



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Working Together to Build Strong Communities

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP'S

OZARKS ALLIANCE TO *End* HOMELESSNESS

HIGH RISK AND HOMELESS YOUTH REPORT

JUNE 14, 2019

Research conducted by the Missouri State University Sociology Department in collaboration with Community Partnership's Homeless Youth Task Force. Much of the report content was written by Dr. Tim Knapp, with 2019 updates to statistics and recommendations provided by Christina Ryder and Kirsten Krier of the Sociology Department at Missouri State University.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Methodology.....	3
Introduction	4
Defining Homelessness	4
Available Housing Resources for Youth	5
Summary of the Survey Results	6
I. Demographics of the Sample - 78 Persons	7
II. Work History	9
III. Family Troubles and Running Away from Home.....	10
IV. Alcohol/Drug Use and Mental Health.....	11
V. Homelessness	13
VI. Self-Reported Reasons for Being Homeless	13
VII. Services for Homeless Youth in Springfield	14
VIII. Dangers of Being a Youth Experiencing Homelessness	15
IX. Subgroups and Rates of Unaccompanied Homelessness	16
X. Primary Factors Associated with Experiencing Unaccompanied Homelessness	16
XI. Secondary Factors Associated with Experiencing Unaccompanied Homelessness.....	16
XII Policies and Programs to Reduce Youth Homelessness	17
Conclusion.....	18
References	19

Executive Summary

This project, the 8th High Risk and Homeless Youth Survey conducted since 2007, was developed and completed by Community Partnership of the Ozarks' (CPO) Homeless Youth Task Force in conjunction with Missouri State University's Sociology Department. The Homeless Youth Task Force is a committee of CPO's Ozarks Alliance to End Homelessness (OAEH). The OAEH serves as the planning body for homeless services and oversees U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding in Springfield/Greene, Christian, and Webster counties. Past High Risk and Homeless Youth Reports and other information on homelessness can be viewed at <http://cpozarks.org/endhomelessness>.

Members of the OAEH Homeless Youth Task Force worked to update the survey instrument used in past years with the help, input, and support of The Phoenix Youth Action Board, a subcommittee of the OAEH made up of youth ages 16-24 with lived experience of homelessness. The youth understood that data obtained from the survey is critical for funders, policy makers, and service providers, and could support the community in meeting the needs of homeless youth. Youth perspective was essential throughout this process.

Members of The Phoenix Youth Action Board shared their thoughts on youth homelessness in Springfield, MO:

There is help out there, but kids don't know how to find it.

Many homeless youth are scared to get help and are afraid the system will fail them.

They have often left home because it's better than what was at home.

We want to help other homeless youth to seek out help and resources.

The results of the 2019 High Risk and Homeless Youth Report include essential information about the experiences of at-risk youth within the community. Seventy-eight surveys were submitted, and 39 of those youth reported they had wondered where they would sleep the following night. 73% of the respondents had either witnessed or been victim to traumatic experiences within a caregiving setting, and more than half came from homes where one or both parents battled alcohol or drug addiction. Over 50% of the young people who responded to the survey had been wards of the state as minors. Many of the youth responding do not know how to access essential services and report a need for increased services for homeless youth within the community.

Methodology

During the first quarter of 2019, online questionnaires were given to youth at the annual Springfield, Mo. Every Youth Counts event, hosted at the Ward Downtown YMCA by several local nonprofits and youth service providers, including The Kitchen, Inc.'s Rare Breed Youth Outreach Center. The Every Youth Counts event is conducted in conjunction with the annual Point-in-Time Count. Several area nonprofits and service providers came together to produce a one-day event designed to provide extensive and wrap-around assistance for youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness and to collect vital information on youth homelessness in the community. Available services included applications for state benefits, haircuts, health care, education, and access to job training services. Youth who attended engaged with service providers in a one-on-one capacity. At this event, and the comparable adult-targeted event, Every One Counts, youth were asked to complete a comprehensive survey that incorporated both demographic and personal information. The High Risk and Homeless Youth Survey tool meets the requirements of the Point-in-Time Count mandated by HUD but exceeds those requirements by collecting a variety of information beneficial for local service providers. This survey also targets youth who are both literally homeless and those who are unstably housed.

In addition to this event, surveys were also distributed at various local nonprofits frequented by homeless youth to obtain support and services. Seventy-eight young people completed and returned the survey between January 31, 2019, and March 1, 2019. Not every respondent completed each of the questions on the form, and this is noted when applicable in this report; most surveys, however, were complete. The age range established for the survey was between the ages of 13 and 24 (the age range utilized by HUD and other federal agencies to define 'youth').

Significantly fewer surveys were received in 2019 than in 2018 and past years. Several factors may have played a role in this, including unusually cold weather the night prior to the Every Youth Counts event and a change of venue for the event.

Along with the High Risk and Homeless Youth Survey conducted in the first quarter of 2019, this report will also consider data provided by Springfield Public Schools on homelessness in the school district. This data was compiled by Springfield Public Schools' Office of Students in Transition and reflects the federal definition of homelessness used by the Department of Education.

Introduction

Defining Homelessness

Within different systems of care, varying definitions of homelessness exist. HUD has four definitions of homelessness. They are as follows and do specify some differences between homeless youth and adults.

- 1) Literally homeless individuals and families lack a fixed, adequate, and regular nighttime residence, meaning they are living in a place not intended for human habitation, are living in emergency shelter or transitional housing, or are exiting an institution where they resided for up to 90 days, after having lived in a place not intended for human habitation or in emergency shelter or transitional housing.
- 2) Imminent risk of homelessness means an individual or family will lose their primary nighttime residence, which may include a motel or hotel or doubled-up living arrangement, within 14 days.
- 3) Homeless under other federal statutes includes both unaccompanied youth and families with children and youth who do not qualify as either literally homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness, but who are defined as homeless under other federal statutes, have not had a lease, ownership interest, or occupancy agreement in the 60 days prior to applying for assistance, have experienced persistent instability as measured by two or more moves in the past 60 days, and can be expected to continue in such a status.
- 4) Fleeing/attempting to flee domestic violence is the final category recognized by HUD. These individuals are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, lack another residence, and do not have the resources to obtain other permanent housing.

Many providers within the area rely upon these HUD definitions; however, homeless youth and families are frequently also recognized by local public-school systems, under the guidelines of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Act.

According to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Act, homeless children and youth means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. The McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness includes children and youth sharing the housing of others (living doubled-up) due to economic hardship, loss of housing, or similar reasons; those living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or campgrounds due to lack of other housing; those living in emergency or transitional shelters; those abandoned in hospitals; and children in foster care awaiting placement. These criteria are broader than those applied by HUD; however, the HUD definition is included within McKinney-Vento classification, including children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence in a public or private place neither designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodation; children and youth living in cars, parks, public spaces, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar places; and children of migrant agricultural workers.

Available Housing Resources for Youth

The OAEH has had youth designated housing projects since 2005 and consistently works to expand those projects and provide more available beds and units for youth in need. Today, our community currently has two HUD-Continuum of Care funded Rapid Rehousing programs for youth and one Emergency Solutions Grant Rapid Rehousing program for youth. These programs utilize the Housing First model and participate in the local Coordinated Entry System.

The Kitchen, Inc. provides nine Rapid Rehousing units and 11 Permanent Supportive Housing units for youth. The Permanent Supportive Housing project has designated units set aside for youth subpopulations including five units that serve former foster youth, two units for LGBTQ+ youth, and two units for youth with disabling conditions related to mental illness. The permanent housing success rate of these programs has been over 75% since transitioning to a Housing First model.

Great Circle provides nine Rapid Rehousing units for youth and has been the Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Basic Center funded agency for many years. In October 2017, Great Circle was awarded a RHY funded Transitional Living Program to house seven youth ages 16-21. This program was designed to utilize similar programming aspects as successful Rapid Rehousing projects throughout the OAEH service area but also provide services to youth unable to access other services due to programming guidelines (e.g. the ability to house youth under 18 and those not literally homeless). Over the last five years, the OAEH has been able to drastically expand youth-designated housing in our community through these projects. In addition to these youth-specific resources, youth ages 18 and over can also access adult shelter and housing resources.

Great Circle and The Kitchen, Inc. also have emergency shelter beds for youth on an ongoing basis, and youth 18 years of age and older can access emergency shelter at Salvation Army's Harbor House, Victory Mission's Victory Square, and Council of Church's Safe to Sleep. While these are limited, in the winter months crisis cold weather shelters offered a significant increase in available shelter beds. At least some of the youth who reported staying in emergency shelters stayed in crisis cold weather shelters. During the 2018-2019 winter, the men's crisis cold weather shelter, hosted by East Sunshine Church of Christ, housed 68 men a night on average, and the women's crisis cold weather shelter, hosted by Council of Churches and Grace United Methodist Church, housed an average of five women a night.

Summary of the Survey Results

The majority of youth who were homeless or unstably housed identified as White, and 82% identified as either Springfield, Mo., or the state of Missouri residents. Nearly half had previously been a ward of the state or in foster care, and 86.4% were either currently enrolled in school of some kind or had completed high school. Perhaps different than in prior reports conducted, the sample age was a bit older. 57.7% of the sample reported they were between the ages of 18 and 24, making issues related to aging out of state systems and the variables of education and employment particularly significant to study findings. Of 72 reporting youth, 39 individuals (54.2%) said they had in the past wondered where they would sleep that night. There was no reported difference in experiencing literal homelessness among those who identified as heterosexual compared to those who identified as part of the LGBTQ community (see section IX “Subgroups and Rates of Unaccompanied Homeless”). While this may be true for the 2019 sample, previous reports, as well as national data, suggest non-heterosexual identifying youth are often at higher risk for running away or being asked to leave their home, homelessness in general, and exploitation once homeless (National Council of State Legislatures, n.d.).

The High Risk and Homeless Youth Report provides a snapshot of youth within the area, but predominantly reaches those youth already accessing services from local youth-targeted providers. Given that, the numbers of homeless and at-risk youth discussed here do not accurately reflect the scope or scale of the problem of youth homelessness in Springfield/Greene, Christian, and Webster counties.

While less than 80 youth responded to the survey this year, Springfield Public Schools reports a total of 667 high school students who are identified as McKinney-Vento eligible. Data from Springfield Public Schools does not specify how many of these youth are homeless with family versus homeless on their own but does report that 13 high school age youth are unsheltered in total, and another 77 youth are either in emergency or transitional shelters. In total, from early childhood through high school, Springfield Public Schools reports that 2,283 students are McKinney-Vento eligible out of more than 25,000 students. These numbers reflect a nearly 45% increase from 2014 and illustrate that approximately 9% of children and youth in Springfield Public Schools qualify as McKinney-Vento eligible.

As with past reports, and national data as well, exposure to significant life trauma (namely emotional, physical, or sexual abuse) and difficult family backgrounds appear to be primary factors that contribute to young people being homeless on their own, while underemployment and mental health concerns/disability are likely important secondary factors (see sections X and XI). Many youth noted shelter as a significant and under met need within the community.

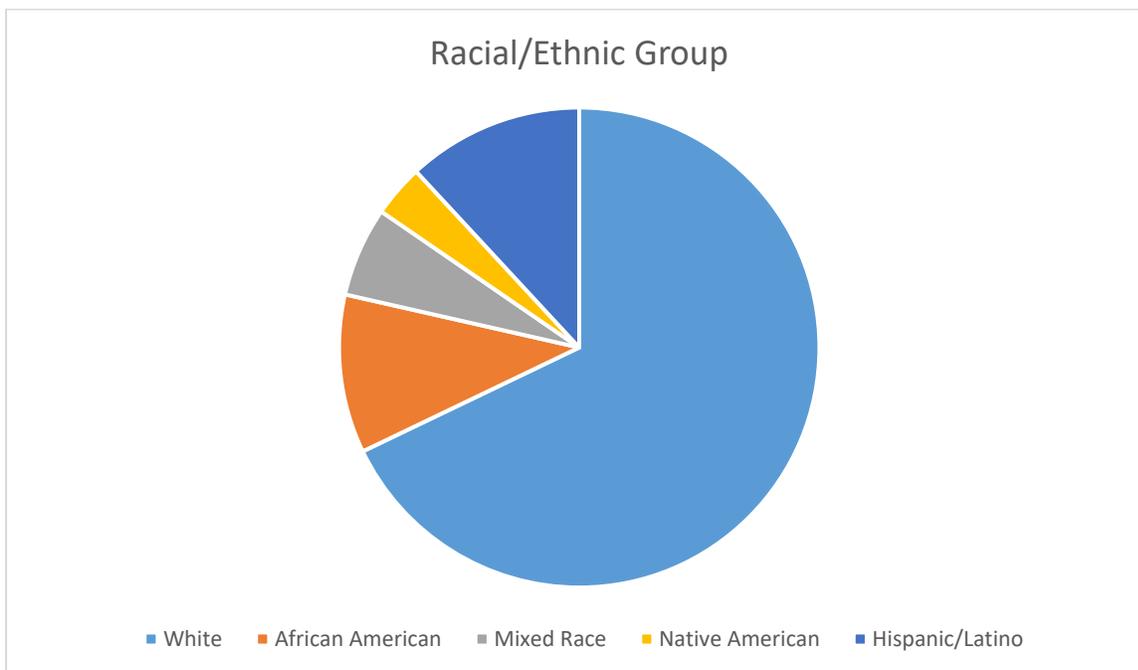
I. Demographics of the Sample - 78 Persons

Age: The two youngest respondents were 13 years old, and the oldest person was 24 years of age. Three subjects (3.8%) were 13 years of age. Six individuals (7.7%) were either 14 or 15 years old. Twenty-three respondents (29.5%) were either 16 or 17 years old. Twenty-four people (30.8%) were either 18 or 19 years of age. Twenty-one subjects (26.9%) were age 20 or older. The average (median) age of individuals who completed a survey was 18 years old. One person did not give an age.

Gender: Thirty-six respondents (46.2%) were males and thirty-nine (50%) were females. One individual was transgender (1.3% of all participants) and two were gender non-conforming (2.6% of all participants).

Racial/Ethnic group: Fifty-seven youth (73.1%) were white. Nine respondents were black (11.5%) and five were of two or more racial group backgrounds (6.5%). Three people (3.8%) were American Indian. Three people responded “other” (3.9%), which included “Mexican/American,” “Human,” and “I am a lot of different things.” One participant did not answer (1.3%).

A separate question asked respondents if they are Hispanic/Latino. Ten subjects responded yes, (12.8%) and 68 responded no (87.2%).

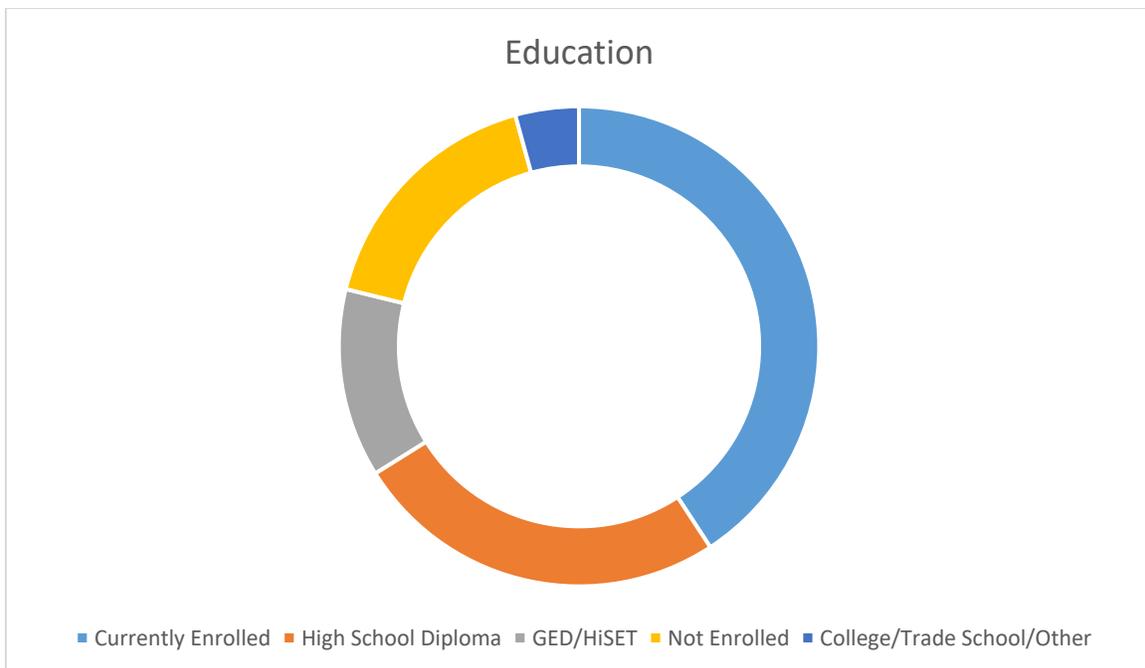


Based on the demographics of Springfield, Mo., the number of minority youth who self-identified as homeless or unstably housed is higher than within the general population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population of Springfield is less diverse than represented by this sample. While 73.1% of the survey sample was white, overall 88.2% of the population of Springfield identifies as white. Only 4.5% of the population of Springfield overall is African American, but 11.5% of this

sample self-identified as African-American. Similar discrepancies are present for other racial and ethnic minorities.

Sexual orientation: Fifty-three youth were heterosexual, which is 67.9% of the 78 respondents who identified their sexual orientation. Three people (3.8%) were gay or lesbian. Twelve individuals (15.4%) identified as bisexual. Three young people (3.8%) were questioning their sexual orientation while two people responded as “asexual” in the “other” category (2.6%), two others reported as “pansexual” in the “other” category (2.6%), and one person responded as “demisexual” in the “other” category (1.3%). In total, 22.1% of youth identified as non-heterosexual. According to the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law, only 3.8% of Missourians overall identify as LGBTQ+.

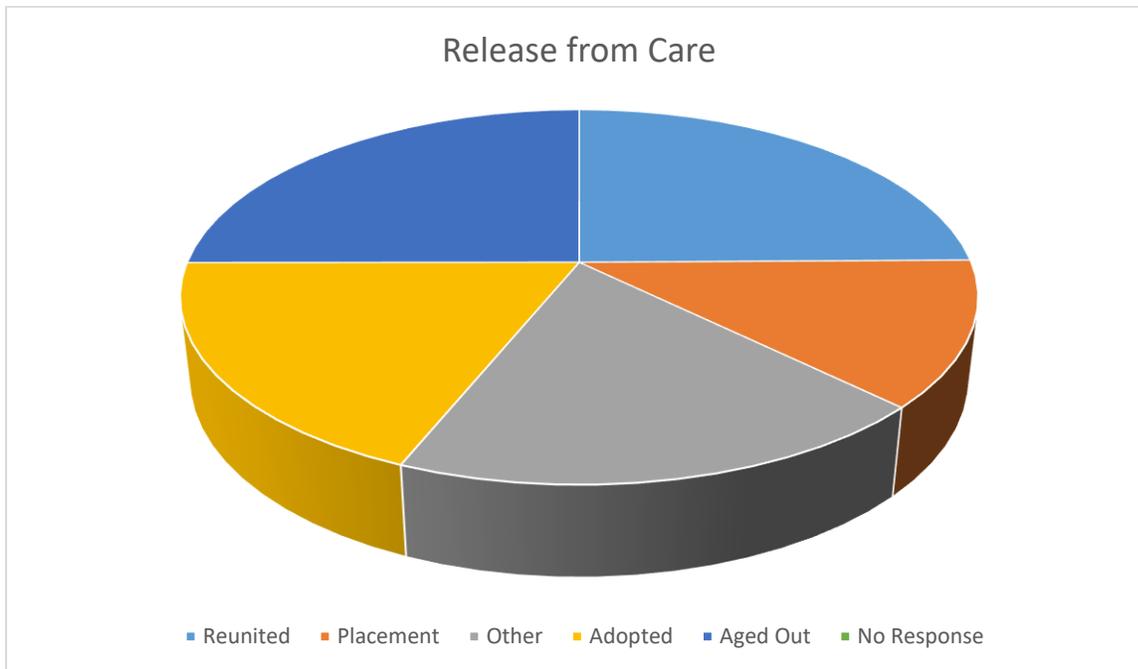
Education status: Twenty-nine subjects (37.2%) are currently enrolled in middle school or high school. Eighteen respondents (23.1%) had earned a high school diploma, two of which had trade school experience (2.6%) and nine of which (11.6%) had earned a GED. Three respondents are taking GED classes (3.8%), with one taking GED classes while enrolled in middle or high school (1.3%). Of those who earned a HiSET (or GED), one was not enrolled in education, one was currently enrolled in college, and one was pursuing a professional certificate. Twelve individuals were not enrolled in education of any kind (15.4%). One individual (1.3%) was currently enrolled in college, one responded having some college (1.3%), and one responded being involved in Springfield Public School’s BASE Project, which provides academic and job training for students with Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) (1.3%). One person (1.3%) did not respond.



Hometown: Twenty-three youth (29.5%) were from Springfield, Mo. Thirty-six individuals (46.2%) were from another town in Missouri and 14 young people (17.9%) listed their home town as in another state. Five people did not provide this information (6.4%).

Ward of the state: Of the youth who provided information, 33 (42.3%) had not been a ward of the state in foster care, Division of Youth Services, Division of Family Services Children’s Division, or juvenile justice. Forty-two respondents (53.8%) had been wards of the state. Three people (3.8%) chose not to respond. Of those who have been wards of the state, 24 (30.8%) are still in care.

Age of release and how released: Of the 42 people who had been under state care, 18 were released. Of these individuals, the age of exiting care was 18 years. Among those who had been released, four (22%) were reunited with their family, two (11.1%) were placed with a legal guardian, three (16.7%) were released in an “other” form, three (16.7%) were adopted, and four (22.2%) aged out. Two people chose not to respond as to how they left the system.



Adequate support after care: Of the 18 individuals who were released from care, six (33.3%) reported they did not receive the support needed to transition out of foster care and live independently, while seven people (38.9%) said they did. Five people chose not to respond.

Pregnant and parenting: Fifty-five respondents (70.5%) said neither they nor their significant other was pregnant or had a child. Five people (6.4%) said they or their significant other might be pregnant, and 15 (19.2%) individuals said they or their significant other was pregnant or currently a parent. Three people did not answer.

II. Work History

Job status: Of the respondents who answered this question, 78.2% were not employed at the time of the survey. Eight people (10.3%) worked full time and four (5.1%) worked part time.

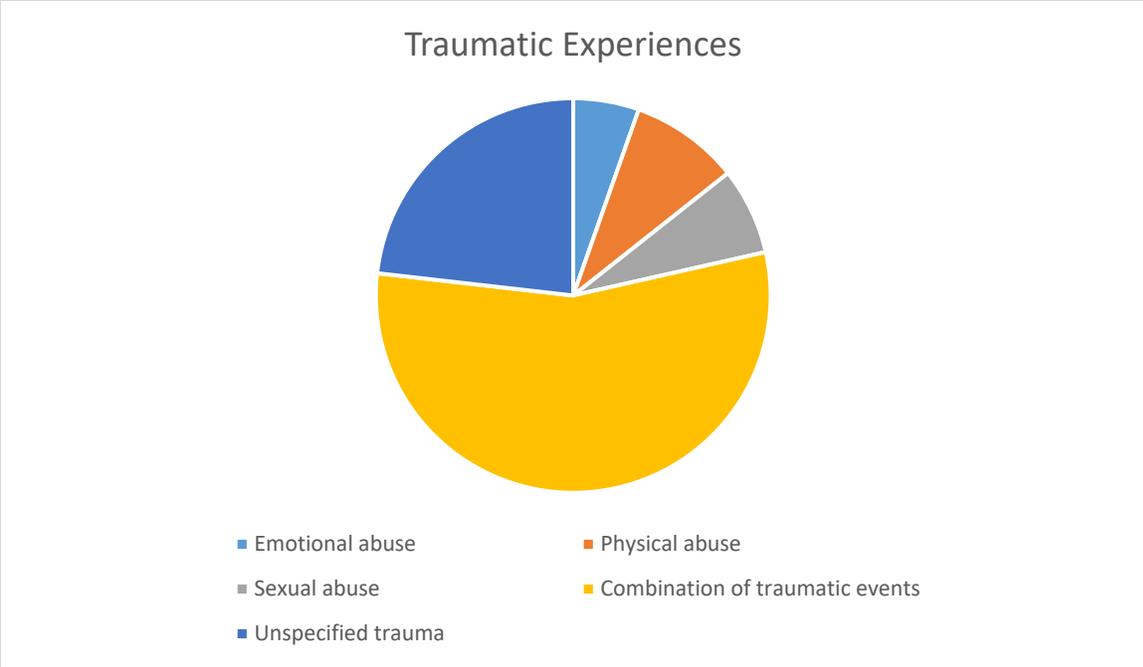
Weekly hours of work: Of the eight respondents who were working and provided information, 37.5% were on the job 30 hours each week, 50% were on the job 35 to 40 hours each week, and 12.5% worked 40 or more hours weekly. No employed youth reported working fewer than 30 hours per week.

Job history: A total of 53 subjects (almost 70% of all subjects) had held at least one job in the past year. Among those who had worked for pay in the past 12 months, 37 people (69.8%) had held one or two jobs, 13 individuals (24.5%) had worked three or four jobs, and three respondents (5.7%) had held five or more jobs in the past year.

Other sources of income/meeting daily needs: Respondents reported other sources of incomes and resources used to meet daily needs. Two reported child support as a resource (2.6%), three reported food pantries as a resource (3.8%), three reported food stamps as a resource (3.8%), two reported receiving hot meals from the community (2.6%), nine reported using money/resources from family (11.5%), and four reported receiving money/resources from friends (5.1%). Twenty reported using a combination of multiple sources (25.6%). Twenty-three (29.5%) people reported using other types of resources. Of these, three reported foster care (3.8%), six reported Great Circle as a resource (7.6%), one reported emergency shelter (1.3%), one reported Footsteps (1.3%), and one reported none (1.3%). Eleven did not respond.

III. Family Troubles and Running Away from Home

Victim of or witness to repeated household traumas: Fifty-seven respondents (73.1%) had been the victim of or witness to repeated traumatic events in a caregiving situation. Thirteen respondents (16.7%) had neither witnessed nor been the victim of repeated household traumatic events. Of those who witnessed acts, three witnessed emotional acts (5.3%), five witnessed physical events (8.8%), four witnessed sexual events (7%), and one witnessed some other form of violent act (1.8%). Thirty-one witnessed some combination of events (54.4%), while 13 did not specify (22.8%).



Parents’ alcohol or drug abuse: Forty-one respondents (52.6%) reported that one or both of their parents had an alcohol or drug problem, while 32 (41%) did not have a parent with an alcohol or drug problem. Five did not answer.

Abuse experienced by relative or other person stayed with: Forty-five respondents (57.7%) reported experiencing some sort of abuse from a relative or other person they had stayed with, while 29 respondents (37.2%) did not. Of those who were abused, two reported being emotionally abused (4.4%), two were physically abused (4.4%), two were sexually abused (4.4%), and 26 had been abused in some combination of the three (57.8%), while 13 did not specify (28.9%).

Runaway: Thirty-five youth, almost half (44.9%) of the respondents, had never run away from home. Among the 39 youth (50% of the total respondents) who had run away from their home, 38.4% had run away once or twice, 17.9% had run away three or four times, 12.8% had run away five or more times, and 30.7% chose not to say how many times. Four did not respond overall.

IV. Alcohol/Drug Use and Mental Health

Youth alcohol or drug problem: Over two-thirds of subjects, 73.1%, said they themselves have never had a drug or alcohol problem. However, 17 young people (21.8%) reported they have had or currently have an alcohol or drug problem. Four did not answer.

Use of alcohol or drugs: Over three-quarters of respondents had not used alcohol or drugs in the week preceding the survey. Among the entire sample, five people (6.4%) had used alcohol and eight people (10.3%) had used drugs.

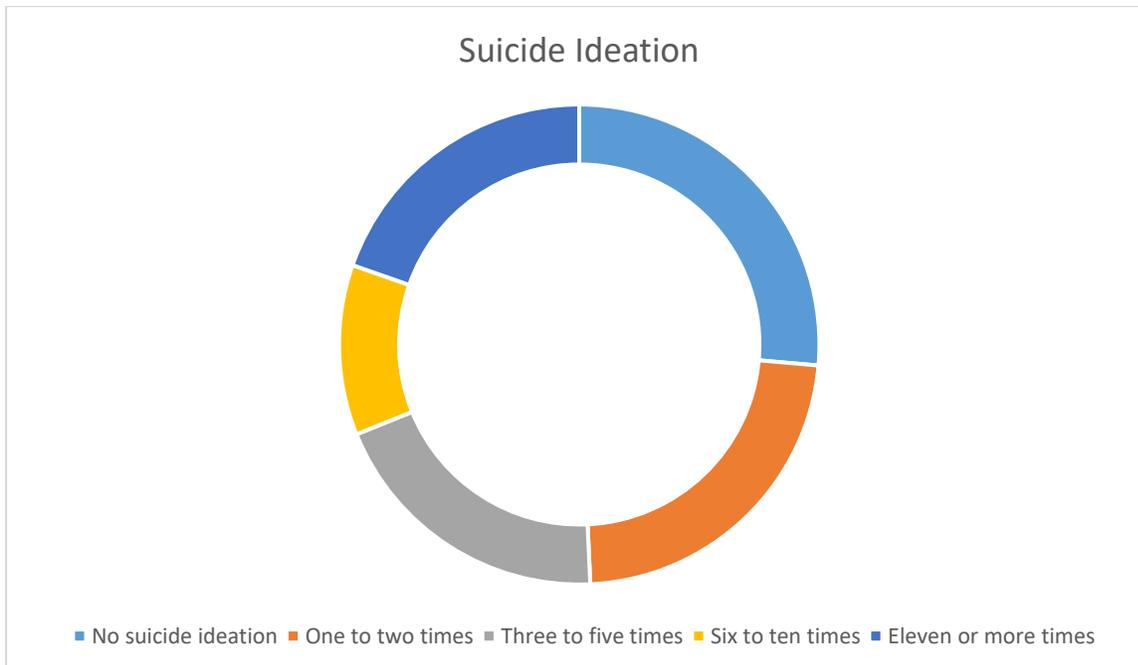
Mental illness: The majority of subjects, 60.3%, had never been diagnosed with a mental illness. Thirty-one respondents (39.7%) had been diagnosed with a mental illness; of these, 14 respondents (45.2%) also had some other form of disability. Ten people responded that they did not know or refused to answer.

Mental illness prescription drugs: Interestingly, the number of respondents who had been prescribed medicine for mental illness is higher than the number of respondents who have been diagnosed. Fifty participants (64%) have been prescribed medication to treat mental illness, while 25 (32.1%) have not. Three did not respond at all.

Counseling Services: Eleven respondents (14.1%) had never received counseling services. However, 63 youth (80.8%) had received counseling services. Four did not answer.

Self-harm: Thirty-eight youth (48.7%) reported they had self-mutilated, such as cutting or burning themselves, at some point. Thirty-five (44.9%) said they had never done so, and five did not respond.

Suicide ideation: Twenty-eight participants (35.9%) had not thought of completing suicide. However, 45 (57.7%) have. Among the 45 who have considered it, 31.1% of individuals had suicidal thoughts once or twice, 26.7% had thought about ending their lives three to five times, 15.6% had considered suicide six to 10 times, and 26.7% had thought about suicide 11 or more times.



V. Homelessness

One question measured whether subjects had ever faced uncertainty of shelter. Of 72 reporting youth, 39 individuals (54.2%) said they had in the past wondered where they would sleep that night.

The amended McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children as young people who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Some examples of children who fall under this definition are: young people who rotate housing (couch surf); those living in campgrounds; youth staying in emergency or transitional shelters; and children living in cars, parks, public spaces, or abandoned buildings. Five questions measured the various conditions of youth homelessness.

Stayed in shelter, housing program, with friends or family, or in a hotel/motel: Of 72 respondents who answered the question, 30 individuals (38.5%) had stayed in a homeless shelter, lived with friends or another family member, or stayed in a hotel/motel within the last week.

Slept in a place not meant for human habitation: Of 72 people who provided information, nine of them (11.5%) had slept in a place not meant to be slept in, such as a vehicle, shed, park, porch, tunnel, or vacant building within the last week.

Homeless with family: Of 75 youth who provided information, 16 youth (20.5%) had experienced homelessness with their family.

Homeless without family: Of 74 subjects who answered the question, 33 of them (42.3%) had been homeless on their own without their family.

Age when first homeless on their own: Of 27 people who had been homeless without their family, the youngest individual (3.7%) who had been homeless on their own first experienced it at age 14. Ten youth (37%) first were homeless without their family when they were either 15 or 16 years old, 10 people (37%) were first homeless on their own when they were 17 or 18 years old, and six individuals (22.2%) experienced homelessness without their family for the first time when they were 19 years old or older. The mean and median age at which young people first experienced homelessness on their own was 17 years old.

Hunger: A separate question asked youth about hunger. Thirty-seven young people (47.3%) said they had wondered where they would get food today, and 45% had not experienced hunger.

VI. Self-Reported Reasons for Being Homeless

Respondents were asked about 13 factors that could have caused them to become homeless on their own. Among the 27 individuals who had been homeless without their family, four factors were most often identified by youth as having contributed to them experiencing homelessness on their own. Sixteen youth (59.3%) said they had a lack of income (underemployment), 12 (44.4%) reported there had been lots of arguments at home, 44.4% reported that their family could not support them, and 44.4% reported they left due to the home being unsafe/unhealthy. Other notable reasons for youth being homeless on their own included parent/caregiver's alcohol/drug abuse (33.3%) and verbal abuse (40.7%).

VII. Services for Homeless Youth in Springfield

The survey asked youth about their knowledge of available services, and their thoughts on what services are needed in the area. They were not asked about specific services or service providers.

Knowledge of health care services: Of 72 youth who provided information, 21 (29.2%) did not know how to access health care, but only 11 (15.3%) did not know how to access needed medications. Twenty-one (29.2%) did not know how to access dental care, and 17 (23.6%) did not know how to access mental health care. Twenty-four (33.3%) did not know how to get drug and alcohol rehabilitation services. All other youth either knew how to access these services or were already getting these services.

Knowledge of emergency shelter and food: Of the 72 individuals who answered, 22 (30.5%) were not aware of emergency shelter options and 15 (20.8%) did not know how to access emergency food. All other respondents either knew how to get emergency shelter and food or were getting emergency shelter and food.

Knowledge of housing, education and employment services: Of 72 youth who shared their thoughts, 24 (33.3%) did not know how to access housing services, 20 (27.8%) had no knowledge of how to access educational services, and 14 (19.4%) did not know how to access employment services. The remainder of the responding youth either knew how to get these services or were getting these services.

Knowledge of parenting and domestic violence services: Of the 72 respondents, 25 (34.7%) youth did not know how to access parenting support resources. The remaining 47 youth either knew how to access parenting resources or were receiving parenting support. Twenty-seven (37.5%) youth did not know how to access domestic violence services. Forty-five youth knew how to access domestic violence services and resources and six (8.3%) youth were receiving those services.

Need for more short-term shelter: Of 72 youth who provided information, 62.5% of them agreed or strongly agreed that Springfield needs more short-term shelter for youth (see Table 2). 19.4% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. 18.1% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

Need for more transitional shelter: Of 72 respondents who answered the question, 37.5% agreed or strongly agreed that Springfield needs more long-term transitional housing for youth. 31.9% of people disagreed or strongly disagreed. 29.2% neither agreed or disagreed.

Need for more housing for pregnant or parenting teens: Of 71 individuals who gave their opinion, 75% felt that Springfield needs a transitional living program for pregnant or parenting teens; while Catholic Charities of Southern Missouri's LifeHouse program is a transitional housing program for pregnant women, it serves women ages 18 and up. 16.7% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. 6.9% neither agreed or disagreed.

Need for a "one stop shop": Of 71 youth who provided information, 77.7% agreed or strongly agreed that Springfield needs a "one stop shop" where youth can get the services they need in one place. 13.9% of young people disagreed or strongly disagreed. 6.9% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Table 2: Youths' views of local services

Need more short-term shelter	62.5%
Need more transitional housing	37.5%
Need housing for pregnant/parenting teens	73%
Need a "one stop shop"	77.7%

VIII. Dangers of Being a Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Of 71 respondents who provided information, 27 young people (37.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that there are adults in Springfield who endanger or harm homeless youth. Among the respondents, 32 (41%) reported witnessing or experiencing traumatic events while homeless. Of 22 who specified what they had witnessed/experienced, many witnessed multiple types of events. Fifteen (47% of the 32 witnesses) reported seeing emotional events, 17 (53% of the 32 witnesses) reported seeing physical events, 11 (34% of the 32 witnesses) reported seeing sexual events, and 10 (31% of the 32 witnesses) reported seeing some other type of violent act.

Thirty-five respondents (44.9% of the total sample) reported doing something they would not normally do to stay in a housing situation. Twenty-four of the 35 (68.6%) reported they had stayed somewhere that didn't feel safe; the same number reported they had stayed with someone they didn't know or trust. Nine of the 35 respondents (25.7%) said they had paid something other than money (food stamps, sex, labor/work) to stay in a housing situation, and the same amount of people said they stayed with a sexual partner they otherwise would not have stayed with in order to stay in a housing situation.

Youth living on the streets also have to worry about sexual coercion and sex trafficking. Seven of the 78 respondents (9%) stated they received something (money, food, shelter, drugs, etc.) in exchange for sex/sexual activity. Of these seven, four (57%) reported this occurred within the last three months. Of these seven, four (57%) reported they did sexual acts once or twice, one respondent reported they did sexual acts three or four times, one reported doing sexual acts five or six times. One respondent did not specify. These numbers were relatively evenly split between male and female youth.

In a related question, respondents reported on whether they had ever been made, persuaded, or forced to have sex in exchange for things. Five of the 78 respondents (6.4%) said that they had been made/persuaded/forced to have sex in exchange for something, and three of the five reported this had occurred within the last three months. Each of these youth also reported they had received something in exchange for sex/sexual activity in the past.

Youth also face issues with working, including labor trafficking. Seven of the 78 respondents (9%) reported they had been afraid to quit/leave work due to threats of violence against themselves, their family, or their friends. 11 of the 78 (14%) also reported they were promised work where the work or payment was different than they expected. Eight respondents also reported they felt

forced, coerced, pressured, or tricked into continuing to work in a place they no longer wanted to work due to either workplace violence or difference in expectations.

IX. Subgroups and Rates of Unaccompanied Homelessness

There was no statistically significant difference in the rates of being homeless without family by gender. Rates of homelessness also did not vary across racial groups. Rates of youth experiencing homelessness on their own did not vary based on respondents' sexual orientation. Rates of homelessness were also similar for sexual orientation: 56.6% of heterosexual/straight youth had been homeless without their family while 52.2% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and questioning respondents had been homeless.

X. Primary Factors Associated with Experiencing Unaccompanied Homelessness

Three family background variables had statistically significant associations with high rates of young people having been homeless on their own. 70% of respondents who had at least one parent with a drug or alcohol problem had been homeless on their own, compared with 30% of those who did not have a parent with a drug or alcohol problem.

81.8% of youth surveyed who had experienced unaccompanied homelessness (27 individuals) had been the victim of or witness to repeated traumatic events in a caregiving situation. Only 15% of youth who had experienced unaccompanied homelessness had not been the victim of or witness to repeated traumatic events.

62.5% of young people (10 respondents) who previously had been homeless with their family had also been homeless on their own, compared with 37.5% of those (six respondents) who had never experienced homelessness with their family.

XI. Secondary Factors Associated with Experiencing Unaccompanied Homelessness

Unemployment was noted as the number one factor for contributing to homelessness or risk of homelessness. Two other factors were associated with high rates of having been homeless on their own. 52% of respondents who had been diagnosed with a mental illness have been homeless on their own, compared with 36% of youth who had never been diagnosed with a mental illness. Over half, 55%, of youth who had run away from home one or more times had experienced homelessness on their own, compared with 48% of participants who had never run away from home.

Cross-sectional "snapshot" surveys are not designed to identify historical causal processes as well as experiments and longitudinal studies can. However, sometimes cross-sectional data logically imply causal processes that occur over time. In these circumstances, approximate conclusions can be put forth. It is logical to assume that in most (but not all) cases, the negative family experiences mentioned above occurred prior to young people developing a mental illness and/or running away from home. Thus, our tentative conclusion is that the family background variables are primary factors contributing to youth being homeless on their own, while mental illness and running away are important secondary factors.

Of course, in some cases the experience of being homeless on their own leads young people to develop significant anxiety and depression, and some individuals who run away from home and become homeless do not experience difficult family circumstances. The direction of the causal arrow cannot be determined definitively with cross-sectional data. However, some empirical evidence is consistent with our historical causation conclusion that difficult family experiences contributed to some youth developing a mental illness and/or running away from home, which in turn increased the likelihood that young people become homeless on their own.

Two of the family background factors were associated with having run away from home at least once. 61.5% of youth who had at least one parent with an alcohol or drug problem had run away, while 38.5% of those who did not have a parent with an alcohol or drug problem had run away from home. 82% of respondents who had been the victim of or witness to repeated traumatic events in a caregiving situation had run away from home, compared with 13% of those who had not experienced repeated traumas at home. Having been homeless with their family did not have a statistically significant association with having run away at least once.

The analysis and discussion above suggest that for many (but not all) youth in our sample, difficult early life family experiences significantly increased the likelihood that youth experience homelessness on their own. Difficult family lives were associated with high rates of mental illness and with having run away from home, which in turn also contributed to youth having been homeless without their family.

XII Policies and Programs to Reduce Youth Homelessness

As in reports prior, researchers and 2019 updates confirm that reducing the impacts of family homelessness on children and limiting the negative effects that disruptive family conditions and household traumas have on high-risk youth remain significant primary prevention strategies. Secondary prevention strategies include additional resources for those youth with mental health concerns and disabilities, additional housing options for youth and families, and additional support for youth exiting the foster care system. Many local agencies and their collective efforts in the last 12 years of survey implementation are, and continue to, address these existing and ongoing vital concerns.

Many of the current concerns being reported by older youth are similar to those being reported by those adults over 25 who are also homeless or at risk. In particular, concerns related to unemployment or underemployment that many defined as youth (18-24) expressed as the major cause of homelessness or risk for homelessness in 2019 are concerns that are also significant for those at risk for homelessness or who have experienced homelessness over the age of 25. According to American Community Survey (2013-2018) estimates, nearly 26% of all residents live in poverty in Springfield, Mo. At the same time, the area also boasts very low (under 5%) unemployment rates (U.S. Department of Labor, 2018). Many have noted that these figures often point to employment or employment opportunities that do not provide enough income for individuals and families to meet basic needs. Of course, for those with mental health challenges or disabilities, the ability to find and retain adequate employment (including the employment

options that may be feasible or available due to physical or mental health limitations) may be even more limited.

Safe, decent, and affordable housing, in general, also remains a significant concern in the area and has been consistently identified as a Red Flag in Community Focus Reports. As housing costs have risen, many in the area have seen wages remain stagnant (Maciag, December 13, 2013). This is particularly true for younger workers (some of whom have seen wages decline), both in Springfield and across the nation (Economic Policy Institute, 2015).

Conclusion

Homelessness in general, including youth homelessness, remains a significant problem nationally and in the Ozarks. The costs of homelessness are high both for individual youth themselves and for communities. As the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (2015, p. 1) noted, “more needs to be known about the costs associated with youth homelessness but we know that high rates of medical and behavioral health care and incarceration are costly. These costs compound over a lifetime as today’s homeless youth become tomorrow’s homeless adults.”

Cost-benefit analyses have been conducted on only a few homeless youth programs; however, those programs do appear to be cost effective. For example, Cincinnati’s Lighthouse Youth Services housing programs cost about \$85 per day, compared with \$216 per day to house a youth in a juvenile justice facility (Root Causes, 2012, p. 5). A study conducted by Portland State University researchers of Oregon programs for runaway and homeless youth estimated that every \$1 the state spends on services for those youth provides over \$4 in savings (Cahn, Jamieson, Schweitzer, and Slevin, 2009). And, Thompson (2010) noted that programs to prevent long-term youth homelessness in northwest Minnesota cost taxpayers less than high jobless and incarceration rates, frequent emergency room visits, and increased use of mental health and social services.

As identified in prior High Risk and Homeless Youth Reports, more outcome assessment studies need to be conducted to identify best practices, and more cost-benefit analyses of teen homelessness prevention programs need to be completed. Nonetheless, a convincing argument is emerging that providing adequate funding for programs to prevent youth homelessness is a good social investment that saves communities money now and in the future.

It is a substantial challenge to secure adequate and stable funding for primary and secondary prevention programs in a time of tight city budgets, declining federal and state resources, and strained balance sheets for non-profit organizations. What is clear from a growing body of research is that the present and future costs of doing too little are higher than the costs of providing adequate, stable funding for youth homeless prevention programs today.

References

- Cahn, Katherine, Ally Jamieson, Don Schweitzer, and Hannah Slevin. (2009). *Stronger communities and smarter communities: An analysis of Oregon's investment in runaway and homeless youth programs*. Retrieved from www.macchomeless.org/taskfiles/OregonHomelessYouthProgramAssessment.pdf
- Department of Housing and Urban Development. (n.d.) *Homeless definition*. Retrieved from https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessDefinition_RecordkeepingRequirementsandCriteria.pdf.
- Economic Policy Institute. (2015) *Wage Stagnation in Nine Charts*. Retrieved from <https://www.epi.org/publication/charting-wage-stagnation/>
- Lighthouse Youth Services. (2015) *Runaway and homeless youth division*. Retrieved from <http://www.lys.org/runaway2.html>
- Maciag, Mike. (2013 December 3) Cities Where Wages Have Not Kept Up With Housing Costs. *Governing*. Retrieved from <https://www.governing.com/news/headlines/housing-cost-affordability-burden-increases-in-cities.html>
- National Council of State Legislatures. (2015) *Homeless and Runaway Youth Statistics*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/homeless-and-runaway-youth.aspx>
- Root Causes. (2012) *Social issue report: Improving outcomes for homeless youth*. <http://www.rootcause.org/docs/Resources/Research/Improving-Outcomes-for-Homeless-Youth/Improving%20Outcomes%20for%20Homeless%20Youth-%20Social%20Issue%20Report.pdf>
- Thompson, Wendy Kalass. (2010) *Needs Assessment: Youth and young adult homelessness in a five-county region of northwest Minnesota*. www.evergreenyfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/12/Evergree-Youth-Homeless-Needs-Assessment-March-2010.pdf
- UCLA School of Law: Williams Institute. (2016) *LGBT Data and Demographics*. Retrieved from <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/visualization/lgbt-stats/?topic=LGBT#density>
- United States Census. (2013-2018) *American Community Survey Estimates (2013-2018)*. Retrieved from <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>
- United States Census. (n.d.) *Quick Facts: Springfield city Missouri*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/springfieldcitymissouri/PST045218>
- United States Department of Labor (2018). *Springfield MSA Snapshot*. Retrieved from https://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.mo_springfield_msa.htm
- United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2018 February) *Key Federal Terms*. Retrieved from https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Federal-Definitions-of-Youth-Homelessness.pdf
- United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2015) *Opening doors: Homelessness among youth*. Retrieved from www.usich.gov/usich_resources/fact_sheets/opening_doors_homelessness_among_youth/