

Youth Services of Southern Wisconsin, Inc.

Guiding Youth Toward a Better Future

Homeless and Runaway Youth

The Problem

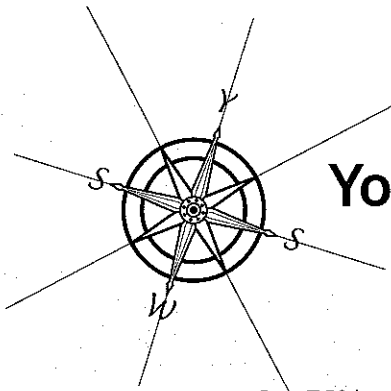
Homelessness among young people is a serious problem. Homeless youth, often referred to as unaccompanied youth, are youth under the age of 18 who are not being cared for by a parent, guardian, legal custodian, or foster parent. The National Runaway Safeline estimates that on any given night there are approximately 1.3 million homeless youth living unsupervised on the streets, in abandoned buildings, with friends, or with strangers. Unaccompanied runaway and homeless youth are at higher risk for physical abuse, sexual exploitation, mental health problems, substance abuse, and death. It is estimated that 5,000 unaccompanied youth die each year as a result of assault, illness, or suicide.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's Yearly Comparison Report of Homeless Student Enrollment, the number of homeless unaccompanied youth in Dane County is increasing. This disturbing trend reinforces the need to expand the array of services available to these youth.

The Research

Studies have shown that:

1. One in seven young people between the ages of 10 and 18 will run away
2. Youth ages 12 to 17 are more at risk of homeless than adults
3. 75% of runaways are female
4. Over 50% of homeless youth report that their parents knew of or facilitated their exit from the family home
5. Approximately 1 in 3 youth will be approached for sex in exchange for money, food, shelter, or drugs within 48 hours of leaving home
6. Runaway homeless females ages 14-17 have pregnancy rates of 48% compared to 10% for those who are housed
7. 46% of runaway and homeless youth reported being physically abused, 38% reported being emotionally abused, and 17% reported being sexually abused by a family or household member



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8. 75% of homeless and runaway youth have already or will drop out of school
9. 20 - 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ

Service Gaps in Dane County

One of the most significant gaps in services for homeless unaccompanied youth in Dane County is the lack of short-term housing (temporary shelter). Short-term housing facilities for these youth have the following primary objectives:

- Provide a safe non-judgmental environment for youth to get off the streets
- Conduct a comprehensive assessment to identify each youth's needs and connect youth with resources to meet these needs
- Help youth re-connect with school or other educational opportunities
- Assist youth with finding employment as applicable
- Assist youth in returning home or with developing a plan for obtaining other safe long-term housing
- Prevent youth from developing a long-term pattern of homelessness

Addressing the Needs

Youth Services of Southern Wisconsin (Youth Services) is committed to bringing a short-term housing unit for runaway and homeless youth to Dane County. This eight (8) bed short-term housing unit will be part of the agency's Briarpatch services for runaway and homeless youth. Youth Services is currently looking for a suitable location for a new facility that will include space for the Briarpatch Housing Unit as well as space for the agency's other services.

Youth Services estimates that the cost of this facility will be \$2.7 million which includes the \$400,000 cost of the Briarpatch Housing Unit for runaway and homeless youth.

For more information please contact:

Casey Behrend, Executive Director
casey.behrend@youthsos.org
608-245-2550, Ext. 212

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