

LARKIN STREET YOUTH SERVICES



YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT HOMELESSNESS IN SAN FRANCISCO: 2018 REPORT ON INCIDENCE AND NEEDS

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Introduction

No young person should find themselves without a safe and stable place to call home. Yet across the country, one in 10 young people ages 12 to 25 will experience some form of homelessness in a given year.¹

The problem is serious, and the challenges are many. But it is a **solvable** problem.

Over more than three decades, Larkin Street Youth Services has learned what young people experiencing homelessness need to thrive:

- A range of housing options that are easy to get into and hard to fall out of
- Robust support services delivered by well-trained staff committed to engaging with youth deeply to achieve their goals
- Authentic and meaningful opportunities to have a voice in the decisions that affect them

With these critical pieces in place and the time they need, most young people can move on, out of services, and into independent adulthood.

But Larkin Street can't solve youth homelessness alone. Homelessness is a complex problem that requires a community-wide system response. We have a collective obligation – as a community, and as a country – to ensure that every young person can reach their full potential. With the right investments and policies in place, we can ensure that any experience of homelessness by a young person is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

Together, we can end homelessness for all young people.

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THE SCOPE OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Every year: **4.2 million** young people experience some form of homelessness ¹

Every night: **45,486** young people are on the streets, without a safe place to sleep ²

National estimates of young people experiencing homelessness vary widely due to differences in definitions and methods used to enumerate these young people. Many hide in plain sight: couch surfing, living in cars or abandoned buildings, or participating in the street economy for a place to sleep.

California is home to the highest number of young people experiencing homelessness in the country ²

1 in 3 young people experiencing homelessness in the U.S. lives in California. Those young people are more likely than their peers in other states to be both unsheltered and underage. ²

The State of California lacks the resources and the cross-system collaboration to meet the needs of these young people. The most recent attempt to assess statewide resources found that two out of three counties lacked even basic services specifically for young people experiencing homelessness. Progress has been made since then through the expansion of the Homeless Youth and Exploitation Program, but the need still vastly outstrips demand.

One in five individuals experiencing homelessness in San Francisco is under the age of 25. ³

\$1

Just six cents of every dollar spent on homelessness services in San Francisco is directed towards young people. ⁴

CAUSES OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Abuse, Neglect, and Family Conflict

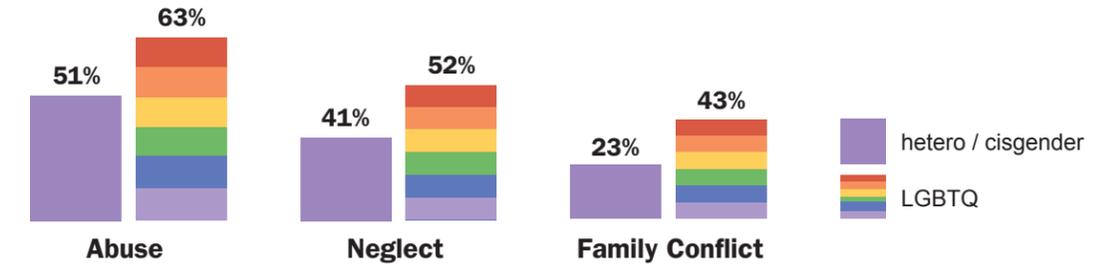
Young people often report abuse and conflict with a parent or guardian as contributing to their homelessness.

88% of young people report they experienced physical, sexual or emotional abuse prior to becoming homeless ⁷



51% of young people report they became homeless initially because they were asked to leave home ⁸

These issues are particularly acute for young people who identify as LGBTQ.



Justice/Foster Systems Involvement

A disproportionate number of young people experiencing homelessness have a history of involvement in the child welfare system.

The relationship is complex – children whose parents have experienced homelessness are more likely to enter the child welfare system, and having a history of involvement in this system makes one more likely to experience homelessness later. ⁹

Involvement in the justice system can also increase a young person's likelihood of becoming homeless, and, in turn, many laws disproportionately affect young people experiencing homelessness (such as truancy, panhandling, sitting or sleeping in public places), making them more likely to enter the justice system. ¹¹

Prior involvement in the foster care system



25% of young people at Larkin Street report an arrest history

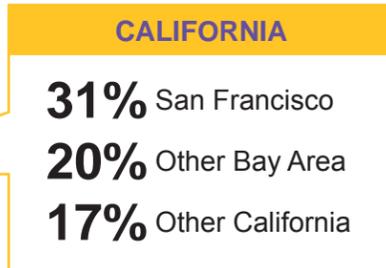
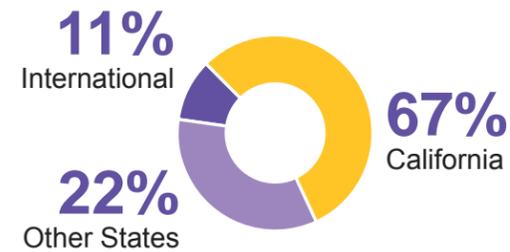


17 years old = average age of first involvement with the justice system

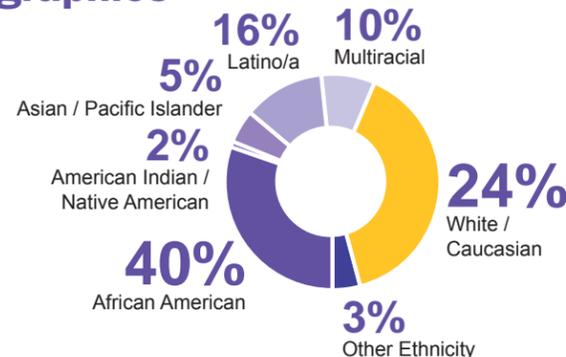
LARKIN STREET YOUTH SERVICES

2,500 - 3,000 young people access services at Larkin Street every year. *

Places of Origin



Demographics



Identify as LGBTQ



Economic Instability

Bay Area housing costs are among the highest in the country. This affordability crisis means that many families are precariously housed and at greater risk for homelessness. Economic instability at the family level often contributes to cycles of entrenched, intergenerational poverty as well.



16% of young people in San Francisco reported job loss as a primary cause of their homelessness ³

36% of young people in San Francisco report financial issues in general contributed to their homelessness ³



Unemployment compounds the impacts of this crisis. While improvements in labor market participation have been made since the 2008 economic recession, just over half of young adults ages 18 to 24 are currently employed.

Economic instability also disproportionately impacts youth of color and their families.

Young African American men are **2x** as likely to be unemployed as their white counterparts ¹²

Median income for Latinos is just **73%** of the Bay Area average ¹³

Median income for African Americans is just **48%** of the Bay Area average ¹³

Young people of color and those who identify as LGBTQ are at greater risk of homelessness than the rest of the youth population, because the drivers into homelessness – abuse, neglect, family conflict, systems involvement, and economic instability – disproportionately impact them.

For young people of color in particular, institutional or structural racism – the systemic ways in which opportunities are withheld from some and available to others – contributes to these pathways into homelessness, and it impedes their ability to exit.

BARRIERS TO STABILITY



Youth homelessness is different from adult homelessness not only because the causes are distinct, but also because young people are still developing – physically, emotionally, psychologically, and socially – into adulthood.

Once on the streets, young people face significant obstacles to leading stable, self-sufficient lives. Common challenges that can result from – or be exacerbated by – a young person becoming homeless include:

Poor Health and Wellness

Living on the streets has negative impacts on physical health, mental health, and overall well-being. Young people experiencing homelessness report exploitation, traumatization, violence, and harsh conditions, all of which impact health and wellness.

45% of young people at Larkin Street report one or more serious health conditions at intake



47% of young people at Larkin Street report current or prior mental health issues at entry into housing

Rates for major psychiatric disorders (including depression, anxiety, and PTSD) can be up to 4 times higher for young people experiencing homelessness than their peers.¹⁴

Young people experiencing homelessness often turn to substances as a coping strategy for dealing with the trauma of life on the streets.

70% of young people entering Larkin Street housing report using drugs in their lifetime



15 = Age at first drug use

Mental health and substance use issues are compounded by histories of trauma and abuse and a high risk of victimization, including sex and labor trafficking.

1 in 2 youth report their safety being threatened at least once in the past month³



37% report being assaulted or physically attacked in the past year³

Youth who identify as LGBTQ are at even greater risk than their cisgender and heterosexual peers for poor behavioral health due to higher rates of family conflict, societal discrimination, violence, and trauma.¹⁴

Interrupted Life Skills Development

Life skills, including maintaining stable housing, addressing one's health concerns, engaging in education, obtaining and retaining employment, and managing and growing one's income, are at the very core of self-sufficiency.

Yet many young people enter homelessness without having had the opportunity to develop the basic life skills needed to navigate adulthood.

Additionally, the skills that enable young people to survive on the streets – from disrupted sleep to substance use – are maladaptive to reconnecting with educational systems and succeeding in the workforce.

Disconnection from Education and Employment

Histories of abuse, neglect, and trauma can compound young people's disconnection from mainstream education and employment systems. Factors such as poverty and poor health also create profound barriers to re-engaging, pushing young people further from the pathways that are meant to help them make a positive transition to adulthood and employment.

Many young people experiencing homelessness have little or no formal work experience. The costs of early periods of unemployment are significant and long-term, leading to fewer opportunities to advance and lower lifetime wages.¹²

Currently employed



Average monthly income



Education is key to career-track employment, however, most homeless youth are disconnected from formal educational systems and have been off-track educationally for an extended period of time.

Research has shown that the impacts of homelessness on educational attainment linger long after an individual is stably-housed and reconnected to education.¹⁶

Completed high school or GED³



Length of Time on the Streets

The more time young people spend disconnected from their families or on the streets, the more risks they face and the less protection they have from those risks.¹⁷

62% do not have a supportive adult in the Bay Area³

50% of all people experiencing homelessness in San Francisco first experienced homelessness before the age of 25⁴

43% of young people experiencing homelessness reported being homeless for a year or more³

This is a startling reminder that investing in youth is an essential step towards ending homelessness for all.

Housing Affordability

Despite the scope of the problem of homelessness in San Francisco (over 1,300 young people are on the streets on any given night), there are only 450 youth-specific transitional or supportive housing beds available citywide, with less than 100 more in development.

This scarcity of housing is exacerbated by the Bay Area's affordability crisis, untenable rental costs, and the skills-to-jobs gap that deeply impacts disconnected and homeless youths' abilities to obtain and maintain living wage employment.

LARKIN STREET'S MODEL AND RESULTS

At Larkin Street, we believe that every young person can reach their full potential.

Young people experiencing homelessness are resilient and have hopes for their futures. However, making homelessness a rare, brief, and non-recurring experience for young people requires a holistic approach that provides stabilization, encourages wellness and social connection, and creates opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills needed for independent adulthood.

Larkin Street provides a robust continuum of wraparound supports to help young people do just that, building a foundation for lifelong well-being and self-sufficiency.



YOUTH VOICE AND LEADERSHIP

Ensures young people can influence the decisions that impact their lives through:

- Agency and choice around housing options
- Youth Advisory Board to inform policy and develop young leaders
- Client feedback processes to collect and learn from meaningful input



EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Intensive, individualized programs to ensure homelessness is non-recurring through:

- Cohort-based curricula focused on post-secondary success and career-track employment
- Individualized college and job counseling, tutoring, job placement, and internships



HOUSING

A variety of options tailored to meet young people's needs, including:

- Emergency shelters, time-limited and non-time limited residential programs, and rental subsidies
- Scattered site apartments and congregate, dorm-style living
- Supports with intensity varied based on individual need

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT SERVICES

Builds trust through a visible presence across the community, including:

- Street outreach teams to help meet young people's basic needs
- Drop-in centers providing opportunities for deeper engagement

OUR OUTCOMES

This model supports the following long-term outcomes upon which we measure our success:

- Safe and stable housing
- Physical and emotional wellness
- Sustainable, career-track employment at a livable wage
- Two years of education post high-school

OUR RESULTS

Among youth exiting Larkin Street's transitional housing programs last year...

81% exited to stable housing

60% achieved physical and emotional wellness

70% were employed or enrolled in post-secondary education

\$1,601 average monthly income[†]



ROBUST AND INTENTIONAL SERVICES

Embedded at all levels to create permanent self-sufficiency:

- Low-threshold access to services
- Strengths-based and tailored life skills interventions
- Outcomes-focused case management and exit planning
- Services for populations with specialized needs (young people who are HIV positive, current and former foster youth, those with mental illness, and young people who identify as LGBTQ)



HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Critical medical and behavioral health supports, including:

- Primary care and HIV prevention
- Evidence-based techniques like motivational interviewing to address mental health, substance use, and trauma
- Group and individual services to support physical, emotional, and social health



TRAUMA-INFORMED SETTINGS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Enables young people to heal through:

- Restorative practices, which builds community, accountability, and resilience
- Behavioral health supports and linkages to medical care



DATA- AND OUTCOMES-DRIVEN APPROACH

Underpins our ability to learn from what works including:

- Screening and assessment
- Ambitious, objective metrics
- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation



What can we do as a community to create the circumstances young people need to be successful? The following key policy recommendations will help make our vision to end youth homelessness a reality.

Authentically engaging young people and ensuring equality for LGBTQ youth and youth of color are key elements underpinning all of these recommendations.



We need the City and County of San Francisco to:

- Increase resources for **prevention** to stem the flow of young people into homelessness
- Deliver on its mandate for a youth-specific Navigation Center to provide **easy linkage** to essential resources
- Expand the portfolio of **youth-dedicated housing** options
- Dedicate resources to **aftercare** services so that episodes of homelessness among young people are non-recurring
- Execute on its three-year Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project plan to test **innovative** solutions
- Complete its five-year **strategic plan** to prevent and end youth homelessness, including issues of over-representation among LGBTQ youth and youth of color

We need the State of California to:

- Launch an Office of Homeless Youth and Young Adults to **coordinate** a statewide response to the crisis
- **Invest** \$100 million in services throughout the state, so every California county can respond to needs in their communities



We need the Federal Government to:

- **Sustain** the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness to drive progress towards the Federal goal to end youth homelessness by 2020
- **Expand resources** through the Departments of Housing and Urban Development and Health and Human Services to provide a range of housing options and supportive services to meet the needs identified through Voices of Youth Count
- Expand funding for the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program, so more communities can launch **innovative models** of care



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* Unless otherwise noted, data source is Larkin Street Youth Services' client database. Dataset is comprised of youth served and services provided July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017. Intakes are not completed with all youth, therefore data subsets may not include total population of youth. Only valid responses are included unless exception is noted. Due to rounding, some totals may not equal 100%.

† Dataset is comprised of youth exiting Larkin Street's transitional housing programs between July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017 after a stay of at least six months.

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