Missed Opportunities: Pregnant and Parenting Youth Experiences of Homelessness in the US

Foundational evidence for understanding the scale, scope, and urgency of homelessness among pregnant and parenting youth in America

May 2018

Our nation’s young families deserve the best possible start in life. Every day of housing instability and the associated stress represents a missed opportunity to support healthy development and transitions to stable family life. Voices of Youth Count gives voice to young people across America who lack the support they need to achieve independence and to make transitions to productive adulthood.

A substantial number of children are being raised by young parents experiencing homelessness

Approximately

1.1 MILLION CHILDREN

had a young parent who experienced homelessness during the past year.

(Source: VoYC National Survey)

Pregnancy and parenthood are common among youth experiencing homelessness

Recommendations

1. Address the sexual and reproductive health needs of youth experiencing homelessness by adapting evidence-based pregnancy prevention programs and providing contraception plus prenatal and post-partum care in nontraditional settings.

2. Increase collaboration among homeless service providers and providers in other systems, including early childhood, early intervention, education, and welfare.

3. Explore opportunities for family reunification, relationship building, and service engagement with youth experiencing homelessness who are pregnant or parenting.

4. Develop the capacity of homeless youth and homeless family service providers to serve all young mothers and fathers who are homeless, regardless of their gender, age, or marital status.

5. Design support programs that recognize the importance of the relationships pregnant and parenting youth have with their partners and co-parents.

6. Assess the risk for homelessness among pregnant and parenting youth and refer high-risk youth for appropriate services when they are identified.

(Source: VoYC Brief Youth Survey)