Society for Children and Families</b>    | Host Homes<br>(Crisis Shelter)             | 10 beds  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coed</li> <li>• Ages up to 21</li> </ul>  | • 30 days  |
| <b>Safe Horizons</b>                                 | Crisis Shelter<br>(2 locations)            | 3 crisis beds<br>21 short term beds                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coed</li> <li>• Ages up to 21</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30 day crisis beds</li> <li>• 90 day short term beds</li> </ul> |
| <b>The Ali Forney Center</b>                         | Crisis Shelter                             | 18 beds  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coed</li> <li>• Ages 16 to 24</li> <li>• Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning (GLBTQ) youth</li> </ul> | • 30 days  |
| <b>The Ali Forney Center</b>                         | Transitional Living Program                | 24 beds in a scatter-site facility                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coed</li> <li>• Ages 16 to 24</li> </ul>  | • 24 months  |
| <b>Berkshire Farms</b>                               | Transitional Living Program                | 6 beds   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Males</li> <li>• Ages 17 and up to 22 years old</li> </ul>  | • 18 months  |
| <b>Covenant House</b>                                | Transitional Living Program                | 210 beds   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coed</li> <li>• Ages 16 to 21</li> </ul>  | • 18 months  |
| <b>Covenant House</b>                                | Transitional Living Program                | 56 beds for mothers and children                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mother/child program</li> <li>• Ages 16 to 21</li> </ul>  | • 18 months  |
| <b>Promesa</b>                                       | Transitional Living Program/Crisis Shelter | 13 beds long term<br>50 beds overnight                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Males</li> <li>• Ages 16 to 21</li> </ul>   | 13 beds for up to 18 months<br>50 beds overnight   |
| <b>St. Christopher-Ottilie (Independence Inn I)</b>  | Transitional Living Program                | 20 beds  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Males</li> <li>• Ages 16 to 21</li> </ul>   | • 18 months  |
| <b>St. Christopher-Ottilie (Independence Inn II)</b> | Transitional Living Program                | 12 beds for single women and 6 beds for young mothers and 6 children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Females</li> <li>• Ages 16 to 21.</li> <li>• Young mothers with children 4 and under</li> </ul>                       | • 18 months  |

<sup>43</sup> Residential programs that serve runaway and homeless youth are funded by federal, state and local runaway and homeless youth funds and other sources. The city Department of Youth and Community Development does not currently provide information on programs they do not directly fund. This list is a compilation of programs put together based on information gathered through research and informational interviews and may not be exhaustive.

<sup>44</sup> Under New York State law, homeless youth are eligible to receive emergency crisis shelter for 30 days with one (1) 30 day extension. Under federal law homeless youth are eligible to receive emergency crisis shelter for 15 days with unlimited extensions. Emergency crisis shelter is supported, in large part, by private donations and utilize the flexibility allowed through these funds to shelter youth for greater lengths of time based on need.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

| Program Name   | Program Type                              | Youth Capacity                            | Age/Population   | Maximum LOS                     |
|--|---|---|--|---------------------------------|
| <b>St. Christopher-Otilie (Independence Inn III)</b>   | Transitional Living Program               | 10 beds for young mothers and 10 children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Females</li> <li>• Ages 16 to 21.</li> <li>• Young mothers with children 4 and under</li> </ul>                         | • 18 months                     |
| <b>Korean Youth Center of New York, Inc.</b>   | Transitional Living Program               | 15 beds                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coed</li> <li>• Ages 16 to 21</li> </ul>  | • 18 months                     |
| <b>Gramercy Life Skills Residence - Green Chimneys</b>   | Transitional Living Program               | 25 beds                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Males</li> <li>• Ages 16 to 21.</li> <li>• Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning (GLBTQ) youth</li> </ul> | • 18 months                     |
| <b>Triangle Tribe Apartments – Green Chimneys</b>  | Transitional Living Program (3 locations) | 10 beds                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coed</li> <li>• Ages 17 to 21</li> <li>• Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning (GLBTQ) youth</li> </ul>   | • 18 months                     |
| <b>Women’s League Community Residences</b>   | Transitional Living Program               | 4 beds                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Females</li> <li>• Ages 16 to 21</li> </ul>   | • 18 months                     |
| <b>Christopher Nels Larson Residence – (Common Ground Community and Good Shepard Services)</b> | Supportive Housing (Chelsea Foyer)        | 40 units                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coed</li> <li>• Ages 18 to 24</li> <li>• Youth aging out of foster care and homeless youth</li> </ul>                   | • 18 to 24 month Length of Stay |
| <b>Discipleship Outreach Ministries, Inc. (DOMI) Turning Point Housing</b>                     | Transitional Housing                      | 37 beds                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Females</li> <li>• Ages 18 to 25</li> <li>• By referral only</li> </ul>   | • 6 to 9 months                 |
| <b>The Bridge, Inc.</b>  | Permanent Supportive Housing              | 12 units                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Males</li> <li>• Ages 18 to 21</li> <li>• Homeless and dually diagnosed youth</li> </ul>                                | • N/A                           |
| <b>Broadway Housing Communities, Inc. - Dorothy Day Apartments</b>                             | Permanent Supportive Housing              | 5 units                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coed</li> </ul>   | • N/A                           |
| <b>The Lantern Group</b>   | Permanent Supportive Housing              | 25 units                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coed</li> <li>• Ages 18 to 21</li> </ul>  | • N/A                           |

# FINDINGS

Findings are based on information gathered through formal surveys with homeless youth service providers, homeless and at-risk youth, and informational interviews and discussions with agency personnel and experts in the field. When possible, findings are reinforced with research literature.

## NEW YORK CITY'S HOMELESS YOUTH SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM

**The Department of Youth and Community Development's (DYCD) runaway and homeless youth policies and service models are not driven by data collection and analysis. No means for collecting and synthesizing data on homeless youth currently exists.** There is no uniform and centralized intake and assessment procedure to collect information regarding runaway and homeless youth who receive services at residential facilities and non-residential programs. Absent comprehensive data on where homeless youth are coming from and why and how many homeless youth seek and receive services, city policies to address the needs of this population are developed largely uninformed. Providers surveyed by CCC do collect information from the young people they serve. However, this information is not uniformly collected, nor is it synthesized by the city with data from other runaway and homeless youth programs.

**No single city agency is responsible for services and support to runaway and homeless youth.** There are limited government funds available to support the core structure of runaway and homeless youth services created by state and federal law. Time limits, capacity, and age and program restrictions all contribute to the number of homeless youth who seek services outside of the DYCD continuum of care. Young adults between 18 and 21 years old may choose to enter a runaway and homeless youth residential program or apply to receive shelter from a DHS adult or family shelter. Youth who age out of foster care and remain on trial discharge have an additional route to transitional housing through the ACS Supervised Independent Living Programs (SILPs).<sup>46</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Supervised Independent Living Programs are supportive housing facilities for youth over 18 and under 21 on trial discharge from foster care.

## A SURVEY OF NEW YORK CITY'S HOMELESS YOUTH

**Eighty-six percent of the young people surveyed (76 of 88 youth) were in homeless youth residential facilities.** Six service providers allowed us to survey young people from their programs. Of the 17 young people (19 percent) receiving services from drop-in centers, 10 were living with a parent or legal guardian and at risk of becoming homeless and seven (7) were in a homeless youth residential facility operated by another provider. Seventeen percent (15 out of 88) of the young people surveyed were pregnant or young mothers. Of these youth, six (6) were in crisis shelter (two youth were under the age of 18) and eight (8) were residing in a transitional living program. There are only 100 homeless youth residential beds available to young mothers and no beds available for young parents.

**Ninety-one percent (80 of 88 youth) of the young people surveyed were Black, Latino or Bi-Racial.** Racial and ethnic backgrounds of young people surveyed are consistent with that of adult and family homeless demographics and public assistance caseloads.<sup>47</sup>

|                         |    |
|-------------------------|----|
| Male                    | 38 |
| Female                  | 50 |
| Pregnant/Parenting Teen | 15 |

|           |    |
|-----------|----|
| Black     | 35 |
| Latino    | 24 |
| Bi-Racial | 21 |
| White     | 2  |
| Asian     | 2  |
| Other     | 4  |

<sup>47</sup> The Department of Homeless Services cites the following: 60-65 percent of families in shelter are African American and 30-35 percent are Latino. 60 percent of single adults in shelter are African American and 25 percent are Hispanic. See <http://www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/dhs/downloads/pdf/demographic.pdf>. According to Human Resources Administration statistics, between 90-95 percent of the public assistance caseload is Black or Latino. See <http://www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/hra/pdf/facts0405.pdf>

**Twenty-three percent (18 out of 88) of young people surveyed were under 18 years old. Of these, only two were in a transitional living program.**

Homeless youth under 18 years old are eligible for residential runaway and homeless youth services through DYCD or may be eligible for foster care placement through ACS. Homeless youth over 18 years old can receive services through runaway and homeless youth program that contract with DYCD or apply to enter an adult and family shelter contracting with DHS.

**Fifty-eight percent (51 of 88) of young people surveyed last lived with a parent or legal guardian in either Brooklyn or the Bronx. Eighteen percent (16 of 88)<sup>48</sup> reported last living with the parent or legal guardian outside of the City.** Young people overwhelmingly come from communities in the Bronx and Brooklyn that exhibit risk factors known to contribute to homelessness including, poverty, housing instability, and unemployment. This too is consistent with adult and family homeless demographics as well as public assistance caseloads

### Foster Care and Youth Homelessness

**Thirty percent of young people surveyed reported having a foster care history. Of these youth, 77 percent reported being in foster care for more than 2 years.** In New York City, approximately, 1,043 young people turn 18 and

leave foster care to live on their own each year.<sup>49</sup> Employment, education, life skills and affordable housing are critical to achieving self-sufficiency for this population. CCC's survey findings are reinforced by several studies undertaken in this area. A National Alliance to End Homelessness study cited close to 40 percent of homeless adults had foster care histories and multiple housing placements with friends or family members (sometimes through kinship care). Other findings from this study suggest that individuals with foster care histories become homeless at an earlier age and foster care placement correlates with the length of time persons experience homelessness.<sup>50</sup>

|                          | Birthplace | Last Known Place Lived With Parent/Guardian |
|--------------------------|------------|---|
| Bronx                    | 7          | 18  |
| Brooklyn                 | 31         | 33  |
| Manhattan                | 14         | 11  |
| Queens                   | 8          | 2   |
| Staten Island            | 1          | 5   |
| Out of New York City     | 27         | 16  |
| Never Lived with Parents | 0          | 1   |
| No Answer                | 0          | 2   |

| AGE                         | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | Total |
|-----------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-------|
| Crisis Shelter              | 3  | 6  | 5  | 3  | 6  | 3  | 0  | 26    |
| Transitional Living Program | 0  | 2  | 6  | 12 | 16 | 8  | 1  | 45    |
| Drop In Centers             | 1  | 5  | 6  | 2  | 3  | 0  | 0  | 17    |
| TOTAL                       | 4  | 13 | 17 | 17 | 25 | 11 | 1  | 88    |

<sup>48</sup> Youth reported last living with their parents in: Tampa, FL; Atlanta, GA; Wichita, Kansas; Puerto Rico; Fairwood, NJ; Hillcrest, Rockland County; Newark, DE; San Antonio, TX; Rochester, NY; Miami, FL (2); Trinidad; Swanee, GA; Haiti.

<sup>49</sup> *Keeping Track of New York City's Children 2005*. Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc. Foster Care Discharges by Destination (2003).

<sup>50</sup> Roman, Nan P. et al. National Alliance to End Homelessness. *Web of Failure: The Relationship Between Foster Care and Homelessness*. April 1995.

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In addition, a study utilizing data matches from DHS and the Administration of Children Services (ACS) sought to determine the prevalence of young adults under the age of 25 in the adult and family shelter system with child welfare involvement at the time of childhood. This study reported 26% of the adult shelter system have a history of child welfare involvement including out of home placement and preventive services.<sup>51</sup> In comparison, only three percent of the United States non-shelter population experiences a foster care placement.<sup>52</sup>

**Thirty-one percent of young people who reported foster care histories (8 of 26) aged out of foster care at the age of 18.** Little data is available from the city and state on young people who leave foster care.<sup>53</sup> Improved data collection and analysis by the city will help in efforts to learn more about the effectiveness of independent living programs in helping young people become financially and emotionally independent and the benefits of trial discharge foster care placements. A recent study by the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago found that more than one third of young people coming out of foster care did not have a high school degree compared to 10 percent of a national sample of 19 year olds. This study further found that young people who left care after 18 were 50 percent more likely to be unemployed and out of school and 14 percent more likely to be homeless than young people who remained in a trial discharge foster care placement.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Park, Jung Min et al. Childhood out-of-home Placement and Dynamics of Public Shelter Utilization Among Young Homeless Adults. Children and Youth Services Review. October 19, 2004

<sup>52</sup> Firdion, Jean-Marie Homelessness, Poverty and Foster Care. Social Exclusion, Inequality and Health An International Workshop. Brown University, June 3, 2004.

<sup>53</sup> *Can They Make it On Their Own? Aging Out of Foster Care – A Report on New York City's Independent Living Program.* Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc. January 2000.

<sup>54</sup> Courtney, Mark E. et al. *Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth.* Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. (Illinois, Wisconsin and Ohio) 2005.

## Juvenile Justice and Youth Homelessness

**Twenty-six percent (23 out of 88) of young people surveyed reported previously being placed in a juvenile detention facility or being incarcerated in an adult facility.** Approximately 6,468 young people enter juvenile detention facilities every year.<sup>55</sup> Prior to youth being released, a home assessment must be done to determine whether or not they can be returned to a suitable home. In CCC's 2000 evaluation of New York State juvenile justice aftercare services, aftercare counselors estimated that between 15 percent and 35 percent of the discharged youth had homes that were unsuitable to return to due to the lack of parental supervision, parental health problems, parental substance abuse, open child welfare case against the parent, the young person's victim resides in the home, illegal activity in the home, the parent has stated that they do not want the child back in the home, and gang activity.<sup>56</sup> Although none of the young people we spoke to were discharged directly to emergency crisis shelter, instability in the home combined with a juvenile justice history may be contributing factors to youth homelessness.

Young people who are preparing for discharge from juvenile justice facilities in New York State are provided with mandatory aftercare services. There is little data available on how effective this program is in reducing recidivism. A 1999 statewide study of the recidivism rate conducted by the New York State Comptroller's office found that 81 percent of boys and 45 percent of girls were rearrested within 36 months.<sup>57</sup> The New York City Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) reported a 46 percent recidivism rate in 2004.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> *Keeping Track of New York City's Children 2005.* Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc. Fewer Youth Enter New York City Department of Juvenile Justice Detention Facilities (2003) and The Number of New York City Juveniles placed in Office of Children and Family Services facilities (2002).

<sup>56</sup> *Returning Home: A Look at Aftercare Services Provided to Delinquent Youth.* Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc. p. 2.

<sup>57</sup> Office of the NY State Comptroller. *Identifying and Treating Youth Needs.* Report 97-S-05. November 2000.

<sup>58</sup> Mayor's Office of Operations. *Mayor's Management Report.* Preliminary Fiscal 2005.

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Discharge Planning Services have been developed to help transition young people coming out of city juvenile justice facilities back into the community. Discharge planning program workers are responsible for working with young people prior to discharge in numerous areas including “literacy, truancy, HIV-education, risk reduction education, alcohol/substance abuse prevention/treatment, tobacco cessation, violence reduction, conflict resolution, computer skills, life skills, anger management, artistic development, sports skills [and] leadership development.”<sup>59</sup> In order to prevent recidivism, DJJ discharge planning workers make efforts to link young people with services in the community.

### Education, Employment and Youth Homelessness

**Twenty-seven percent (24 of 88) of young people surveyed did not have a high school diploma and were not attending school at the time of the interview.**

Homeless youth in crisis shelter are not required to pursue education or employment but are actively encouraged to do so during their stay. All transitional living programs surveyed require young people to pursue a GED or high school diploma and to seek and maintain employment. When surveyed, both crisis shelter and transitional living program providers reported that well over 50 percent of homeless youth were not in school and had not completed high school or a GED at the time of intake. Although this may have been the case upon intake, our survey of homeless youth suggests that providers have been successful in encouraging and assisting young people in taking advantage of educational opportunities while receiving services in their programs. Of the young people we surveyed who were not attending school at the time of interview, 44 percent (19 out of 44) had completed high school, a GED program or a training program. Twenty-seven percent (24 out of 88) of young people stated they had not received a high school diploma/GED and were not attending school during the time of the interview. Several reasons were cited as to why:

- Three (3) young people stated that GED classes were full at the time they applied;
- Two (2) young people stated they felt they were too old to go back to high school;

- Seven (7) young people stated they planned on going back to school;
- Six (6) young people stated they were working and had no time for school;
- Two (2) young people stated they had been kicked out or expelled from school; and
- Four (4) young people stated they stopped going to school because of their homelessness.

Half of all young people interviewed reported attending school during the time of the survey. Of these youth, 74 percent attended high school, 5 percent were completing a General Education Degree (GED), and 16 percent attended community college.

**Fifty-five percent (52 out of 88) of young people surveyed reported having a job at the time of the interview. Only 6 percent reported having no work experience.**

A number of providers discussed concerns regarding the difficulties youth face when attending job training or interviewing for a position. When asked about what type of employment they held, most youth reported working in the retail or service industries that generally do not provide benefits, specifically health insurance. Several young people talked about working “off the books” and sporadically. Providers reported that young people generally had weak interviewing skills and wore improper clothing to interviews, making it less likely they would be taken seriously by potential employers.

Young people that did report working “on the books” during the time of the interview, were likely to be receiving wages that would make it difficult for them to be financially stable if they were to leave the residential program. On the other hand, wages above \$838 a month<sup>60</sup> (\$7.00 an hour for 30 hours a week) disqualifies a youth from being eligible for state medical insurance.<sup>61</sup> Seventy-three percent of young people

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<sup>60</sup> To be eligible for Medicaid, a single adult 19 and older cannot earn more than \$659 gross monthly income. To be eligible for Family Health Plus, a single adult over the age of 18 cannot earn more than \$838 gross monthly income.

<sup>61</sup> Young people in residential settings automatically qualify for state medical insurance. Young people that have been discharged from a residential program must apply for Family Health Plus which covers 19 years and older or Child Health Plus B if under 19. For Family Health Plus, single young adults must report monthly earnings under \$838 to qualify. A young person earning minimum wage must work no more than 31 hours a week to qualify. For Child Health Plus B, young people must report monthly earnings under \$798 to qualify. A young person earning minimum wage must work no more than 30 hours a week in order to qualify.

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<sup>59</sup> <http://www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/djj/html/cbidischarge.html>

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surveyed reported having health insurance (Medicaid) at the time of interview. Ninety-three percent of young people surveyed reported needing to see a doctor in the past year. Young people with and without medical insurance cited the use of mobile medical vans, the Callen-Lorde Community Health Center and the Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center for services.<sup>62</sup>

## WHY YOUNG PEOPLE SEEK RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS ASSISTANCE

**Forty-seven percent (41 of 88) of young people surveyed reported running away at one time. The top three (3) reasons youth ran away included:<sup>63</sup>**

- **Strict behavior guidelines in the home (46 percent or 19 of 41)**
- **Youth behavior issues<sup>64</sup> (39 percent or 16 of 41)**
- **Physical abuse (32 percent or 13 of 41)**

Additionally, young people reported running away because of: a parent or guardian's issue with their sexuality; sexual abuse; substance abuse (by the parent and by the youth); mental health issues (of the parent or of the child); cultural issues; and pregnancy. Reasons cited are in no way mutually exclusive of one another. However, the top three (3) reasons given by young people suggest what providers confirm – that difficult family relationships is one of the root causes to youth homelessness.

**Fifty-three percent (47 of 88) of young people surveyed reported being thrown out at one time. The most common reason why youth were thrown out:**

- **Strict behavior guidelines in the home (34 percent or 16 of 47)**

Additionally, young people reported being thrown out because of: parent issues with sexuality; substance abuse (by the parent and by the youth); mental health issues (of the parent and of the youth); cultural issues; and pregnancy. It should be

noted that young people were generally uncomfortable with questions related to being thrown out and emphasized the fact that they were not seeking services because they had been thrown out but because they had decided to leave on their own.

**Sixty-eight percent (60 of 88) of young people surveyed reported running away, being thrown out or both at one time in their lives. However, 60 percent (36 of 60) of youth who reported running away or being thrown out did not cite these as the reason for seeking runaway and homeless youth services and assistance.**

When asked why they were living away from their parent or legal guardian during the time of the interview, many youth were hesitant to say it was because they had run away or been thrown out. Instead, youth cited numerous reasons as to why they were seeking shelter.

- Fourteen (14) young people stated they had left home at 18 to be on their own and/or were too old to return after being away for some time;
- Five (5) young people stated they had no where to go or that both parents were deceased;
- Four (4) young people stated that they had left home because there was no space and/or their parents expected them to pay rent;
- Three (3) young people stated they wanted to be on their own with their own apartment;
- Three (3) young people stated that their parent(s) were also homeless;
- Three (3) young people stated that their parent(s) had left New York and they remained behind.
- Two (2) young people stated that their parent(s) were incarcerated; and
- Two (2) young people said they had been living with a boyfriend and were domestic violence survivors.

**According to our youth survey, the three most helpful services runaway and homeless youth programs provide are:**

- **Help exploring job training programs, job search activities and education opportunities (27 percent or 24 out of 88);**
- **Basic necessities – specifically shelter and/or food (22 percent or 19 of 88)**
- **Counseling (10 percent or 9 of 88)**

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<sup>62</sup> Callen-Lorde Community Health Center is a no cost/low cost health clinic specifically geared towards gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transgender youth ages 13 to 24. Services include HIV/STI prevention services and health education. The Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center provides free medical and mental health services to youth ages 12 to 20. In addition, mobile medical vans are available to youth during early afternoon and evening hours in Manhattan.

<sup>63</sup> Percentages do not equal 100 percent because several youth identified more than one reason as to why they ran away.

<sup>64</sup> Behavior issues are defined as actions that result in an adverse relationship between a young person and a parent or guardian such as truancy, arguing, and illegal actions, among others.

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The provider emphasis on the pursuit of employment and education opportunities for young people coincides with the services they seek. Many spoke about the difficulty in finding employment and welcomed help from providers in this capacity. Provider programs included making referrals to job training programs or educational programs and also teaching basic interviewing skills and resume writing among other skills. In addition, basic necessities, such as food and shelter, and counseling were also reported to be among the most helpful services provided by runaway and homeless youth programs.

## TEMPORARY SHELTER AND DISCHARGE PLANNING

**There are limited temporary shelter options for homeless youth.** The overwhelming majority of New York City's emergency crisis shelter beds are provided in one building and by one organization receiving a significant share of city and state funding as well as private funding to support its mission. Although short-term emergency crisis shelter is available to all young people upon request, providers express concern regarding the lack of program options available to youth who may present special needs or be particularly vulnerable.

Reported by providers as drawing the most concern were young people who identify themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or questioning. According to the National Network of Runaway and Youth Services, 20 to 40 percent of young people who become homeless each year are lesbian, gay or bisexual. There are few residential options available to this population in New York City. Although all young people have access to all services, providers speculate the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth do not always feel comfortable seeking services in a mainstream environment. Another area of concern was expressed by young homeless mothers who reported relationships with the father of their child but an inability to receive residential runaway and homeless youth services together as a family unit. Instead, young homeless parents that chose to remain together had no other option but to apply for family shelter through the DHS or enter a runaway and homeless youth program separately.

**Thirty-three percent (29 of 88) of young people surveyed reported having good relationships with a parent, family member or legal guardian speaking with them on a daily or weekly basis and having overnight and daytime visits at the home.** Thirty percent (27 out of 88) of the young people surveyed stated they had an infrequent or strained relationship with either one or both of their parents or legal guardian. The remaining 36 percent (32 out of 88) stated they had no relationship with their parents or legal guardian including four (4) youth who stated both their parents were deceased. Although homeless youth providers offer and provide family counseling and mediation upon request, it is not mandated for young people receiving services.

**According to the homeless youth residential providers we surveyed, of the young people discharged from crisis shelter, 25 percent moved to a transitional living program, 32 percent returned home, 14 percent moved to an adult shelter and 30 percent are unaccounted for.<sup>65</sup> Young people discharged from transitional living programs were most often discharged to their own apartment, to a parent, family member or friend, to an adult shelter or are unaccounted for.<sup>66</sup>** Service providers reported that the average length of stay for homeless youth in an emergency crisis shelter was 18 days and between nine (9) and 10 months for youth in transitional living program. Providers reported they are mindful of the time limits imposed on the program and worked aggressively to help youth find employment, finish high school and learn the independent living skills necessary to move to an apartment on their own or return home and contribute to a family household.

The 2006 state budget adopted changes to the New York State Runaway and Homeless Youth Act extended the maximum length of stay for transitional living programs from 12 months to 18 months to mirror federal law. This change will ease pressure brought on by time limits for transitional living program providers working to help youth transition to

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<sup>65</sup> Percentages were rounded and may add up to over 100 percent.

<sup>66</sup> Transitional living program service providers were unable to give us actual discharge data but did report where youth were most often discharged.

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a permanent housing arrangement. Although, this amendment is a positive change, without increased funding, it can potentially lead to fewer residential beds available to homeless youth.

**Young people discharged from residential programs who cannot return home have limited permanent housing options available to them.** Young people transitioning from the homeless youth system face numerous challenges in finding permanent affordable housing with limited employment history and salary, limited education, and limited experience living on their

own. Until recently, the most valuable tool available for homeless youth making the transition to permanent housing was the federal Section 8 voucher program. No longer available, providers will be under more pressure to transition youth who cannot return home to permanent housing on their own with little or no financial assistance. The City's Housing Stability Plus program is available to homeless youth after nine months in shelter but only if receiving public assistance. Few homeless youth receive public assistance and therefore would not be eligible for this subsidy.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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## IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION AND COORDINATE EFFORTS AMONG CITY AGENCIES THAT SERVE HOMELESS YOUTH

The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) should improve methods of data collection and analysis to inform public policy around prevention activities and service needs for homeless youth. With no central intake process for homeless youth entering emergency shelter, transitional living programs or non-residential programs, little information is known on how many young people seek homeless services in New York City and why. Although all providers had developed intake assessment procedures for young people entering their facilities, this comprehensive information is not uniformly collected by DYCD. DYCD should consider requiring providers to use a basic intake assessment tool to uniformly collect information on young people who seek services in their programs. An intake assessment tool should include information already collected by providers including where youth are coming from and why, what services they need, where they are discharged to, and other relevant information necessary to learn more about preventing youth homelessness or helping young people return home or move to independent living. This information will better inform DYCD policy development in this area.

**Interagency collaboration should be strengthened to ensure that city agency policy and practice do not result in young people becoming homeless.** The lack of coordination and collaboration among and between city agencies increase the likelihood that young people with prior involvement in the child welfare system, juvenile justice, adult and family shelter, and other institutional settings may experience homelessness on their own. Greater efforts must be made between and among city agencies to ensure that young people discharged from one system have no choice but to enter another for support. The collecting and sharing of information among city agencies may help pinpoint the areas where young people experience the greatest risk of homelessness. Agencies including the Human Resources Administration, the Administration for Children's Services,

the Department of Education, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of Homeless Services, the Department of Probation and the Department of Youth and Community Development should collaborate to develop points of intervention and methods of prevention to help decrease the number of young people who are discharged from residential settings without stable housing arrangements.

**DYCD should appoint a homeless youth coordinator responsible for collecting and synthesizing the data collected by DYCD and other agencies that also serve young people.** Together with improved data collection by DYCD, data from other agencies could be helpful in learning more about where homeless youth in crisis shelter and transitional living programs are coming from and most importantly, help city agencies think about ways to prevent youth homelessness in the first instance. An example of the information that could contribute to the development of better prevention tools for youth homelessness include:

- Number of young people who leave foster care with no housing arrangement;
- Number of young people who leave Supervised Independent Living Programs (SILP) with no permanent housing arrangement;
- Number of young people who leave juvenile justice facilities who do not or cannot return home;
- Number of young people who leave other residential settings who do not or cannot return home;
- Number of young adults who enter the adult or family shelter system that have at one point received services from a residential homeless youth service provider.

Sharing this information and compiling it with data collected by DYCD will begin to develop a better picture of homeless youth and service needs and gaps for this population.

## CREATE AND EXPAND PREVENTION PROGRAMS THAT HELP YOUNG PEOPLE AVOID HOMELESSNESS

**Designated staff from the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) and DYCD should form a working group to collaborate on effective prevention methods that may reduce youth homelessness.** The ACS family team conferencing model and neighborhood based

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services approach<sup>67</sup> to prevention at the community level provide opportunities to identify successful prevention strategies to help young people avoid homelessness. Partnering with ACS to examine its work in this area and other strategies used to prevent foster care placement or reduce length of stay in foster care may be useful in DYCD's exploration of prevention strategies for homeless youth.

**When appropriate, opportunities for family counseling and mediation services should be encouraged and provided to young people in residential and non-residential programs, regardless of whether youth plan to return or remain at home.** Counseling and mediation services can provide families with better tools to increase communication among youth and family members and confront issues that may lead to youth homelessness. Although returning home to a parent(s) or family member(s) was not always perceived as possible by the young people we interviewed, the number of young people with positive relationships with family members is significant enough to consider ways to build upon this connection. Providing family counseling and mediation is critical to increasing the likelihood that young people will return home and/or build a family support network. In addition to collaborating with ACS around prevention, DYCD should consider collaborating with the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) to learn more about its new Homebase program that provides innovative and varied services to families at risk of entering shelter including financial assistance, family counseling and mediation and public benefits advocacy. Many of these strategies may be transferable to helping prevent young people from experiencing homelessness on their own or help them to reunify with family members.

**DYCD should work with the Department of Education (DoE) to draw down more federal funding to support equal access to educational opportunities for homeless youth as mandated by the federal McKinney-Vento Act.** The McKinney-Vento Act appropriates funding to the states to be used for services to ensure that homeless children enroll, attend, and achieve success in school. This

funding also supports the creation of an education coordinator office at DoE charged with implementing programs to gather information on children and youth who experience homelessness. New York State's 2004 appropriation was \$5.3 million of which \$400,000 was applied for and allocated to New York City. DoE should coordinate with DYCD to ensure that New York City draw down available funding from the state Education Department to provide service improvements and/or enhancements.

## **CREATE AND EXPAND TEMPORARY AND PERMANENT HOUSING OPTIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

**To increase the temporary housing options available to young people, New York State and New York City should provide start-up grants and technical assistance for service providers to secure state Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) certification necessary to receive state runaway and homeless funding.** In order to receive state or local runaway and homeless youth funding, OCFS must certify a residential/non-residential provider to provide runaway and homeless services. Homeless youth providers that do not receive local or state runaway and homeless youth funding are often funded by other government agencies that provide regulatory oversight or through private funding sources. Although runaway and homeless youth programs are mandated to be state certified regardless of funding source, it is possible for programs to exist under the radar screen. More significantly, no new programs are able to draw down state and local dollars without state certification, making it difficult to expand temporary housing services even if new funds are provided. Start-up grants and technical assistance can help providers who are currently not certified to receive state certification and therefore become eligible for state and local runaway and homeless youth funding. It would also encourage new providers to serve this population.

**Homeless youth under 21 should receive targeted transitional housing services that help them gain the independent living skills necessary to live on their own.** It is not possible for all homeless youth in the DHS shelter system, ages 18 to 21, to be accommodated in runaway and homeless youth residential programs. Whether or not this limitation contributes to the number of young people who

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<sup>67</sup> ACS' neighborhood based services approach attempts to provide services to families and youth in the community in order to avoid foster care placement or re-entry into the foster care system. ACS' family team conferencing model supports parental involvement in decision making while the child is in foster care to expedite the reunification of the family and limit the trauma to the child. Source: Mayor's Management Report. Fiscal 2005.

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opt to seek services through DHS is unknown. Although there are DHS shelters that specialize in providing services to young single mothers and young adults, these shelters must follow DHS shelter policies that emphasize re-housing as quickly as possible. Homeless youth transitional living programs have the flexibility to emphasize stability first and housing second, working first on independent living skills to ensure that youth can become financially stable and return home or placed in permanent housing. The emphasis on independent living skill building is particularly critical for young people who often do not have long employment histories, have never leased an apartment or paid rent and/or who have never lived on their own.

**DYCD should increase the number of residential programs targeted to homeless young mothers under 21 and should consider funding a demonstration project that would support young homeless parents with children.** The Family Homelessness Special Master Panel Prevention Report cited young families as one group among several groups of families that may benefit greatly from targeted preventive services.<sup>68</sup> Providing access to transitional living programs or similar long-term residential facilities that foster the development of independent living skills and parenting skills are also critical to ensuring that young mothers do not enter the adult family shelter system. Focus groups of young homeless mothers conducted by the Family Homelessness Special Master Panel cited interest in participating in programs that tied housing relocation assistance with education and job training. Programs such as money management, life skills, parenting skills, education, landlord/ tenant relations and incentives to remain home were also topics of interest.<sup>69</sup> Transitional living programs that serve young homeless mothers emphasize many of these services.

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<sup>68</sup> New York City Family Homelessness Special Master Panel. *Family Homelessness Prevention Report*. November 2003.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

There are no residential services available to two parent families outside the adult family shelter system. Young homeless mothers under 21 years old who wish to receive services through a transitional living program can only do so on their own. The city should consider supporting a demonstration project to support young homeless parents under 21 who wish to remain together. Additional programs can be incorporated into this model including relationship building, counseling and other partner related programs.

**New York City and New York State should increase the number of supportive housing units available to homeless youth and increase funding to provide operating costs for supportive housing developments.** In 2004, New York City increased funds to support capital construction of supportive housing for single adults and families, including young adults, as part of its larger housing agenda. The city came one step closer to fulfilling this commitment when agreeing to a New York/New York III agreement with New York State that will develop 9,000 units of supportive and service enriched housing in New York City. DYCD should play a larger role in this effort by working with the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) to strategize about effective program models for young adults and allocating funding to support operating costs for supportive housing developments.

An example of a successful program model is the Chelsea Foyer. Opening in 2002, it is the first housing-based career development program in the United States. The program is for youth aging out of foster care and integrates housing with job training and educational milestones to ensure youth, once discharged from foster care, can live on their own. Young people can remain in the program for up to 18 months. This supportive housing model provides an opportunity to serve young people of various levels of need in one facility and can be used as an alternative to runaway and homeless youth residential programs or as a step down for youth discharged from a transitional living program with no permanent housing arrangement.

# CONCLUSION

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Steps have already been taken at the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) to improve and create a “more integrated system of services along a continuum of care” for homeless and at risk youth.<sup>70</sup> As DYCD embarks on this new direction, it will be critical to improve its data collection and analysis to learn more about runaway and homeless youth in New York City and inform

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<sup>70</sup> Request for Proposal: Runaway and Homeless Youth. Department of Youth and Community Development. Release Date: December 21, 2005.

policy and program development in this area. Collaboration and coordination among and between city agencies can provide opportunities for DYCD to learn more about effective homeless prevention strategies and ways to help young people return home to a family member or guardian, when appropriate. In addition, DYCD should consider working with the city housing agencies to ensure that permanent housing options, such as supportive or service enriched housing and rent assistance, are available to homeless youth that will remain on their own.

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**CITIZENS' COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN OF NEW YORK IS AN INDEPENDENT  
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# ABOUT CCC

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Since 1944, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc. (CCC) has convened, informed and mobilized New Yorkers to make the city a better place for children. CCC's approach to child advocacy is fact-based and combines the best features of public policy advocacy with a tradition of citizen activism. While many of our activities directly affect the lives of individual children, most of our efforts are spent identifying the causes and effects of vulnerability and disadvantage, and working to make public policy, services and benefits more responsive to children. To improve the well-being of New York City children, CCC:

- Mobilizes New Yorkers who are committed to making what is best for children a priority
- Advocates for children by promoting new ideas, strengthening policies and offering new solutions
- Analyzes and monitors, policies, programs and budgets to find out what works for children and what doesn't
- Educates the public and the media about children's issues and reaches out to New Yorkers to raise awareness and capitalize on their desire to do something for children
- Provides opportunities for New Yorkers to get involved and promote policies and programs that reward families who are working hard to make a good life for their children and assist children in families who cannot
- Builds networks among civic, religious and community groups and individuals and organizations who are determined to improve the quality of life for children and families
- Prepares young people and adults to be leaders through YouthAction NYC and the Community Leadership Course.

Casting light on the issues, engaging allies, fueling civic discourse, identifying improvements and envisioning alternatives has helped CCC make children a priority in New York City.

Despite modest improvements in child well-being, *Keeping Track of New York City's Children* reports too many children still face daily conditions that challenge healthy development and a future where achievement and economic stability will be out of reach unless steps are taken to reverse these trends. *Securing Every Child's Birthright*, CCC's new communication and action campaign promotes economic, housing and developmental security for all New York City children and challenges policymakers and fellow New Yorkers to think big about public amenities, public services and public benefits for children. By championing bold policies and initiatives that produce lasting, structural improvements, *Securing Every Child's Birthright* proposals seek to eliminate, not just diminish, barriers to make it possible for children to grow into adulthood ready to meet the demands of society and fully engage in the 21st century economy. The Campaign calls on policymakers to enact legislation, adopt budgets, develop initiatives, and implement policies that will secure every child's birthright to be healthy, housed, educated and safe.

CCC is a non-profit organization supported by individuals, foundations and corporations.



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