



Understanding Youth Homelessness

Young people face a number of challenges growing up. Homelessness shouldn't be one of them. Unfortunately, young people are at a far greater risk of becoming homeless through experiences outside of their control. This includes having suffered or witnessed abuse or neglect in the home, or if their family falls into hard times.

We need to understand who these young people are, and what barriers they are facing, in order to create a support system that will help prevent and end youth homelessness. These young people have enormous potential. All around us are future doctors, writers, artists, teachers, and thinkers. Let's tap into the potential inside every young person in Washington state.

By the Numbers

Roughly 32% of the total homeless population is young people under the age of 24.

Some homeless children and youth are with their families. In [January 2015](#), more than 206,000 people in families with children experienced homelessness across the United States.

But some young people are on their own. Another 73,700 youth in the United States were homeless and living apart from their families last year.

In Washington state, nearly 13,000 unaccompanied youth access homeless housing and services each year in Washington.

In the 2014-2015 school year, more than 35,000 public school students of all ages in Washington state were identified as homeless. That's enough to fill over 500 school buses.

Risk Factors and Demographics

Contrary to popular stereotypes, approximately 70 –75% of homeless youth are "local," meaning they come from the immediately surrounding geographic area.

Family conflict is the most prevalent reason youth and young adults identify for becoming homeless.

Up to 50% of homeless youth have been placed in foster care or an institutional setting—like the juvenile justice system—at some point in their life.

Up to 40% of homeless youth are LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, or Questioning). Family rejection on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is a frequent factor contributing to LGBTQ homelessness.

Homeless youth suffer significant mental health problems, including depression, substance abuse, suicidal thoughts, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorders.