

Runaway & Homeless Youth Prevention Month

November 2023

WHEREAS, youth homelessness is complex and distinct from adult homelessness, with family disruption being a leading factor, conflict, abuse, neglect, exposure to domestic violence and poverty in their homes. This is crucial to understanding the diverse situations because many youths who run away from home do not have anywhere to return. If a teen escapes sexual abuse from a relative, that relative is likely still living in the home. Youth experiencing homelessness are at a far greater risk of being stopped by police and arrested relative to youth with a home; and

WHEREAS, with Black Americans making up a disproportionate size (43%) of Alameda County's unhoused population, it is vital and necessary to address that BIPOC youth are at a greater risk of experiencing homelessness and face higher barriers to getting resources due to the systematic, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized perpetuation of racism; and

WHEREAS, sexual orientation and gender identity are often cited as reasons youth are forced to leave their home or run away; and

WHEREAS, when teens run away from home and experience homelessness, they are at an increased risk of becoming victims of sex trafficking. In Alameda County, over 70% of at-risk or involved CSEC are under the age of 18, more than 60% are African American, 83% have runaway history, and almost all have been involved or are currently involved in the probation and foster care systems; and

WHEREAS, at least 31% of all people currently experiencing homelessness first experienced homelessness before their 25th birthday. Youth and young adults make up at least 11% of the homeless population, yet only 4.5% of emergency beds in the county are dedicated to youth; and

WHEREAS, the February 23, 2022 Point in Time (PIT) Count counted 832 unaccompanied minors and youth under age 25 experiencing homelessness in Alameda County **on any given day**, of which 97 unaccompanied children under the age of 18 **on a single night** – compared to the general youth population – were youth of color, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender; and

WHEREAS, the number of youth experiencing homelessness is an underestimate and often does not include undocumented youth as well as youth without stable housing who couch-surf between friends and family; and

WHEREAS, youth with former involvement in child welfare, juvenile justice systems and the foster care system have an increased risk of experiencing homelessness. In Alameda County, 300-400 youth leave foster care annually and experience homelessness within 5 years of exit; and

WHEREAS, recognizing that a coordinated system of robust diversion and prevention strategies, housing services, education and workforce programs, and health and wellness supports, all tailored to the unique needs of young people, and that are designed for and by youth with lived experience, are key requirements to preventing and ending youth homelessness; and

WHEREAS, members of Alameda County's Youth Advisory Board commit to exercising equity, working in partnership with adult allies to learn, advocate and inform youth-led solutions.

NOW, THEREFORE, this Board of Supervisors, County of Alameda, State of California hereby proclaim November 2023 as National Runaway and Homeless Youth Prevention Month.

FUTHERMORE, we recognize our role in positioning youth with lived expertise to be in partnership with us in making youth homelessness brief, one time and non-reoccurring.

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