INCIDENCE AND NEEDS REPORT

2012

LARKIN STREET

YOUTH SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

There are an estimated 6.7 million youth, ages 16-24, who are not a part of the workforce or engaged in education across the United States (Belfield, Levin, & Rosen, 2012). These youth, known as disconnected or opportunity youth, are detached from systems that provide support to their skills and knowledge development. They are off track to reach a future that includes self-sufficiency, economic stability, and overall well-being.

Homeless youth represent the most extreme case of disconnection. It is estimated that 353,000-503,000 youth ages 12-24 are homeless on any given day in the United States (Burt, 2007). Many struggle on a daily basis to survive and meet their basic needs, such as food and housing. Due to their life histories they often exhibit high levels of trauma and are coping with mental health and substance use issues. They lack the educational attainment and employment experience that result in living wage jobs. They have not developed the skills they need to live on their own. They require assistance to get back on track and become independent, self-sufficient adults.

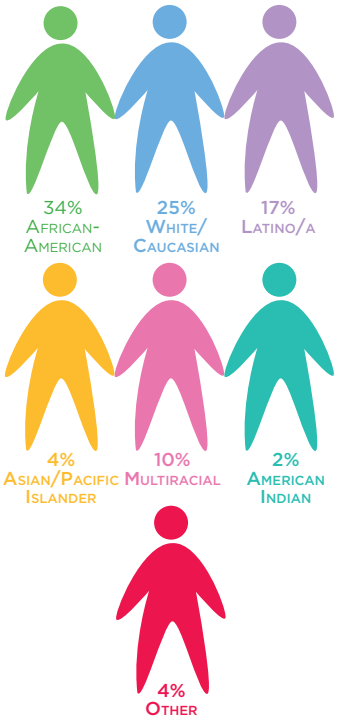
THE FACE OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN SAN FRANCISCO

There is an estimated 5,700 homeless and marginally housed youth, ages 12-24, in San Francisco each year.[1] Homeless youth are without a place to call home - they sleep at night in Golden Gate Park, their car, and abandoned buildings. Places most would not consider suitable for human residence. Marginally housed youth are those without permanent stable housing, staying temporarily with friends or family for periods of time. Their futures are uncertain and these youth often do not know when they will wear out their welcome and be forced out onto the streets.

Larkin Street is the leading provider of housing and support services to homeless and marginally housed youth in San Francisco. Between July 2011 and June 2012 Larkin Street provided services to over 4,000 youth.[2] Due to the number of youth who access Larkin Street programs we are able to provide a picture of youth homelessness in San Francisco.

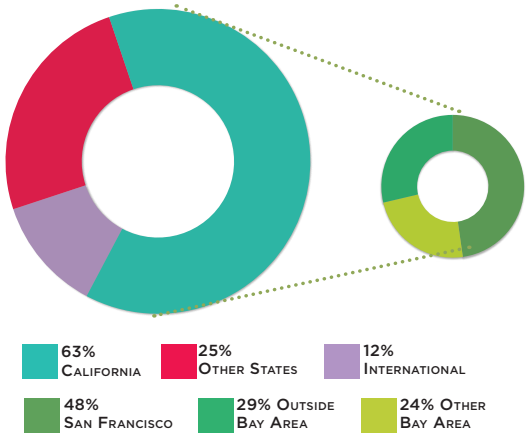
Larkin Street serves the most vulnerable of the San Francisco homeless population, youth ages 12-24. The majority are youth between 18 and 24.

Ethnicity



Programs serve more male (61%) than female youth (34%). Five percent of youth are transgender/intersex/genderqueer/other gender identification. Youth served reflect the diversity of San Francisco with no single ethnic group comprising a majority of youth served.

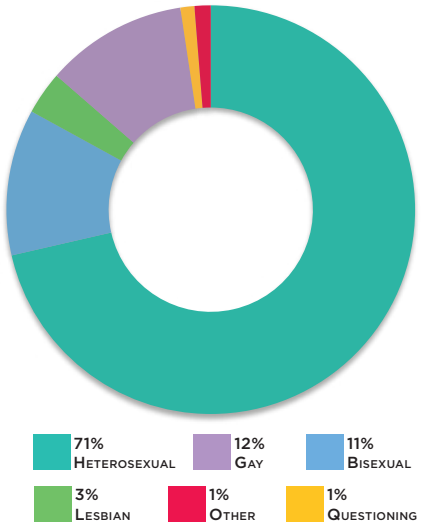
Place of Origin



Larkin Street serves youth from across the United States and beyond representing 43 states/territories and 41 foreign countries. Eighty-eight percent of youth are from the United States. Among youth from outside the United States, 64% are from Latin American countries. The majority of Larkin Street youth are from local communities. Almost 2/3 of the youth served are from California and over 70% of these youth are from the Bay Area, which includes the cities of Oakland and San Jose.

There is a disproportionate number of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning youth (LGBTQ) among the homeless youth population. Between 320,000 to 400,000 LGBTQ youth experience homelessness at some point each year (Quintana, Rosenthal, & Krehely, 2010). Estimates are that 3-5% of the U.S. population identifies as lesbian or gay (Ray, 2007). Approximately 30% of Larkin Street youth report that they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. These youth often land on the streets of San Francisco because they fled from the discrimination they encountered in their homes or communities based on their sexual and/or gender identity.

Sexual Orientation



Homeless youth who are pregnant or parenting are in need of additional services and supports. Young homeless mothers, those between the ages of 18 and 25, are more likely to have experienced separation from their own families during childhood, to have been placed in foster care, to experience homelessness at younger

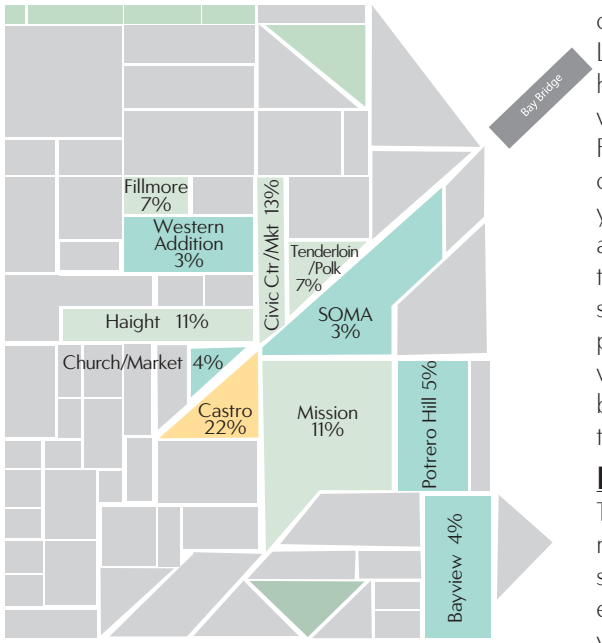
ages, and to have more limited support networks (Strengthening At Risk and Homeless Young Mothers and Children, 2012). Homeless parents are managing multiple stressors which make it difficult to respond to the needs of a young child, which impacts their child's cognitive and emotional development. Compared to their housed peers homeless children are almost three times more likely to have developmental delays (Duffield & Lovell, 2008). Providing parenting and therapeutic support can assist in sound child development. These youth also have additional medical needs, requiring either pre-natal or pediatric care, but often do not have the ability to access these services. And they have to provide financially for the family yet face additional barriers to employment due to the need for affordable childcare that is available outside of the conventional 9-5 workday. Among youth receiving services last year 13% were pregnant, had a pregnant partner, or were a parent.

MEETING IMMEDIATE NEEDS

Outreach

Outreach is one of the main ways that Larkin Street makes initial contact with homeless youth, making them aware of services available and assisting them in starting their path off the streets. The program provides both street-based and community outreach, reaching out to youth on the streets, at events, and in other community settings. Last year outreach workers had over 5,000 contacts with youth throughout San Francisco. Over a quarter of these contacts were with youth under the age of 18, who are particularly vulnerable to predators if they are on the streets. Outreach Workers provide basic necessities, like water and socks, as well as brief counseling and referrals to services.

Outreach Services



Percentage of Outreach Shifts By San Francisco Neighborhood

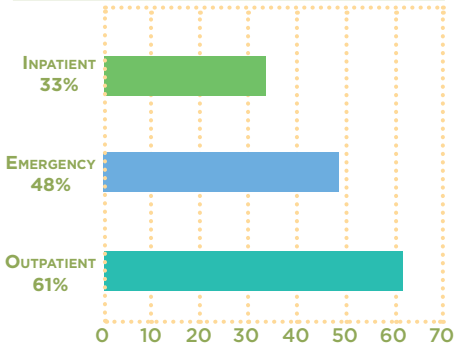
Drop-in Services

The drop-in centers meet basic needs by providing a safe space, meals, clothing, showers, and laundry. In addition youth receive counseling, case management, and referral services. There is a focus on relationship building and assisting youth in accessing additional services. The centers provide a range of activities that youth are able to participate in including wellness, substance use, art, life skills, and peer support groups. The Drop-In Center is in the Polk Gulch neighborhood and primarily serves youth ages 12-19, with access for older youth on a limited basis. Haight Street Referral Center is located in the Haight Ashbury neighborhood, near Golden Gate National Park, and serves youth up to age 24. Last year Larkin Street's two drop-in centers served an average of approximately 60 youth per day.

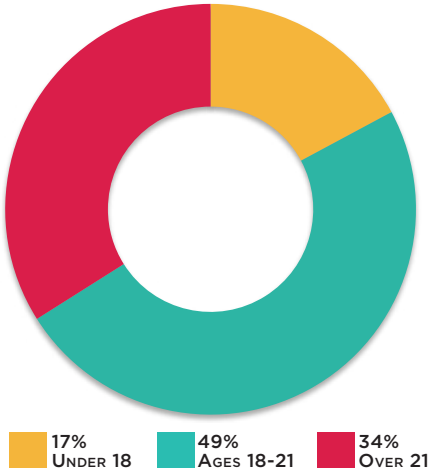
Medical Clinic

Homeless youth are at high risk for a number of health problems due to sleeping outside, lack of food, and irregular sleep. In addition, the lack of access to care can result in small problems developing into more serious issues. Almost a quarter of youth report their health to be fair or poor at intake. Forty-four percent do not have health insurance. Less than 25% reported receiving medical services in the previous 30 days, but almost 50% of these were emergency services.

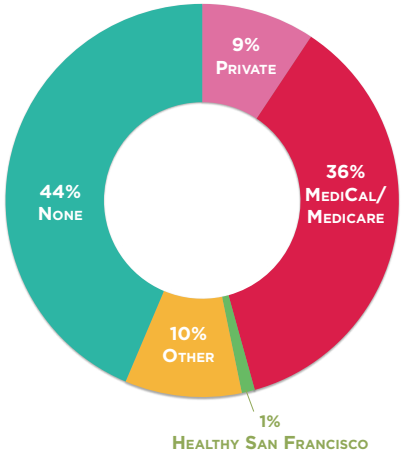
Type of Health Care Used- Previous 30 Days



Age Became Homeless



Health Insurance

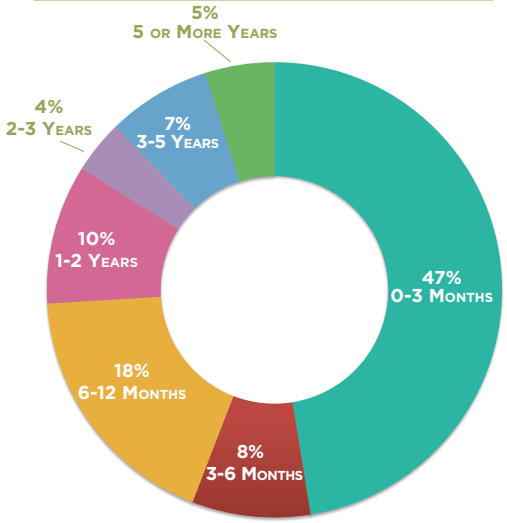


There were 2,234 clinic visits provided to 654 youth at the Larkin Street Clinic. Fifty-seven HIV-positive youth received medical services through the Specialty Clinic.

Emergency Housing

Emergency short-term housing is often the first step in the stabilization process

Length of Time Since Stable Housing

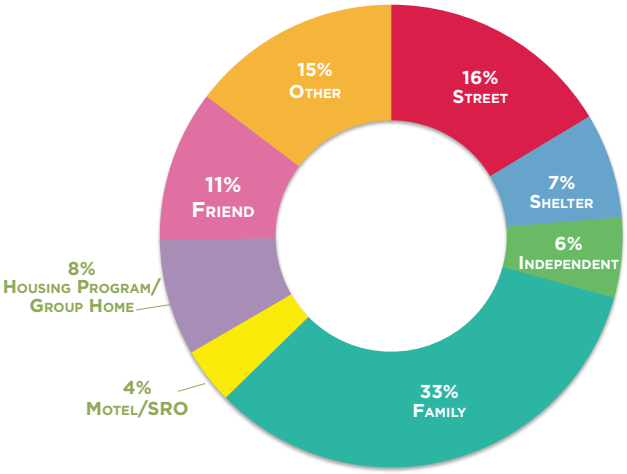


for homeless youth. The main focus is to provide immediate safety and stability for youth while simultaneously engaging them in case management services to identify the additional issues that may be impacting their ability to obtain and maintain housing.

The goal of Diamond Youth Shelter is to provide youth with a "home away from home" during their crisis. The program provides youth with immediate care and support while working closely with parents, guardians, and Child Protective Services to determine the most appropriate long-term housing solution. Last year Diamond Youth Shelter provided emergency, short-term housing to approximately 100 youth ages 12-17, with an average three week stay. Over 40% of youth were reunified with family members.

The Lark Inn is part of the San Francisco homeless shelter network and is the only shelter specifically for transition age youth 18-24. Basic necessities are met through the provision of meals, secure lockers, laundry, and shower facilities. Staff provide counseling, group services, recreational activities, and linkages to other support services. Youth with extended stays are required to meet with a Case Manager to develop a plan for stabilization. In the last year Lark Inn provided approximately 13,875 nights off the street to 395 youth ages 18-24. This is a 6% increase in the number of youth who received emergency housing from last year. Nine percent of those youth were homeless by the age of 18, an additional 41% before the age of 21. Ninety-one percent of youth receiving case management services were linked to Larkin Street's Hire Up program and received employment and/or education services.

Living Situation Previous 30 Days



STABILIZING LIVES

Transitional Housing

Transitional housing provides the stability needed for youth to be able to address the issues impacting their potential long-term self-sufficiency. Youth work collaboratively with Case Managers to develop goals related to education, employment, financial stability, and well-being and create individualized case plans to achieve these goals. The longer length of stay allows youth to make progress toward their long-term goals and reach significant milestones such as completion of a GED or attainment of career track employment.

Larkin Street provides a range of transitional housing options to meet the needs of a diverse group of youth who come to the agency with varied needs based on factors such as age, health status, and level of independent living skills.

Non-Specialized Housing

Avenues to Independence is the agency's oldest non-specialized transitional housing program and serves youth ages 18-24 in a congregate setting. It is designed to be the final step in the transition to independent living by engaging youth, teaching life skills, and helping to build healthy habits. Youth participate in weekly grocery shopping, complete household chores, and participate in cooking lessons. Among youth who exited the program 79% made a transition to stable housing.

G House is Larkin Street's largest congregate non-specialized transitional housing program, and provides housing and support services to 20 youth ages 18-24. Youth are expected to participate in some combination of work and school activities and there is a focus on developing self-sufficiency. Ninety-three percent of youth participated in community building activities with their peers such as recycling, gardening, or community service. Among youth who exited the program 95% made a transition to stable housing.

Specialized Housing

Underage Programs

The LOFT (Larkin Opportunities For Transition) is a licensed group home for youth who are part of the child welfare or juvenile justice systems, or who are unable to live with their families. The housing model strives to emulate a healthy family structure, and uses a system of natural rewards and consequences for choices made by youth. Eighty-two percent of youth were either maintained in housing or exited the LOFT to another stable living situation.

Foster Youth

LEASE (Larkin Extended Aftercare for Supported Emancipation) is a program for former foster youth, ages 18-24. Youth live in the community in their own apartment, some in roommate situations. The program provides housing and financial supports that allows youth to work on developing the skills and resources needed to gain and maintain long-term stable housing. Eighty-seven percent of youth received employment services through Larkin Street's Hire Up program. Among youth who exited the

program 97% made a transition to stable housing.

Holloway House serves former foster care youth ages 18-24 in a congregate setting. This environment provides additional support for youth who are not quite ready to live on their own while also helping to develop those independent living skills. Seventy-one percent of youth were retained in housing or transitioned from the program and into stable housing.

LGBTQ Youth

Castro Youth Housing Initiative is specifically designed to meet the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth ages 18-24. Castro Youth combats the previous marginalization youth may have experienced by accepting youth for who they are and helping them to determine who they will become. The program provides independent housing in the community combined with case management and other support services. Among youth who exited the program 87% made a transition to stable housing.

Youth with Mental Health Issues

Routz provides housing for youth ages 18-24 with serious mental health issues who are at high risk of becoming chronically mentally ill adults. Program services are facilitated through a Mental Health Case Manager and Housing Specialist, and include intensive supervision and support, educational and employment services, conflict resolution, and aftercare case management. The program utilizes harm reduction and motivational interviewing principles that prioritize safety and self-efficacy, and promote awareness and youth empowerment. The program also provided counseling services through the support services component of the program to 95 youth not receiving housing through Routz. Eighty-two percent of youth were retained in housing or transitioned to stable housing at exit.

Youth Living with HIV/AIDS

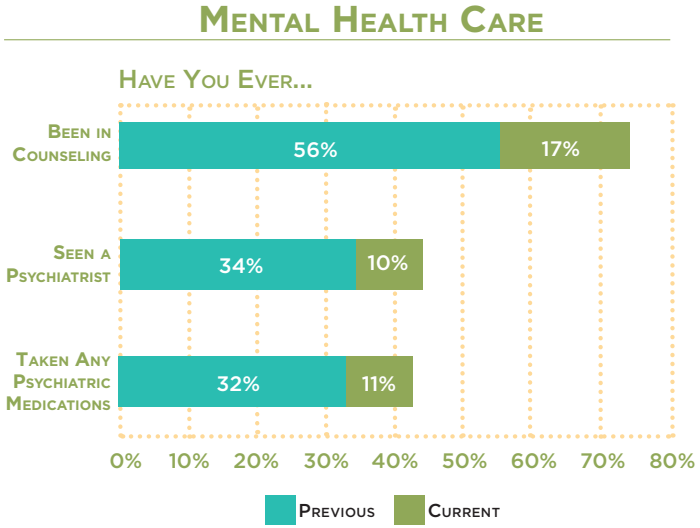
Assisted Care and After Care provide housing for HIV-positive youth ages 18-24. The program provides both congregate housing in two locations and community-based housing. Housing is a critical component of care and has been shown to positively impact health outcomes. Youth are required to meet regularly with their Case Manager, obtain an income, and participate in groups. Access to medical care is a major program component and all youth receive medical services. Last year 92% of youth housed through Assisted Care or After Care received their medical care at the Larkin Street Specialty Clinic. Among youth who exited the program 71% made a transition to stable housing.

Permanent Youth Housing

Ellis Street Apartments provides permanent affordable housing to youth who are in need of longer-term housing support. Six of the program beds are designated for HIV-positive youth. The program provides a high level of independence as well as a safety net. Unlike adult permanent housing, youth are encouraged to move on from the program, in order to make apartments available for other youth. Among youth who exited the program 100% made a transition to stable housing.

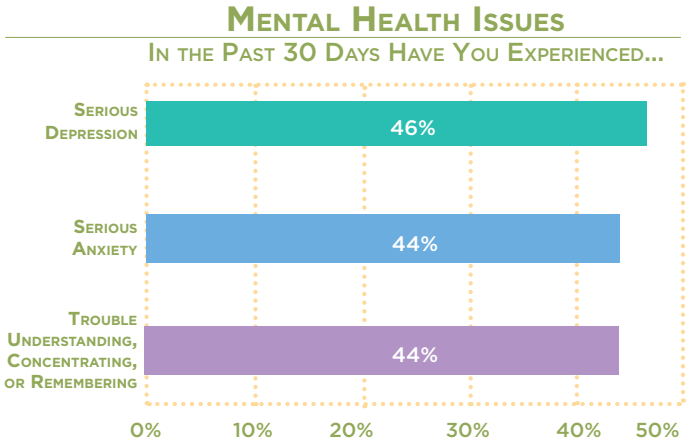
Intensive Case Management

Crucial to helping each youth move toward self-sufficiency is intensive case management. Case Management assists youth to develop both short- and long-term goals, as well as to set a plan to reach them. Case Managers help youth to navigate systems to access the services and supports they need in order to reach their goals. All youth in transitional housing receive case management services. Youth are also able to receive case management services if they are utilizing shelter services or a drop-in center.



Wellness

Larkin Street youth are dealing with mental health and substance use issues of varying degrees. This is due in part both to their unstable histories, particularly in their homes of origin, and to ongoing trauma, instability, and stress from living on the streets. As a result many are dealing with trauma, depression, anxiety, or another mental health issue. Homeless youth are exposed to a larger range of illegal drugs on the street and presented with greater opportunities for use than housed youth. Many youth use substances as a way to cope with life on the street or as a way to self-medicate for their mental health issues. Mental health issues, substance use, or a combination of both create additional barriers to exiting street

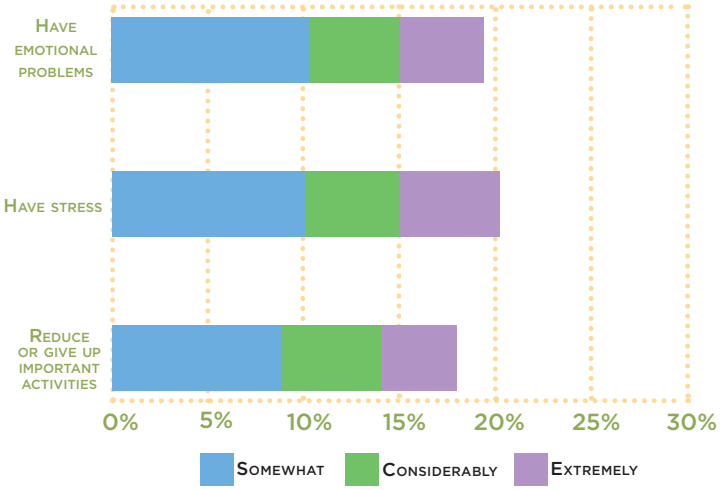


life and making successful transitions to stability.

Larkin Street youth experience a high degree of mental health issues and have an extensive history of formal mental health care. Almost half of youth report that they have experienced serious depression in the previous 30 days. And approximately 3 in 4 have received counseling services at some point in their life.

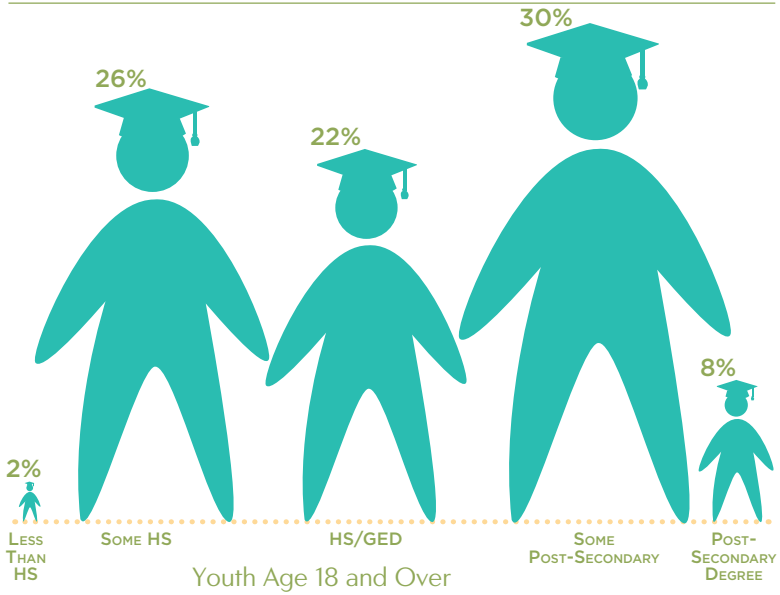
Substance Use

Has Your Use of Alcohol or Drugs Caused You To...?



Larkin Street youth report a high degree of substance use at intake. Many youth recognize the impact that their substance use has on their daily lives. One if five feel that their use of alcohol or drugs have caused them to have stress in their lives. At intake 46% of youth report that they have tried to stop using, and 22% report that they have been in substance use treatment.

Education Level

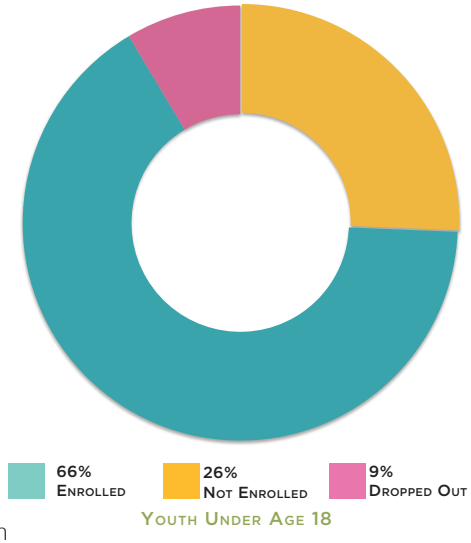


BUILDING PATHWAYS TO INDEPENDENCE

Education

A large number of homeless youth have not had positive educational experiences or the opportunity to complete high school. Approximately 30% of Larkin Street youth age 18 or older do not have a high school diploma or equivalency. Thirty-five percent of California youth who drop-out of high school never attain a diploma or complete their GED (Rumberger & Rotermund, 2008). Not completing high school limits a youth's employment options and earning potential. Someone who has not completed high school is four times more likely to be unemployed than a college graduate (American Human Development Project, 2009). High school completion translates to approximately a 40% increase in annual earnings (American Human Development Project, 2009). A college graduate can expect to earn 2.4 times as much in a year as someone without a high school degree (American Human Development Project, 2009). And a four-year degree is not the only path. There will be an estimated 29 million career track jobs nationwide that will require either a two-year Associates degree or an occupational certificate (Burd-Sharps & Lewis, 2012). Approximately a third of Larkin Street youth under age 18 are not enrolled in school at intake and 9% of these youth report that they have dropped out.

School Enrollment

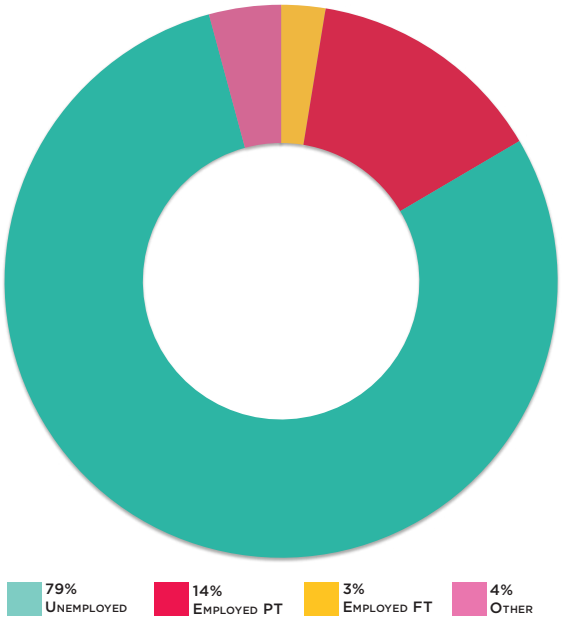


Reconnecting youth to education is the first step. This often begins by changing youth's experiences with education given that many have not had positive experiences in earlier learning environments. For younger youth Hire Up (Larkin Street's education and workforce development program) focuses on providing ongoing academic support to re-engage youth in school, helping them to maintain school engagement and complete high school. Services include tutoring, study workshops, and help obtaining school records. For older youth who did not complete high school, GED prep classes and assistance with GED testing fees are provided.

Post-secondary education is important for career development and long-term financial independence. The Hire Access program assists youth to develop post-secondary educational goals and provides counseling and support services including college tours, assistance with financial aid applications, guidance on course selection, and tuition support. The Post Secondary Success Initiative provides

supports for youth once they have entered college to increase retention and completion rates.

Employment Status

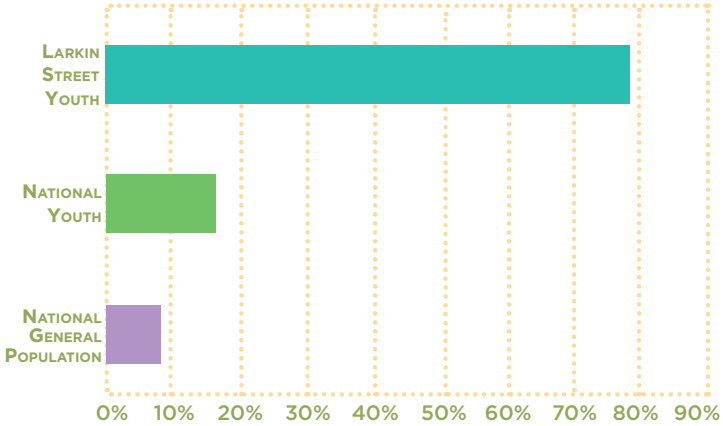


There is a high pass rate among Larkin Street youth who take the GED test, which is offered in five components – reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. Last year, 84% of youth passed the attempted test component and almost half of attempters completed all five components and received their GED. Over 100 youth were enrolled in post-secondary education and working towards completion of an Associates or Bachelors degree.

Workforce Development

Finding and maintaining employment is difficult for homeless youth who have limited education and employment experiences. The lack of a stable address adds to these challenges. The recent recession has had an impact on youth involvement in the workforce. There are 2.7 million fewer jobs currently for youth 16-24 than there would have been if there had not been a recession (O'Sullivan & Johnston, 2012). Just over half of young adults ages 18-24 are currently employed, the lowest it has been since the government began collecting data in 1948 (Taylor et al., 2012). And while the number of youth disconnected from employment has grown, funding for job training programs has decreased. After sustaining a cut of $1 billion over the past decade, underfunded programs now reach fewer than 5% of the disconnected youth in need of job training (Kramer, O'Sullivan, & Burrell, 2012). Less than 5% of Larkin Street youth are employed full time at intake. The majority of youth served by Larkin Street want to work. While 79% of youth report being unemployed at intake, 89% of these youth are actively looking for work.

Unemployment Rates



Source - O'Sullivan, R. & Johnston, A. (2012)

Among youth who reported income in the past 30 days only 17% received this money through some form of employment (including part-time, full-time, casual, and temporary). Five percent earned income through non-legal means, and 39% through public assistance. Average monthly income was $462. The fair market rate of a studio apartment in San Francisco is $1,238 (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2012).

Larkin Street's workforce development services provide a range of progressive options to match the diverse backgrounds of disconnected youth and that develops both hard and soft employment skills. Each youth receives an assessment to identify their needs and to create an individualized plan related to employment goals. Hire Up provides job readiness services, workforce placement, and career development services. For youth with minimal experience in the workforce, development of basic job skills is important. The Job Readiness Class provides services for this group of youth. The program is a four-week professional skill-building course that includes basic expectations in the workforce as well as how to create a résumé and interview techniques. Job placement and retention services are provided to help youth find employment opportunities that provide a livable wage and moves youth towards independence. To assist youth in developing a career, career exploration and subsidized internship opportunities are integral. The Institute for Learning provides a three month paid internship with support services.

Last year over 100 youth graduated from the Job Readiness Course, having developed the basic skills needed to obtain employment. Fifty youth gained real world employment experience through the Institute for Hire Learning. And 188 youth were placed in jobs through Hire Up at an average starting wage of $11.27.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

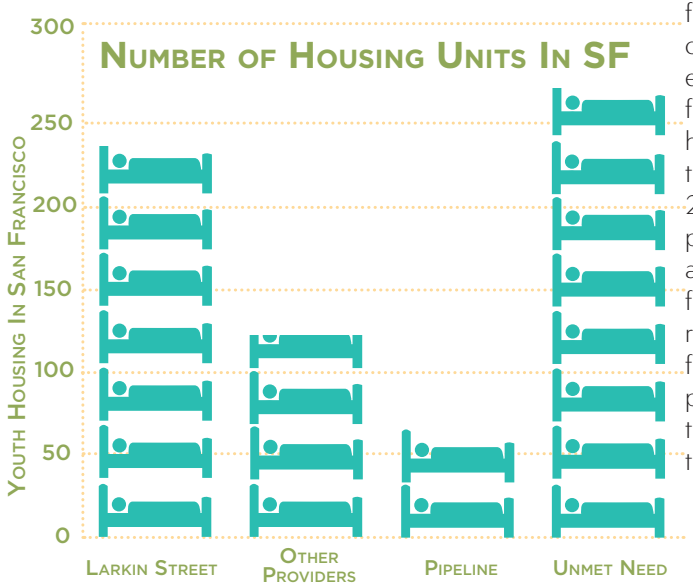
Transition Planning

There is a disproportionate representation of foster youth among the homeless youth population. Forty-four percent of Larkin Street youth spent time in an out-of-home placement, which includes foster care and group homes. The average number of placements was seven and the average time spent out of the home was approximately five years. Within California the average number of foster care placements per youth is three (National Data Analysis System, 2007). Youth with five or more foster care placements experience the worst outcomes after leaving the system. Almost 40% of Larkin Street youth have had five or more placements.

Eighty percent of youth report they were in placement as adolescents and of these youth 58% report they emancipated, or aged out, when they turned 18. Youth who emancipate from foster care are less likely than youth in general to graduate from high school or college. They are also more likely to experience serious mental health problems, experience homelessness, and to be involved in the criminal justice system (Children's Defense Fund, 2007).

A large number of Larkin Street youth have some degree of previous involvement with the criminal justice system. Over half of Larkin Street youth report that they have been arrested. Forty-four percent of these youth report being arrested within the past year. For younger youth many of these arrests are probably due to status offenses, behaviors that are crimes solely due to age, such as running away or underage alcohol consumption. Status offenses were committed by an estimated 45% of juvenile offenders (Steinberg & Haskins, 2008). Sixty percent of youth with arrest histories were arrested for the first time as a juvenile. For others, many of the arrests likely stemmed from activities associated with daily survival such as panhandling, loitering, or sleeping outdoors. Youth involved with the criminal justice system are more likely to report unstable housing (Feldman & Patterson, 2003). In particular, reintegration after exit from detention is difficult. Over a third of youth have spent time in jail. The odds of becoming homeless within a year of release from incarceration, including the juvenile justice system, is 1 in 11 (Sermons & Witte, 2011).

Given the large number of youth who exit either the foster care or criminal justice system and later become homeless more attention must be paid to transition services. Youth leaving foster care and juvenile justice systems are expected to be independent at age 18, yet few have acquired the skills needed to live on their own. Extended foster case provides an opportunity for fewer exits into homelessness for youth but only if we have better prepared these youth to leave at 21 than we have been preparing them to leave at age 18. Increased focus and greater resource allocation for improved transition planning will reduce the number of youth on the streets.



Youth Appropriate Housing Programs

Housing is crucial to stabilizing the lives of homeless youth. There must be a range of housing options available, from emergency housing programs that provide immediate shelter to longer-term supported housing. Increasing the amount of available transitional and supportive permanent housing available to youth will prevent cycling through emergency shelter services and reduce chronic homelessness. Unlike homeless adults, who generally possess the core skill set needed to maintain housing despite the crisis that led to their homelessness, homeless youth have not developed the skills necessary to live independently and maintain a self-supporting income. Therefore just as crucial are a range of support services, in addition to housing, to address issues that are barriers to stability. This includes counseling, educational support, and employment services.

The amount of housing program slots available for homeless youth is insufficient to meet the demand. There is an estimated 1.8-2.1 million homeless youth, ages 12-24, in the United States. (Burt, 2007). The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act is the only dedicated federal source of funding for youth homelessness. While the programs funded through this Act have demonstrated success they are limited in scope and capacity. Each fiscal year the Basic Center program, which provides emergency housing for youth under the age of 18, serves an average of approximately 42,100 youth (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013). In fiscal year 2011 the Transitional Living Program, which serves youth 16-21, served only 4,104 youth (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013). This does not come close to reaching the estimated need at the national level. If we are to meet the goal of eliminating youth homelessness by 2020, as set forth in the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, then we need to dedicate more financial resources towards moving youth off the streets and into housing (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2010).

Career Pathways

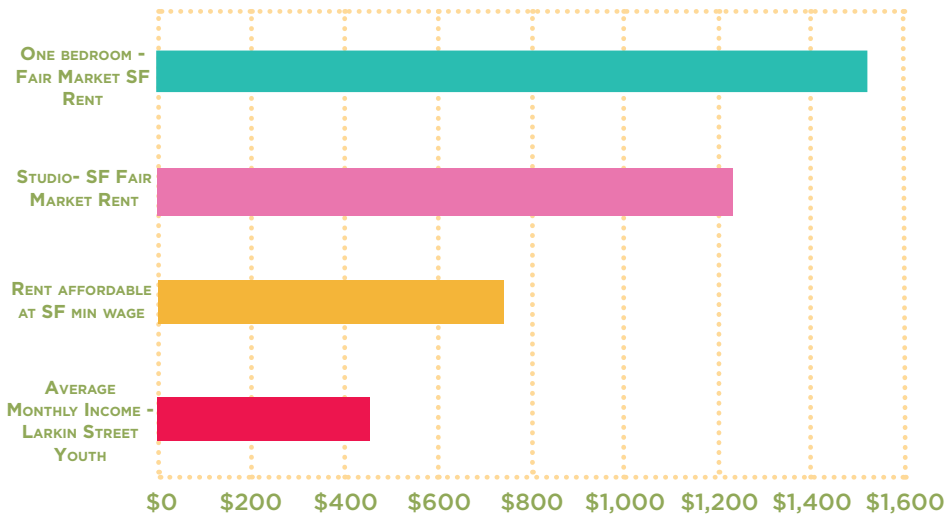
Improving long term outcomes for disconnected youth includes getting them on a path out of poverty and toward a sustainable, living-wage career. This requires a multipronged approach that gets youth employment ready, builds basic workplace skills, provides job training, and gets them into the workforce. Essential elements of workforce development for this group include career exploration activities, job placement support, internship opportunities, and job retention services. A growing body of evidence shows that economic opportunity for those without a postsecondary degree has decreased measurably since the 1980s. In fact, over the past third-century, all of the net job growth in America has been generated by positions that require at least some postsecondary education (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010). Therefore an effective workforce development system must expand opportunities for youth through inclusion of strategies to increase educational attainment. Across the country we

have divested in employment services for those most in need. At the federal level we have seen cuts of $1 billion over the past decade (Kramer, et al., 2012). Studies have shown that programs that combine training and education; employment preparation and job placement; and services such as housing and transportation support can have a social return on investment of $9.10 for every dollar spent (Social Impact Research, 2011). There must be greater investments in developing a workforce that is prepared to meet the needs of the current labor market.

Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is a critical need for transition age youth. Homelessness is caused at the most basic level by the inability of individuals to afford a place to live. Any strategy to eliminate homelessness must address the dearth of affordable housing across the country. The gap between wages earned and fair market rents continue to grow as salaries don't keep pace with increasing housing costs. During the height of the recession median rents increased by 2.2% while incomes among renters dropped 4.1% (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2011). There are a great number of individuals who pay a large percentage of their income on housing. Among working households almost one in four spends more than half its income on housing costs (Williams, 2012). In addition to this group who are at high risk of homelessness there's the growing number of working poor and unemployed who are literally homeless. The National Housing Trust Fund was established in 2008 to provide an ongoing, dedicated, and sufficient source of revenue for low-income housing. The majority of the funds would be for rental housing as low-income renters face the greatest difficulties in maintaining housing (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2011). Identification of a funding stream for the Fund would significantly increase the affordable housing stock in America and positively impact the homelessness rate.

Income vs. Rent Costs



Source - National Low Income Housing Coalition. (2012)

Conclusion

Homeless youth are the most extreme example of disconnected youth. Reconnecting them requires a multifaceted approach that interrupts their current trajectory, provides stabilization, and creates opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills needed for independent adulthood. Getting youth into their own housing is a crucial first step. Without having a place to call home youth are not able to attend to the other issues that impact their ability to obtain and maintain housing. Next is ensuring that youth have the ability to manage both their physical and emotional health and maintain a sense of wellness. And finally assisting youth in obtaining the education and skills necessary to attain career track employment to ensure long-term economic stability is needed. This is the path from youth homelessness to self-reliant adulthood.

What are the most helpful services at Larkin Street?

The moment when you want to give up so bad and someone puts a hand on your shoulder

Getting at least one meal in my stomach a day

Understanding and caring staff members

Housing of any kind, keeps me out of harm's way

The best thing about Larkin Street is

Understanding and caring staff members

The opportunity to succeed

Not having to spend time on the streets

The encouragement to look for, obtain, and keep a job

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NOTES

[1] Larkin Street Youth Services analysis based on existing data sources and provider interviews. Source: National Alliance to End Homelessness (2006); Aron and Sharkey (2002); San Francisco Workgroup on Homeless and Runaway Youth (2005); San Francisco Ten Year Planning Council (2004); Bridgespan analysis (Dec '05); service provider interviews

[2] Unless otherwise noted data source is Larkin Street client database. Data set comprised of youth served and services provided 7/1/11-6/30/12. Intakes are not completed with all youth therefore data subsets may not include total population of youth. Only valid responses included unless exception is noted. Due to rounding, some totals may not equal 100%.

Since 1984, Larkin Street Youth Services has been committed to helping San Francisco's most vulnerable youth ages 12-24 move beyond street life. This commitment has fueled the development of a comprehensive continuum of services thatt is nationally recognized as a model of innovative and effective care. We offer stability, safety and the opportunity for a better life.

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