

Larkin Street Youth Services: Myths & Facts About Homeless Youth

4 Myths & Facts About Homeless Youth

1. **MYTH:** Homeless youth want to be on the streets (they chose this life, they are rebelling against their parents or society)

FACT: Most homeless youth leave their families because of abuse, neglect and violence not because they choose to, but because they must.

2. **MYTH:** Homeless youth are mostly criminals, use drugs and are bad kids (perpetrators vs victims, fear of teenagers or young adults especially youth of color)

FACT: Most homeless youth only turn to crime and drugs when all other options have failed them.

3. **MYTH:** Homeless youth are different than other kids (no - want the same things, yes - more complex stories)

FACT: Homeless youth are looking for the same things most kids want, a home, a stable life and enough resources to do the things they enjoy.

4. **MYTH:** There aren't that many homeless youth –(the invisibility of youth homelessness)

FACT: 7.6% percent of youth (or 1.8 – 2.1mm) are homeless in the U.S. each year. In San Francisco, an estimated 5,700 youth ages 13-24 are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and living on the streets.

KEY FACTS

- **In a down economy, when families have less, the safety net for teenagers and young adults evaporates.** As families struggle to meet ends financially, they are less likely to be able to continue to provide for the 18-21 year olds who are living at home. So those youth may now be forced to move out on their own because finances are stretched too thin for the rest of the family, and they land on the street. And as families struggle more economically, this puts additional emotional stressors on them which leads to more family disruption and more runaways.
- **Tougher economies make it much more challenging for homeless youth to survive on their own.** We know from past downturns that paying jobs will be harder to find for our youth; housing will become even a bigger issue as the rental market tightens up; and health and human services will shrink due to reductions in private and public funding.
- **More homeless youth today become more homeless adults tomorrow.** If we can avoid youth homelessness, we can prevent adult homelessness, a much more intractable problem. The average cost of helping a homeless adult was estimated at over \$66,000 by the Mayor's Task Force in 2004/5.

In times like this, Larkin Street's work is more important than ever.

- Larkin Street is a leader in the fight against youth homelessness nationally and is the only organization, locally, with a proven track record for getting kids off the streets for good.
 - Since 1984, Larkin Street has helped over 70,000 youth through our 25 point of entry (outreach and emergency), health, housing, education and employment program delivered across our network of 13 sites throughout San Francisco.
 - Last year, Larkin Street kept kids off the streets for 86,064 nights.
- Treating youth homelessness has great ROI – the incredible resilience of youth enables them to bounce back faster and farther.
 - For over 25 years, Larkin Street has used a diverse complement of public and private funding to keep our safety net healthy even in poor economic times.
 - Our efficient program model ensures that over 84% of funds raised by Larkin Street go directly to program services.
 - 80% of Larkin Street youth who complete Larkin Street's comprehensive programs exit street life.