

LIVINGSTON COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES COLLABORATIVE BODY

Health and Human Service Needs FACT SHEET

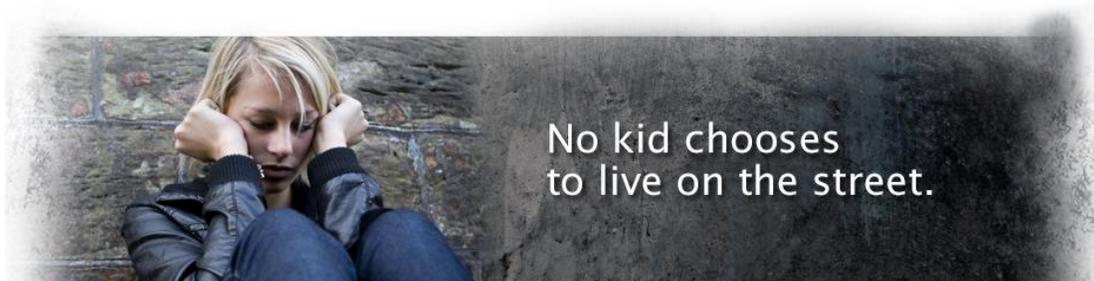
Runaway and Homeless Youth in Livingston County June 2020

Who are “Runaway and Homeless Youth”?

The U.S. Department of Education defines homeless youth as youth who “lack a fixed, regular, and nighttime residence” or an “individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is:

- a supervised or publically operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations;
- 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;
- 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?

- Livingston County provided services to the **second largest number of runaway and homeless youth** among rural counties in Michigan last year.
- Livingston County’s 2020 *Point in Time Count* (PIT) of homeless individuals indicated 96 homeless individuals; **35 (36%) of these individuals were youth under the age of 18.**
- The Connection Youth Services (TCYS) provided emergency shelter to **45 homeless youth** from January 1, 2019 through December 31, 2019 and provided intensive supportive services to another 132 youth at risk of homelessness.
- The Education Project identified 358 displaced/homeless students for the 2018-19 school year – 93 of those students were unaccompanied youth which means **25% of these students identified were living without a parent or legal guardian.**

What causes a youth to run away and/or become homeless?

There is not one “cause” associated with youth homelessness. The issue is complex and there are several factors that can offer explanation. Runaway and homeless youth are not “bad” kids; the majority of unaccompanied youth come from home environments so toxic that living *anywhere else* is better.

In Livingston County, last year, 93% of homeless youth reported family conflict as the leading cause for their homelessness. Youth also reported inadequate income, mental health issues, abuse/neglect, inappropriate sexual experiences, substance use, poor decision-making skills, and stress management to be their major barriers to safe, stable housing.

In a recent street outreach study conducted by the Administration for Children and Families – Youth Services Bureau, youth reported their reasons for becoming homeless as follows:

- 52% were told to leave by a parent or caregiver
- 24% were being physically abused
- 24% left due to problems associated with a caretaker's drug or alcohol problem
- 72% percent of youth had experienced a major trauma such as physical or sexual abuse at some point in their life

What programs & services exist?

- **The Connection Youth Services** **866-440-SAFE (7233)-24/7**
Shelter, counseling, crisis intervention, case management
- **The Education Project-LESA** **517-540-6834**
Eliminating barriers for the educational and social success of homeless youth
- **MYOI (Michigan Youth Opportunity Initiative)** **517-375-8313**
This program specifically supports youth transitioning from foster care to independence

What can the community do to help?

Addressing the issue of runaway and homeless youth is a community responsibility. 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, support, and permanent connections with positive adults.

Here are some ideas of how to get involved:

- Refer homeless or at-risk youth to the above resources.
- Become a host home. These homes provide a safe place and structure for youth who are preparing to move into adulthood and do not have access to family support systems.
- Employ a youth in an effort to provide work experience or on the job training that may help them to move on to other educational and employment options. Internships are great as well.
- Contact The Connection Youth Services to see if any youth has unmet needs to assist them in their journey of independence. These could be personal care items, bedding, additional life skills, etc.
- Sponsor a Youth in the local Education Project by assisting them with extracurricular expenses.
- Assist a youth with transportation needs-LETS vouchers, commitment to driving them to and from work a few times a week, driver's education sponsorship.
- Donate meals to TCYS' Drop-In Center.
- Volunteer to teach a life skills course at TCYS.
- Donate basic needs such as hygiene items, clothing, shoes, and school supplies.

