



VERMONT COALITION OF RUNAWAY
& HOMELESS YOUTH PROGRAMS

Vermont Child Poverty Council

October 20, 2016 testimony notes

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Since 2013, VCRHYP member agencies have served an annual average of 723 homeless, runaway and precariously housed youth between the ages of 12 and 22, providing access to supports around safety, housing, well-being, self-sufficiency and building permanent connections **to promote resiliency and reduce the long-term impacts of housing instability.**

In FY 16, an average of **163 youth were served per month** by VCRHYP programs.

The number of homeless youth enrolled in **public schools in 2016 was 1,096; this number has increased by about 40% since 2010.**

During Vermont Statewide Point-in-Time Count, conducted on January 26, 2016, 1,102 Vermonters were without a home, **136 were youth, 33 of who were parenting, and 12 of who were completely unsheltered in the cold streets.** *These numbers do not include precariously housed youth who are living at the edge of homelessness every night.*

Vermont youth are experiencing homelessness at a higher rate than national average. Vermont is home to approximately 121,600 youth under the age of 18¹. The National Alliance to End Homelessness reports that unaccompanied youth in Vermont make up **8.8% of all people experiencing homelessness in Vermont, which is higher than the national average of 7.8%².**

Economic Issues impacting youth facing homelessness:

- 45% of jobs pay less than the livable wage of \$13/ hr- wages are stagnant, very little growth since 2007
- 62% of the population lives in towns less than 2,500 people, which indicates a lack of opportunity and rural barriers.

¹ Vermont Department of Health, 2014 population data
<http://healthvermont.gov/research/pop/VermontPopulationData.aspx>

² National Alliance to End Homelessness in America, The State of Homelessness, 2015 Pg. 33,
http://www.endhomelessness.org/page/-/files/State_of_Homelessness_2015_FINAL_online.pdf

- 17% of youth under 18 live in a food insecure household³.
- Housing costs are disproportionately high in Vermont and housing stock is low. Vermont housing is among the most expensive in the nation, with a modest 2-bedroom apartment averaging \$1,099/month. To afford that, a renter must earn \$21.13/hr, or \$43,947 annually or work at minimum wage for 88 hours a week⁴.
- 12% state poverty rate, higher in NEK, According to the Vermont Department of Labor, in 2015 the youth poverty rate was consistently higher than Vermont's average poverty rate.

| County | Population | Unemployment | Poverty | Youth Poverty | Teen Pregnancy Rate |
|---------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Addison | 37,009 | 3.7% | 9.5% | 16.1% | 1.7% |
| Bennington | 36,445 | 4.3% | 14.4% | 23.1% | 2.9% |
| Caledonia | 30,981 | 4.8% | 13.9% | 18.5% | 3.8% |
| Chittenden | 160,531 | 2.7% | 11.0% | 11.1% | 1.6% |
| Essex | 6,125 | 6.8% | 19.6% | 23% | 4.4% |
| Franklin | 48,642 | 3.7% | 9.1% | 14.2% | 3.7% |
| Grand Isle | 6,994 | 4.1% | 9.1% | 10.3% | 2.7% |
| Lamoille | 25,082 | 4.7% | 12.6% | 17.5% | 3.0% |
| Orange | 28,859 | 3.5% | 12.8% | 18.7% | 1.7% |
| Orleans | 27,082 | 5.8% | 16.2% | 19.9% | 4.7% |
| Rutland | 60,086 | 4.4% | 13.5% | 16.8% | 3.1% |
| Washington | 58,998 | 3.6% | 11.0% | 11.0% | 2.7% |
| Windham | 43,714 | 3.7% | 12.9% | 15.7% | 3.1% |
| Windsor | 56,014 | 3.3% | 12.1% | 12.8% | 2.9% |

³ “Household Food Security in the US, 2014” www.ers.usda.gov

⁴ National Low Income Housing Coalition, Out of Reach Report, 2016

What Works:

- Individual, group and family counseling.
- Creating individualized, strengths-based plans of care with youth.
- Engaging youth in recreational activities and creating community ties.
- Providing more gateway service opportunities like drop-in and teen centers where youth can access supports without fully entering into programming.
- Diverting youth and families from entering DCF system through family reunification work.
- Providing housing embedded with wrap around, comprehensive services.

WHAT WE NEED:

- Flexible funds for gateway programming.
- Funding that is similar to the concrete supports in times of need funding that the Youth Development Program and DCF have to support youth in obtaining prescriptions they need, appropriate attire for work, equipment to participate in school sports to build resiliency and permanent connections within their community.
- Resources to clear up a youth's credit when they have been victims of family identity theft.
- Longer shelter stays (from 7 days to 21 days to match federal statute) for youth under 18 so our youth care workers have more time to work with them and their family to support reunification.