



Youth Homelessness in San Francisco: 2011 Report on Incidence and Needs



YOUTH SERVICES

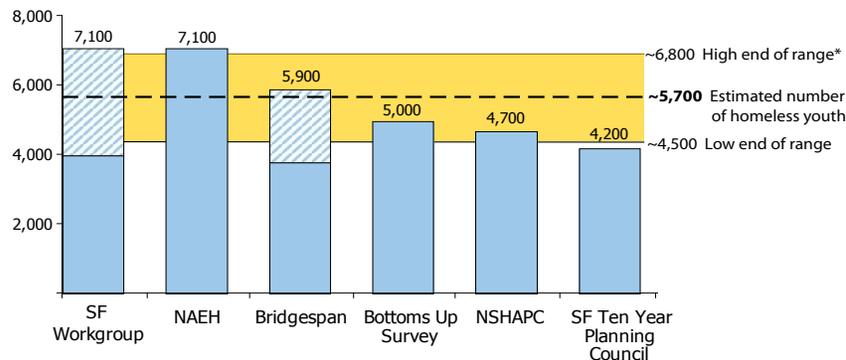
INTRODUCTION

Homeless youth in San Francisco face multiple challenges to self-sufficiency. Although the group is diverse there are common paths to homelessness. The majority of homeless youth come from homes where their parents were either unable or unwilling to care for them. Common family experiences for these youth include child abuse and/or neglect, domestic violence, and parental substance use. In addition many of them have been involved with youth systems of care (foster care, juvenile justice, and mental health). Estimates are that between 38% and 70% of homeless youth have previously spent time in an out-of-home placement.¹ These youth exhibit high levels of trauma, mental health issues, and substance use issues. They struggle on a daily basis to survive and meet their basic needs. They lack the educational attainment and employment experience that results in living wage jobs. They require assistance to develop the skills they need to become independent, self-sufficient adults. This report provides a snapshot of youth homelessness in San Francisco, the service needs, and Larkin Street Youth Services' response to that need.

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN SAN FRANCISCO

There is an estimated 5,700 homeless and marginally housed youth, ages 12-24, in San Francisco each year.² Marginally housed youth are those without permanent stable housing, staying temporarily with friends or family for periods of time.

Estimated Counts of Homeless Youth in San Francisco

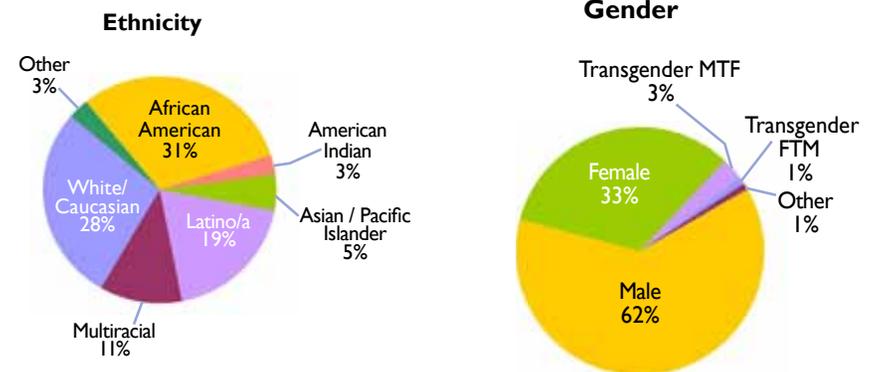


* range = Mean of estimates plus/minus one standard deviation

Larkin Street is the leading provider of housing and support services to homeless and marginally housed youth in San Francisco. Between July 2010 and June 2011 Larkin Street provided services to 3,175 youth.³ The supply of housing services available to homeless youth falls well short of demand. In San Francisco there are 352 housing slots for youth, Larkin Street programs account for 76% of the available housing.

WHO ARE THESE YOUTH?

Larkin Street serves the most vulnerable of the homeless population, youth ages 12-24. The majority are youth between 18 and 24. Programs serve more male (62%) than female youth (33%). Five percent of youth are transgender/intersex/other gender identification. Youth served reflect the diversity of San Francisco with no single ethnic group comprising a majority of youth served.

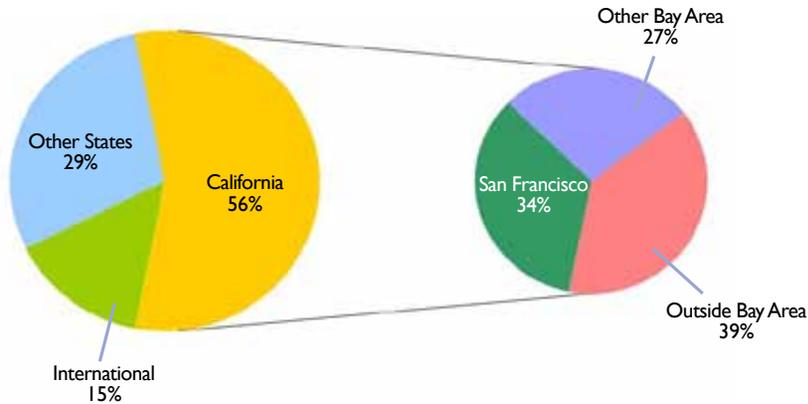


Larkin Street serves youth from across the United States and beyond representing 45 states and 41 foreign countries. Eighty-two percent of youth are from the United States. Among youth from outside the United States, 66% are from Latin American countries.

The majority of Larkin Street youth are from local communities. Over half of the youth served are from California and over 60% of these youth are from the Bay Area, which includes the cities of Oakland and San Jose.

Approximately 3-5% of the U.S. population identifies as lesbian or gay.⁴ Research has shown that there is a disproportionate number of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning youth (LGBTQ) among the homeless youth population. One third of Larkin Street youth report that they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. These youth often land on the streets of San Francisco because they fled from the discrimination they encountered in their homes or communities based on their sexual and/or gender identity.

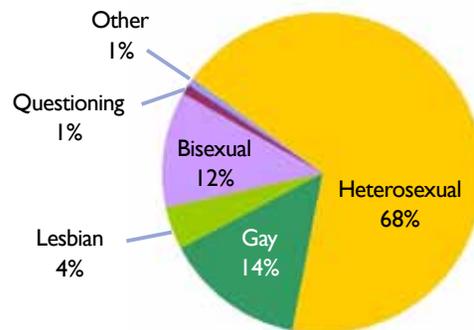
Place of Origin



PATHS TO HOMELESSNESS

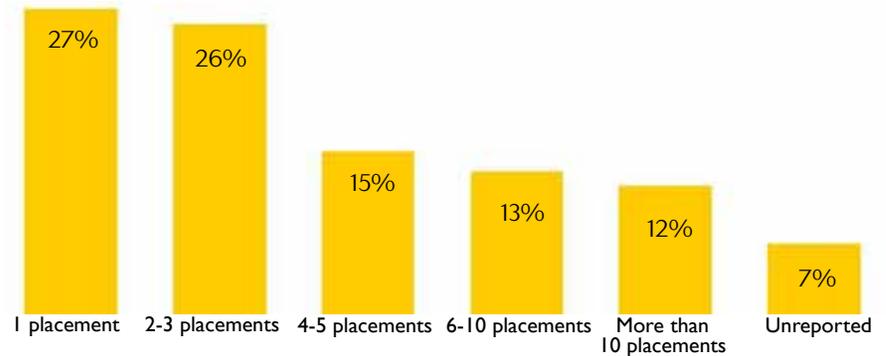
There is a disproportionate representation of foster youth among the runaway population (46%), as compared to the general population (0.23%).⁵ Almost half of Larkin Street youth spent time in an out-of-home placement, which includes foster care and group homes. The average number of placements was seven and the average time spent out of the home was approximately five years. Within California the average number of foster care placements per youth is three.⁶ Youth with five or more foster care placements experi-

Sexual Orientation



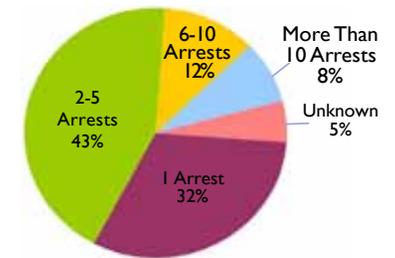
ence the worst outcomes after leaving the system. Over 1/3 of Larkin Street youth have had five or more placements.

Number of Out-of-Home Placements



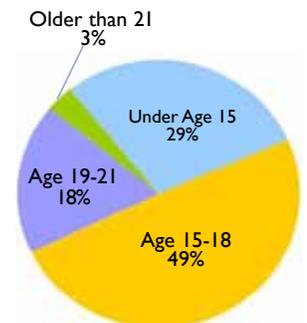
Seventy-two percent of youth report they were in placement as adolescents and of these youth 48% report they emancipated, or aged out, when they turned 18. Youth who emancipate from foster care are less likely than youth in general to graduate from high school or college. They are also more likely to experience serious mental health problems, experience homelessness, and to be involved in the criminal justice system.⁷

Number of Arrests



A large number of Larkin Street youth have some degree of previous involvement with the criminal justice system. Youth involved with the juvenile justice system are more likely to report unstable housing.⁸ In particular, reintegration after exit from juvenile detention is difficult.

Age- First Arrest



More than half of Larkin Street youth report that they have been arrested. Forty-eight percent of these youth report being arrested within the past year and 10% within the last 30 days. For younger

youth many of these arrests are probably due to status offenses, behaviors that are crimes solely due to age, such as running away or underage alcohol consumption. Status offenses were committed by an estimated 45% of juvenile offenders.⁹ For others, many of the arrests likely stemmed from activities associated with daily survival such as panhandling, loitering, or sleeping outdoors. The average age at first arrest for Larkin Street youth is 16, and 55% had been arrested before the age of 18. The average number of arrests is five.

PRESENTING ISSUES AND NEEDS

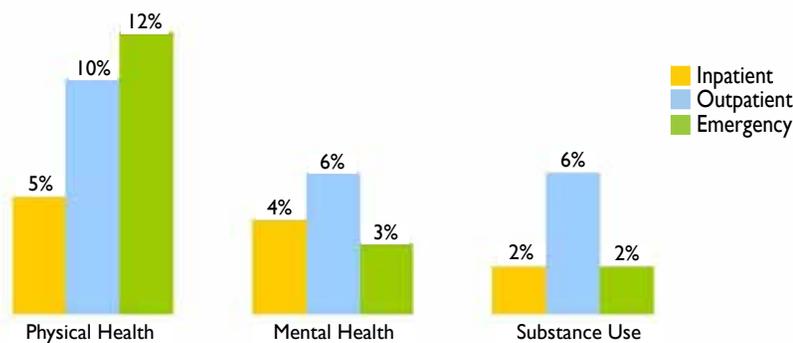
Health

Homeless youth have greater medical needs than their housed peers. This is due largely to exposure from sleeping outside, lack of food, and irregular sleep. Homeless youth are at high risk for a number of health problems including hepatitis, asthma, pneumonia, nutritional disorders, and skin infections.¹⁰ They also have limited access to medical and dental care.

Almost a quarter of youth report their health to be fair or poor at intake. Forty-two percent do not have health insurance. Twenty-six percent report using medical services (physical, mental health, or substance use related) in the previous 30 days, over 50% of these were emergency services.

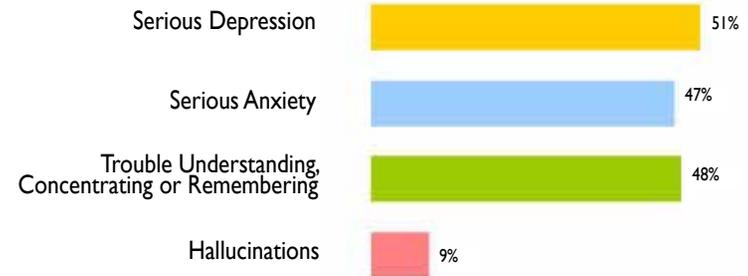
Larkin Street youth are dealing with mental health and substance use issues of varying degrees. This is due in part both to their unstable histories, particularly in their homes of origin, and to ongoing trauma,

Medical Care in the 30 Days Prior to Intake



instability, and stress from living on the streets. As a result many are dealing with trauma, depression, anxiety, or another mental health issue. Larkin Street youth experience a high degree of mental health issues and have an extensive history of formal mental health care at intake. Adolescence is a time of experimentation, and it is not uncommon

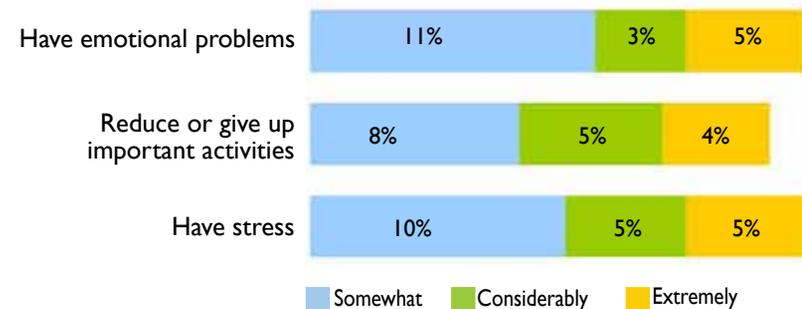
In the Past 30 Days Have You Experienced...?



for youth to experiment with substance use, regardless of their living conditions. However, homeless youth are exposed to a larger range of illegal drugs on the street and presented with greater opportunities for use. Many youth use substances as a way to cope with life on the street or as a way to self-medicate for their mental health issues. Larkin Street youth report a high degree of substance use, as well as an early age of first use.

Many youth recognize the impact that their substance use has on their daily lives. At intake almost half of youth report that they have tried to stop using, and 23% report that they have been in substance use treatment.

Has Your Use of Alcohol or Drugs Caused You To...?

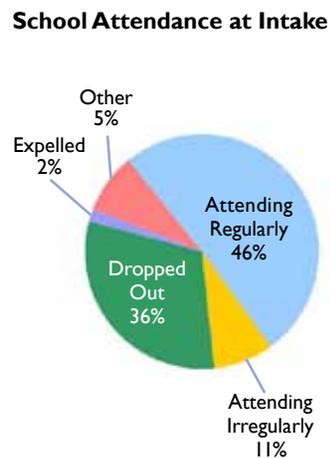
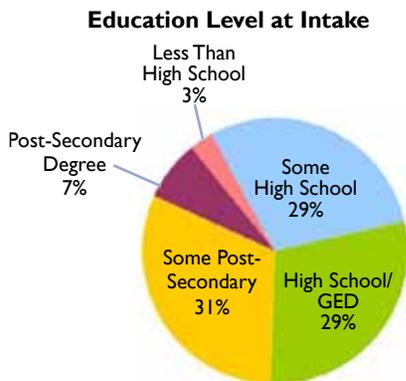


Education and Employment

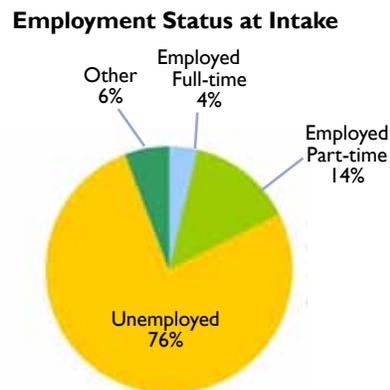
A large number of homeless youth have not had positive education experiences or the opportunity to complete high school. In the United States 75% of youth ages 18-24 have a high school diploma or equivalency. Approximately 1/3 of Larkin Street youth age 18 or older do not have a high school diploma. Thirty-five percent of California youth who drop-out of high school never attain a diploma or complete their GED.¹¹ Not completing high school limits a youth's employment options and earning potential. On average, an individual with a high school diploma earns at least \$6,000 more a year than an individual without a diploma, and those with a college degree earn more than twice as much annually than those with only a high school diploma.¹²

Fifty-seven percent of Larkin Street youth age 18 or under are not enrolled in school at intake, 31% report that they have dropped out.

Finding and maintaining employment is difficult for homeless youth



who have limited education and employment experiences. The lack of a stable address adds to these challenges. Nationally 48% of 18-24 year-olds are employed full time.¹³ In comparison only 4% of Larkin Street youth are employed full time. The majority of youth served by Larkin Street want to work. While 76% of youth report being unemployed at intake, 88% of these youth are actively looking for work.



Among youth who reported income in the past 30 days only 22% received this money through some form of employment (including part-time, full-time, casual, and temporary). Ten percent earned income through non-legal means, and 27% through public assistance. Average monthly income was \$424. The fair market rate of a studio apartment in San Francisco is \$1,191.¹⁴

LARKIN STREET CONTINUUM OF SERVICES

Homeless youth need a range of services to help them transition from the street. Larkin Street provides a comprehensive continuum of services that includes multiple entry points, housing, and support services.

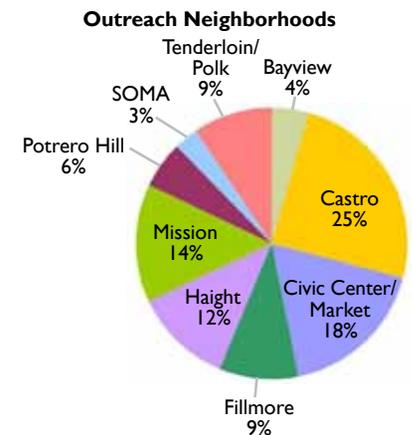
POINT OF ENTRY

Outreach and drop-in centers serve as an introduction to the full range of services available for youth. It also provides for trust and relationship building, an essential first step to getting youth off the streets.

Outreach is one of the main ways that we reach homeless street youth, these youth tend to have been on the street for longer periods of time and are more integrated into the street culture. Last year outreach workers had 10,249 contacts with youth on the streets throughout San Francisco. They provided basic necessities, like water and socks, as well as referrals to services.

The two drop-in centers, which served 2,138 youth last year, provide food, counseling, case management, and referral services. There is a focus on relationship building and assisting youth in accessing additional services.

The two drop-in centers saw, on average, 47 youth a day and provided over 67,000 counseling interactions. The Drop-In Center provided over 1,000 case management sessions and 99% of youth who were engaged in services for at least 30 days were linked to additional services within Larkin Street. Haight Street Referral Center made 2,147 referrals to additional services and provided 174 groups.



RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS

Emergency Housing

Emergency short-term housing is often the first step in the stabilization process for homeless youth. The main focus is to provide immediate safety and stability for youth while simultaneously engaging them in case management services to address the additional issues that may be impacting their ability to obtain and maintain housing.

Diamond Youth Shelter provided emergency, short-term housing to 101 youth ages 12-17, with youth averaging 28 nights in the shelter. Seventy-eight percent of youth who received housing exited to a positive living situation, this includes group homes, transitional housing programs, and family reunification. Thirty-eight percent of youth were placed back with family members.

Length of time since youth had a reliable place to sleep

Length of time	%
Up to 3 months	50%
3-6 months	7%
6-12 months	21%
1-2 years	9%
2-3 years	4%
3-5 years	5%
5-10 years	3%
10 or more years	2%

In the last year Lark Inn provided 13,629 nights off the street to 373 youth ages 18-24. This is an 8% increase in housing nights provided and an 18% increase in youth housed from last year. Twenty percent of those youth were homeless by the age of 18, an additional 36% before the age of 21. The program provided 1,751 case management sessions and 7,142 independent living skills sessions. In addition aftercare services were received by 140 former Lark Inn residents. Eighty-eight percent of youth receiving case management services were linked to Larkin Street's Hire Up program and received employment and/or education services.

Transitional Housing

Transitional housing provides longer-term housing for youth. The guiding philosophy for transitional housing programs is to create an environment that closely mirrors real life, while also providing a safety net for youth that facilitates development of independent living skills. Youth work collaboratively with Case Managers to develop goals and create individualized case plans to achieve these goals.

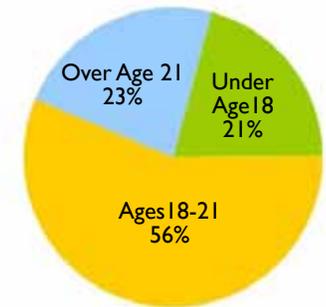
There are two types of transitional housing offered by Larkin Street: congregate and community-based housing. Congregate housing is a single site housing model, youth live in either a home or dorm-type setting. In community-based housing youth are either housed in individual apartments located in various buildings or in multiple units located in one building.

Congregate Housing Programs

The LOFT (Larkin Opportunities For Transition) is designed to meet the unique needs of homeless and runaway youth ages 15-17. One third of the youth were originally from a Latin American country. Last year the LOFT provided over 4,500 independent living skills services and 1,090 case management sessions. Among youth who exited the program 100% transitioned to a stable living situation.

Avenues to Independence is the agency's oldest non-specialized transitional housing program and serves youth ages 18-24. Last year the program provided on average two individual independent living skills services a day to residents. All youth (100%) were either employed or received employment services through Hire Up. Among youth who exited the program 100% made a transition to stable housing.

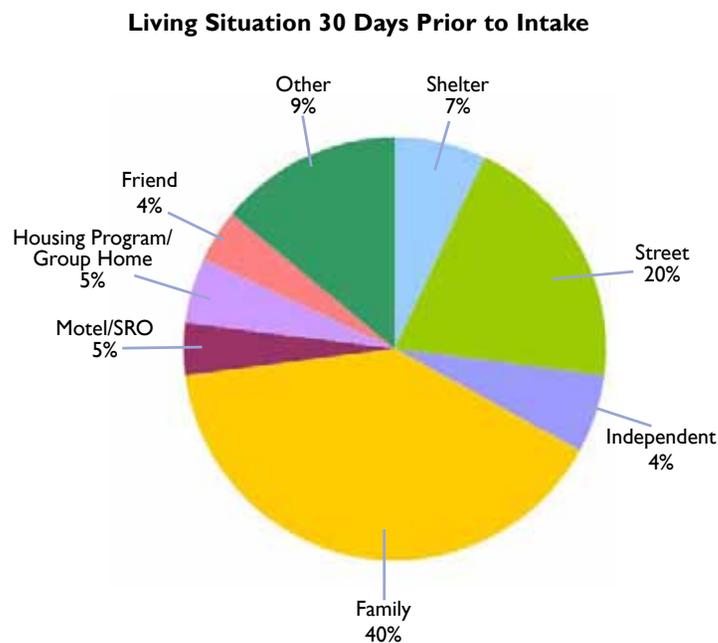
Age Youth Became Homeless



G House, Larkin Street's largest congregate program, provided an average of two independent living skills groups per week to youth ages 18-24. Eighty-eight percent of youth participated in community building activities such as recycling, gardening, or group outings. Among youth who exited the program 81% made a transition to stable housing.

Holloway House serves former foster care youth ages 18-24. Last year the program provided over 1,000 individual independent living skills services and 442 case management sessions. Eighty-nine percent of residents were linked to Hire Up for assessment of their employment and educational needs. Among youth who exited the program 73% made a transition to stable housing.

Assisted Care provides housing for HIV-positive youth ages 18-24. The program provided almost 800 case management sessions and an average of nine groups a week. All youth received medical services, 79% at a Larkin Street clinic. Among youth who exited the program 58% made a transition to stable housing.



Community Based Housing

LEASE (Larkin Extended Aftercare for Supported Emancipation) is a scattered-site residential program for youth, ages 18-24, who have emancipated from the foster care system. The program provided an average of 62 independent living skills services to each resident. Seventy-one percent of youth were employed, and 86% accessed employment services through Hire Up. Among youth who exited the program 90% made a transition to stable housing.

Castro Youth Housing Initiative is specifically designed to meet the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth ages 18-24. The program provided, on average, weekly case management sessions to residents and 40 individual independent living skills services each month. The program provided aftercare services to 16 former residents. Among youth who exited the program 86% made a transition to stable housing.

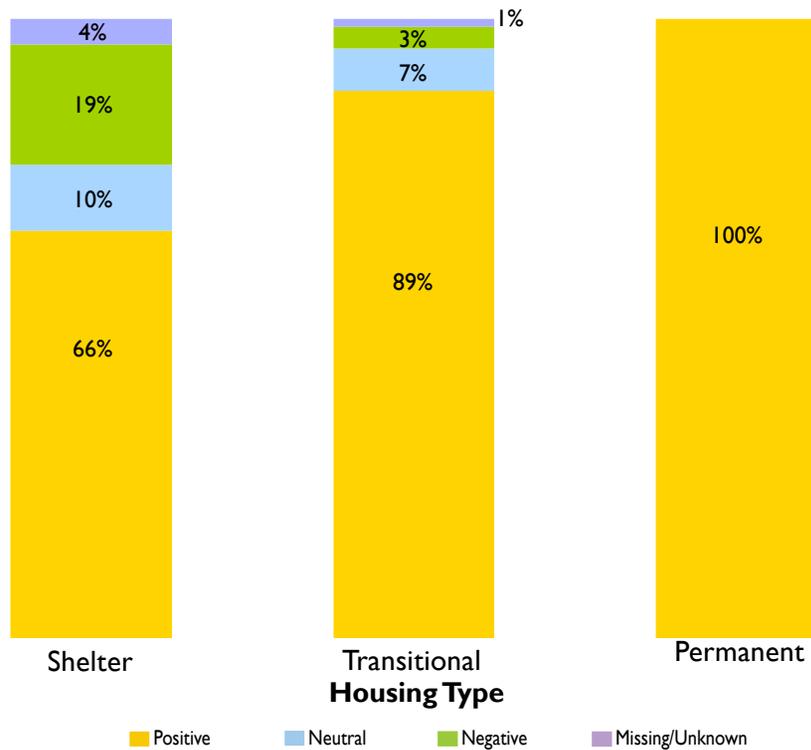
Routz serves youth ages 18-24 with serious mental health issues. The program provided an average of 82 case management sessions each month. All residents received mental health services. Program staff also provided counseling services through the support services component of the program to 279 youth not receiving housing through Routz. Eighty-eight percent of participants transitioned to stable housing at program exit.

After Care provides housing and case management services to HIV-positive youth ages 18-24. The program provided over 900 case management sessions and 304 groups last year. Approximately 70% of youth housed with the After Care program received medical services through a Larkin Street clinic. Among youth who exited the program 88% made a transition to stable housing.

Permanent Youth Housing

Ellis Street Apartments provides permanent affordable housing to youth who are in need of longer-term housing support. Six of the program beds are designated for HIV-positive youth. It provides a high level of independence as well as a safety net. Unlike adult permanent housing,

Youth Transitions from Residential Programs



youth are encouraged to move on from the program. All youth participated in voluntary case management. Among youth who exited the program 100% made a transition to stable housing.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Larkin Street provides a range of support services to address issues that are barriers to self-sufficiency including case management, education, employment, medical, and behavioral health services. Case Management assists youth to develop both short- and long-term goals, as well as to set a plan to reach them. Case Managers help youth to navigate systems to access the services and supports they need in order to reach their goals.

Education and Workforce Development

The Hire Up program provides both educational and workforce development services. Educational services include tutoring,

GED assistance, adult basic education, and college counseling. Workforce development services include job readiness services, job placement, and career development services. Last year the program served 1,073 youth.

Services Provided:

- 605 youth accessed the computer lab
- 216 youth participated in GED preparation services
- 288 youth received individual college counseling
- 212 youth participated in YouthForce (formerly Day Labor)
- 584 youth received employment case management
- 173 youth participated in Job Readiness Class
- The Arts Program conducted 609 groups

Outcomes:

- 93% of youth who attempted a GED test component were successful
- 143 youth registered for college or post-secondary classes
- 153 youth were placed in jobs with average starting wage of \$11.13

Health Services

There were 2,690 clinic visits provided to 654 youth at the Larkin Street Clinic. Fifty-seven HIV-positive youth received medical services through the Specialty Clinic located at the Assisted Care Program.

Mental health and substance use assessments were conducted with 972 youth. There were approximately 13,280 individual mental health counseling sessions provided to 691 youth across the continuum. Substance use services were provided to 966 youth who participated in 154 groups and over 11,150 individual sessions.

There were 14,824 individual HIV prevention services provided to 816 youth throughout the continuum and 487 HIV tests performed. Among youth who participated in HIV prevention services 75% said they learned ways to reduce their risk of HIV infection.

KNOWLEDGE LEADERSHIP

Larkin Street is committed to sharing knowledge with both other service providers to influence best practices in service delivery and with policymakers to impact the development of sound public policy related to homeless youth.

Last year Larkin Street:

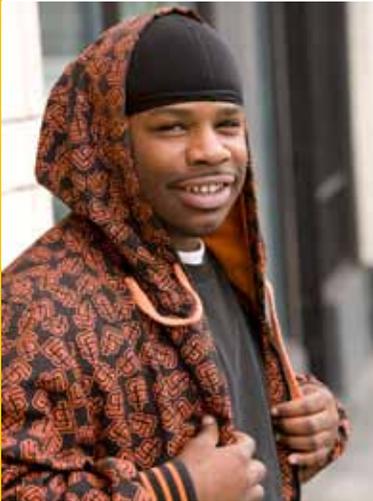
- Provided 32 conference and community presentations. Topics included housing models for youth, program evaluation, nonprofit management, and workforce development.
- Provided 20 trainings to other services providers related to our service model and approach to care
- Provided 77 instances of technical assistance to other service providers which included distribution of 71 publications
- Added four new publications related to the issues and needs of runaway and homeless youth to the agency's growing resource library.



HOW YOUTH FEEL ABOUT LARKIN STREET

Overall, youth report high satisfaction with services, the environment, and the agency as a whole. For these youth, many have found the stability and support at Larkin Street that has been absent in their lives.





The best thing at Larkin Street is...

Showers, socks, bus tokens

Los servicios que se ofrecen son muy buenos (The services that they offer are very good)

They work to help you be the best you can be

Services that are offered to us youth
when everyone else gives up

I get to eat, I can sleep indoors. I don't know how I would've gotten myself back on my feet without a service like Larkin Street

The case managers and workers are extremely helpful and caring

They provide shelter for people to get back on their feet

Safe place to sleep

Finding jobs and getting diploma

...It provides help and support for young people
who would otherwise be homeless.



CONCLUSION

Three factors that contribute to youth homelessness are family issues, lack of transition planning from systems of care, and lack of affordable housing. Improved policies related to these areas will decrease the number of homeless youth in the United States.

Greater investment must be made in keeping youth in their families, because we know that removal increases their later chances of homelessness. A major component of any youth homelessness prevention strategy must be the strengthening of families who are dealing with stressors such as interfamilial conflict, violence, juvenile delinquency, and substance use. Homelessness prevention strategies include family preservation counseling to prevent runaway behavior and intensive in-home services to keep youth out of the child welfare system. The federal funding structure for both foster care and runaway and homeless youth services contributes significantly to the focus on intervention services across the country rather than prevention efforts.¹⁵ While the 2010 expenditure for foster care and adoption services summed \$7.16 billion, in contrast only \$660 million was allocated towards prevention services aimed at keeping youth out of care.¹⁶ The newly created federal bipartisan Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth looks to examine current child welfare policies and ultimately to reduce the number of youth in care. The work of this group can potentially have a positive impact on the prevention of youth homelessness in the country.

Given the large number of youth who exit either the foster care or juvenile justice system and later become homeless more attention must be paid to transition services. Youth leaving both systems are expected to be independent at age 18, yet few have acquired the skills needed to live on their own. Opening Doors, the comprehensive national strategy to address homelessness that was developed last year by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness included a goal to improve discharge planning for youth leaving systems of care to improve housing outcomes and reduce homelessness. This year the Council commissioned a study to examine programs that assist youth in the transition from care which will be completed next year, to inform policy development. Increased focus and greater resource allocation for improved transition planning will reduce the number of youth on the streets.

Affordable housing is a critical need for transition age youth. The National Housing Trust Fund was established in 2008 to provide an ongoing, dedicated, and sufficient source of revenue for low-income housing. The majority of the funds would be for rental housing as low-income renters face the greatest difficulties in maintaining housing.¹⁷ Identification of a funding stream for the Fund would significantly increase the affordable housing stock in America and positively impact the homelessness rate, particularly by intervening prior to homelessness.

In addition to prevention efforts we must have intervention services that assist youth who become homeless in becoming self-sufficient. Essential to any intervention approach is housing. In addition there needs to be a range of support services including case management, behavioral health services, educational support, and workforce development.

Housing is crucial to stabilizing the lives of homeless youth. There must be a range of housing options available, from emergency housing programs that provide immediate shelter to longer-term supported housing. Increasing the amount of available transitional and supportive permanent housing available to youth will prevent cycling through emergency services and reduce chronic homelessness. San Francisco has made great strides in the goals set forth in 2007 by the Mayor's Transitional Youth Task Force, with approximately half of the 400 new housing slots already created or in the pipeline, and we must continue our efforts.

A lack of steady income is one of the main reasons that youth are homeless. Employment is a key component to the stability they need to find their way off of the streets. Entry level services must provide basic services such as assistance with attainment of work documents and development of basic employment skills. Workforce readiness skills are for youth who have developed the basics and are ready to start preparing to enter the workforce. Services at this level should include résumé preparation assistance, tools for finding employment, development of interview skills, job placement, and continued development of employment skills and professional conduct. Employment training provides the next level of skills development for youth and can include a range of opportunities such as advanced technical training, supported employment, and internship opportunities. Job retention services



are crucial in providing support for youth once they have obtained employment. Finally, in addition to services focused on employment it is important that youth have access to educational services that will increase both their earning potential and chance for long term self-sufficiency.

In order to reduce the incidence of youth homelessness in San Francisco and the United States we need a strategy that includes both prevention and intervention. Prevention efforts should focus on systems reform and increasing the availability of affordable housing. Central to intervention efforts are housing which gets youth off the streets and starts the stabilization process. Unlike homeless adults, who generally possess the core skill set needed to maintain housing despite the crisis that led to their homelessness, homeless youth have not developed the skills necessary to live independently and maintain a self-supporting income. Therefore just as crucial are a range of support services to address issues that are barriers to stability.

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- 3 Unless otherwise noted data source is Larkin Street client database. Data set comprised of youth served and services provided 7/1/10-6/30/11. Intakes are not completed with all youth therefore data subsets may not include total population of youth. Only valid responses included unless exception is noted. Due to rounding, some totals may not equal 100%.
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Since 1984, Larkin Street Youth Services has been committed to helping San Francisco's most vulnerable youth ages 12-24 move beyond street life. This commitment has fueled the development of a comprehensive continuum of services that is nationally recognized as a model of innovative and effective care. We offer stability, safety and the opportunity for a better life.

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