

# HOMELESS YOUTH

## The Issue

Students who are homeless often lack access to resources to meet their basic needs, including food and clean clothing. This sometimes leads homeless youth to commit crimes of necessity (i.e. “survival crimes”) and become involved in the juvenile justice system. Furthermore, they are often victimized in the community during after school hours, jeopardizing their safety and causing trauma.

## Scope of the Problem

- ✓ 1,793 public school students in Solano County from Pre-K through the 12th grade were recorded as being homeless at some point during the 2016 school year.<sup>1</sup>
- ✓ The Solano County Point-In-Time homeless count in 2017 found 111 children under the age of 18 to be homeless, as well as an additional 209 young adults ages 18 to 24.<sup>2</sup>
- ✓ Research has demonstrated that due to their housing instability, homeless youth are more than two times as likely as their peers to be chronically absent from school, jeopardizing their academic performance and progress and making them more likely to drop out of school.<sup>3</sup>
- ✓ Youth who are homeless will often avoid being identified as homeless for a variety of reasons, including fear of abuse,<sup>4,5</sup> and are more likely to be victimized in the hours after school.<sup>6</sup>

## Recommendation

Ensure that school campuses are “safe spaces” where homeless youth are treated with dignity and respect and provided with comprehensive support services.

<sup>1</sup> Homeless Public School Students, by Grade Level (2016). As cited on [www.kidsdata.org](http://www.kidsdata.org), a program of the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children’s Health. Retrieved on April 2, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Applied Survey Research. (2017). Solano County Homeless Census & Survey. Watsonville, CA.

<sup>3</sup> National Center for Homeless Education. (2017). In School Every Day: Addressing Chronic Absenteeism Among Students Experiencing Homelessness. Retrieved from: [www.nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/chron-absent.pdf](http://www.nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/chron-absent.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Piinik, L. for the Coalition for Juvenile Justice. (2016, June). *Youth Homelessness and Juvenile Justice: Opportunities for Collaboration and Impact* (Volume 1 Issue 1). Retrieved from: [http://juvjustice.org/sites/default/files/resource-files/policy%20brief\\_FINAL.compressed.pdf](http://juvjustice.org/sites/default/files/resource-files/policy%20brief_FINAL.compressed.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Pergamit, M., Cunningham, M., Burt, M., Lee, P., Howell, B., & Bertumen, K. for the Urban Institute (2013, July). *Counting Homeless Youth: Promising Practices from the Youth Count! Initiative*. Retrieved from: <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/23871/412876-Counting-Homeless-Youth.PDF>

<sup>6</sup> Afterschool Alliance. (2014, May). *Keeping Kids Safe and Supported in the Hours After School*. Retrieved from: [http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/issue\\_briefs/issue\\_KeepingKidsSafe\\_65.pdf](http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/issue_briefs/issue_KeepingKidsSafe_65.pdf)

## Steps for Consideration

1. Provide campus-based support for homeless youth in meeting basic needs (i.e. food, clothing washers/dryers, hygiene supplies, haircuts, etc.) after school hours, without requiring youth to identify that they are homeless in order to receive help.
2. Form a task force including youth, school staff, parents and community leaders to develop strategies for keeping campuses open later so that homeless students have a safe place to receive services after school hours.

“When I was in school and homeless, I felt disrespected and unsafe. I was bullied because my shoes and clothes were worn through, my family couldn’t afford to keep up my haircuts. If we had support at school and could have gotten regular things like clothes, shoes, and haircuts at school, there would have been less bullying and less stress overall. I would have done better in school and it would have improved my mental health in the long run.”

–Nathen, SYV Council Member (age 17)



**Solano Youth Voices**

A partner of the Children’s  
Network of Solano County