

# LIVINGSTON COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES COLLABORATIVE BODY

## Health and Human Service Needs FACT SHEET

### Runaway and Homeless Youth in Livingston County April 2015

#### Who are “Runaway and Homeless Youth”?

Runaway and homeless youth are youth who lack a fixed, regular, and nighttime residence or an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is:

- a) a supervised or publically operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations;
- b) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill; or
- c) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

This definition includes both youth who are unaccompanied by families and those who are homeless with their families.

#### Why is this issue so important to Livingston County?

On January 24, 2014, our county’s Point in Time Count revealed that 32% of the homeless individuals in Livingston County were youth under the age of 22. The Connection Youth Services (TCYS) provided emergency shelter to 132 homeless youth from January 1, 2014 through December 31, 2014.

#### What causes a youth to run away and become homeless?

There is not one “cause” associated with homelessness amongst our youth. The issue is complex and there are several reasons that can offer explanation:

The 2014 Kids Count Data Book reports that in Michigan, 25% of youth live in poverty and 34% live in households where neither parent has full-time, year round employment. Families are facing prolonged unemployment, home foreclosure, and a large decrease in public assistance funding. Livingston County is home to many of these households.

Lack of affordable housing in Livingston County; it is difficult for a family making minimum wages to afford housing in the county.

Runaway and homeless youth are not “bad” kids; most are not running *to* something, they are running *from* something. The majority of unaccompanied youth come from home environments so awful that living *anywhere* is better. They are young people who are abandoned, children of homeless families, abused adult children without protective

services, youth aging out of the foster care or traditional juvenile justice systems, youth who are products of failed adoptions, and youth who are otherwise prematurely ejected from family support systems. These youth often live in conditions that are unstable, distressed, and dangerous. Fifty four percent of TCYS sheltered youth identify family conflict as the presenting factor for becoming homeless. Twenty three percent of youth indicate severe abuse or neglect as the presenting issue, 25% of sheltered youth indicate employment and/or education as the presenting issue, and 21% identify substance use as the precipitating factor that lead them to homelessness.

## What programs & services exist?

- **Livingston Family Center & The Connection Youth Services** 866.440.SAFE (7233)  
Shelter, counseling, crisis intervention, case management
- **Livingston Family Center** 810.231.9591  
Counseling services for children, adolescents, and families
- **The Education Project** 517.540.6834  
Eliminating barriers for the educational and social success of homeless youth
- **MYOI (Michigan Youth Opportunity Initiative)** 517.915.8820  
This program specifically supports youth transitioning from foster care to independence

## What can the community do to help?

Runaway and Homeless Youth are a community problem. The cause is not from any one source and the solution cannot come from any one source. As a community, Livingston County must embrace its youth and work together to prevent youth from running away and becoming homeless. These youth need solutions and support. Following are some ideas of how to get involved:

- Consider becoming a Supervised Independent Living home. These homes provide a safe place and structure for youth who are preparing to move to adulthood and do not have the family supports available to them.
- Consider employing a youth in an effort to provide work experience or on the job training that may help them to move on to other school and employment options. Internships are great as well!
- Contact The Connection to see if any youth needs a bed or sheets to begin the process of moving out on their own.
- Refer homeless or at-risk youth to the above resources.
- Work with the local Education Project to support a homeless youth. You can sponsor a youth who wants to play baseball or go to prom.
- Volunteer to help a youth get their driver's license. Driver's education can be costly to a homeless youth and yet getting their license at 18 with no driver's education, can be a costly for the community.

*For more information, contact The Connection Youth Services at their 24 hour hotline  
866-440-SAFE (7233)*