(Reach out, Engage, Assist, & Count to end Homelessness)

Maryland Unaccompanied Homeless Youth and Young Adult Demonstration Project

Phase 1 Report

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The Institute for Innovation & Implementation
University of Maryland School of Social Work

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DHCD
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Introduction & Background

The transition to adulthood is a critical time of growth for all youth and young adults.[1] However, unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults (typically ages 14 through 24) are one of the most vulnerable and disconnected populations, facing a multitude of barriers and risks that can impede their development and future life outcomes. Youth and young adults who are homeless face particular and significant challenges as a result of the need to survive in the midst of instability (Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, 2008). Youth and young adults experiencing housing instability face greater risks for victimization, exploitation, and substance abuse and the hardships these youth encounter often contribute to psychological, social and behavioral health problems, which exacerbate their daily challenges (Moore, 2005). These barriers continue through adulthood, with "many homeless youth turn[ing] 21 in poor health, inadequately educated, and ill-prepared to find a steady job"(Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, 2008).

Homeless youth and young adults are a diverse population, encompassing "a wide spectrum of experiences, backgrounds, and trajectories" (Toro, Lesperance, & Braciszewski, 2011, p. 2). Youth and young adults who are homeless differ from other populations facing homelessness, such as homeless families and adults experiencing chronic homelessness. Homelessness among families is often related to socioeconomic factors (e.g., income and lack of affordable housing), while chronic homelessness is often associated with individuals who experience disabling health and behavioral health conditions (Dennis, Locke, & Khadduri, 2007; United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, n.d.). Although there is no single pathway to homelessness, primary reasons often cited by youth and young adults are family problems, sexual abuse, exiting system involvement (i.e. foster care and juvenile justice systems), and economic difficulties (National Network for Youth, n.d.). For many youth and young adults, homelessness is part of a pattern of running away or being kicked out, and ranges from an initial stay with a friend to living on the streets (Moore, 2005).

Although the challenges faced by unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults are recognized, this particular population remains largely understudied, and gaps in knowledge persist. Homeless youth and young adults, for the most part, prefer not to be visible and are often referred to as the "hidden population." This is often a result of negative past involvement with particular adults, systems, and institutions that have fostered distrust, especially of authority figures. Homeless youth and young adults report a fear of being returned to unwanted environments that induced their current state of homelessness. This population of youth and young adults is also understudied because they are less likely to access services; many of these youth and young adults do not access shelters or other service providers due to lack of access and/or knowledge regarding availability and eligibility (Pergamit, Cunningham, Burt, Lee, Howell, & Bertumen, 2013).

[1] The term "youth" refers to individuals under age 18; "young adult" refers to individuals who are ages 18-24.

Defining the Population

In addition to the hidden nature of homeless youth and young adults, the lack of agreement on the definition of unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults is often a cause for confusion among researchers, policy makers, and other stakeholders. Several federal agencies serving youth, young adults, and families have formulated their own definitions, which have overlapping and diverging elements relating to definitions of homelessness, unaccompanied, and youth (See Appendix A for a comparison table of federal definitions produced by the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth). The three most widely accepted definitions of unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults were established by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Department of Education (DOE), and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and can be summarized as:

- Unaccompanied homeless individuals under the age of 24 who lack a stable living situation in the present and the near future (HUD);[2]
- School-aged youth who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residences (DOE); and,
- Homeless individuals younger than 22 years old or individuals under the age of 18 who are runaways, street youths, or at-risk of disconnecting from their parent(s) or legal guardian(s) (HHS).

Efforts to Count Homeless Youth

Researchers face multiple difficulties in studying this population (Pergamit et al, 2013), even as key stakeholders understand the important role of data in tackling the issue of homelessness. HUD is at the forefront of most locally-based, data collection efforts due to the mandates that HUD asserts in order for communities to continue to receive certain federal funding. In particular, communities are mandated by HUD to conduct annual Point-in-Time (PIT) counts as part of their funding mechanisms.[3] The data provided by PIT counts have been invaluable in expanding knowledge, shaping policies, and directing services. The standard and methodology for the HUD PIT count has continuously evolved, taking into account the changing landscape of the homeless population (HUD, 2012). **For the 2013 PIT count, HUD began to require communities to include homeless youth and young adults in the PIT counts. However, data stemming from HUD PIT counts remain largely more effective in capturing data on the adult homeless population, and its ability to capture information on the homeless youth and young adult population necessitates further advancement** (Pergamit et al, 2013).

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[2] The HUD definition of "homeless" is further categorized into four categories: Category 1 - Literally homeless; Category 2 – Imminent Risk of Homeless; Category 3 – Homeless under Other Federal Statutes; and Category 4 – Fleeing/Attempting to Flee Domestic Violence (HUD, n.d.; HUD, 2013). Although this definition encompasses a broad population, assistance funded by HUD is primarily directed to individuals and families under Category 1.

[3] Communities submit their collected data annually as part of their Continuum of Care (CoC) application for Homeless Assistance Grants. HUD requires a shelter count every year and a non-shelter count every other year (See Page 11 for definitions of shelter and non-shelter counts) (HUD, 2012).

In acknowledgement of the dearth of data regarding youth and young adults experiencing homelessness, local communities have spearheaded efforts to collect more accurate data. By learning more about the size and characteristics of this highly vulnerable population, communities hope to better align services to improve the well-being and living situations of unaccompanied homeless youth. Communities have leveraged their experiences with homeless data collection from the HUD annual PIT counts to inform data collection efforts specifically focused on youth and young adults. For example, government and nonprofit organizations convened in King County, Washington to develop a strategic framework to end youth homelessness by 2020. As part of this effort, an annual PIT count of unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults in King County called *Count Us In* has been implemented. *Count Us In* is designed as a complementary effort to the annual PIT count required by HUD, allowing King County to take a deeper look into the youth and young adult subpopulation. The fifth annual *Count Us In* will be held on January 22, 2015 (King County Department of Community and Human Services, n.d.).

Nationally, the federal government initiated the Youth Count! Initiative, part of a multiagency effort to end youth homelessness in the United States by 2020. As part of this initiative, four federal agencies – The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), DOE, HUD, and HHS – launched Youth Count! to improve data collection. Nine pilot sites were chosen to develop and carry out a count of unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults, conducted alongside the annual HUD PIT counts. Lessons learned from the experiences of these nine pilot sites were intended to inform strategies and formulate guidelines for future youth counts. These recent efforts have attempted to fill the knowledge gap on the extent of youth homelessness across the United States (Pergamit et al, 2013).

Estimates of Homeless Youth

Due to the transient nature and varying definitions of unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults and uncoordinated enumeration efforts across geographic areas, estimates of unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults have been largely inconsistent. Nationally, official estimates have varied widely; in 2009, HUD identified 22,700 homeless youth from the Homeless Management Information System, while the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA, part of HHS) estimated 1.6 million youth in 2004 between the ages of 12 and 17 who run away from home and slept on the street based on the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (Pergamit et al, 2013).

In Maryland, two jurisdictions have engaged in efforts to enumerate unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults in their areas. In 2011, Prince George's County used a service-based count to estimate that there were 185 unaccompanied homeless youth. The Johns Hopkins Center for Adolescent Health conducted unaccompanied homeless youth counts in Baltimore City in 2009 and 2011. Their estimates suggest that the number of homeless youth has been growing in Baltimore City, increasing from 426 to 640 from 2009 to 2011(Maryland Task Force to Study Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth, 2013).

Data collected by local school systems under the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Improvement Act (McKinney-Vento Act) identified about 15,897 homeless students enrolled in Maryland public schools during the 2012-2013 school year.[4] This represents an over-the-year increase of 8.2 percent from the 2011-2012 estimate of 14,691 students (National Center for Homeless Education, n.d.). Although efforts to enumerate homeless youth in Maryland have been limited, data collected show that a sizable number of youth and young adult are experiencing homelessness and this population appears to be growing.

The Demonstration Project

The Maryland General Assembly has demonstrated awareness of the concerning problem of unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults in the state. In 2013, the General Assembly passed Senate Bill 764/House Bill 823, which established the Task Force to Study Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth. The primary objective of the Task Force was to compile information on and identify the unique needs of unaccompanied homeless youth, identify gaps in the programs and resources currently available to meet those needs, and collect and compile data on the unaccompanied homeless youth population in Maryland (Maryland Task Force, 2013).

The Task Force issued a series of recommendations in its November 2013 report. One of the recommendations was to "obtain accurate, detailed information on the number, characteristics, and needs of unaccompanied homeless youth in Maryland" (Maryland Task Force, 2013, p. 2). During the 2014 legislative session, the General Assembly established the Maryland Unaccompanied Homeless Youth and Young Adult Count Demonstration Project (Demonstration Project) under Chapter 425 of House Bill 794.

Structure of the Demonstration Project

The legislation identified the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) as the lead government agency overseeing the Demonstration Project. A Steering Committee comprised of individuals representing the General Assembly, government agencies, local Continuums of Care (CoCs), and other key organizations was formed to guide the activities of the Demonstration Project (See Appendix for a list of Steering Committee Members).

DHCD contracted with The Institute for Innovation & Implementation, University of Maryland School of Social Work (The Institute) to serve as the Coordinating Entity, managing the primary activities of the Demonstration Projection. Under the guidance of the Steering Committee, the Institute will coordinate with the CoCs named in the legislation,

[4] The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act aims to ensure that "each homeless child and youth has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, . . . ,as other children and youth" (US Department of Education, 2004). Under the McKinney-Vento Act, school districts are required to designated a homeless liaison, track their homeless students, and report data annually. Data collected includes enrollment counts, residency, and academic progress of youth in homeless situations (US Department of Education, 2004).

which will serve as the implementing bodies for Maryland's upcoming Demonstration Youth Count. [5]

Six of Maryland's 16 CoCs were named in the legislation as part of the Demonstration Project and are highlighted in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1: LOCAL CONTINUUMS OF CARE IN MARYLAND (SEE APPENDIX C FOR A MAP OF THE COCS)

CoC Number	CoC Name
MD – 500	Cumberland/Allegany County CoC
MD – 501	Baltimore City CoC
MD – 502	Hartford County CoC
MD - 503	Annapolis/Anne Arundel County CoC
MD – 504	Howard County CoC
MD – 505	Baltimore County CoC
MD – 506	Carroll County CoC
MD – 507	Cecil County CoC
MD – 508	Charles, Calvert, St. Mary's Counties CoC
MD - 509	Frederick City & County CoC
MD – 510	Garrett County CoC
MD – 511	Mid-Shore Regional CoC
MD – 512	Hagerstown/Washington CoC
MD – 513	Wicomico/Somerset/Worcester County CoC
MD – 600	Prince George's County CoC
MD - 601	Montgomery County CoC

DHCD and the Steering Committee operationalized the authorizing legislation for the Demonstration Project into three goals for the Project:

1. To engage youth, young adults, local community members, and federal, state and local constituencies in preventing and ending youth homelessness through participation in the design and implementation of the Demonstration Youth Count and the associated policy and evaluation activities;
2. To conduct an effective Demonstration Youth Count as an ongoing way for federal, state and local constituencies to track progress in understanding and meeting the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults that will result in programmatic, budgetary, and policy changes to end and prevent youth homelessness; and,
3. To incorporate housing and homeless services and programs into the multi-agency data collaborative at the University of Maryland to provide quality, up-to-date, longitudinal data and information related to overall program efficiency and effectiveness in serving the children, youth, and families of Maryland.

[5] A CoC is a planning body comprised of local nonprofit organizations and government entities that coordinates funding & services related to homelessness. They are federally mandated to track and monitor homelessness in their area (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2010).

As evidenced by these goals, which will guide the efforts of the partners and multiple stakeholders involved throughout the Demonstration Project, this **Demonstration Project exceeds the scope of a typical youth count.** It is being designed to enumerate the size and scope of homelessness among Maryland's youth and young adults and the current support system available to serve this population and develop an efficient and consistent mechanism by which the scope of youth and young adult homelessness can be tracked over time. This Demonstration Project is being undertaken with an ultimate goal of supporting Maryland to end and prevent homelessness for youth and young adults.

Demonstration Project Activities

The Demonstration Project officially began on July 1, 2014, and a final report of the results is due to the General Assembly on September 30, 2017. As outlined in Table 2, DHCD, The Institute, and the Steering Committee have identified five phases that will comprise the entirety of the Demonstration Project. The intent is to implement the pilot project in the identified six CoCs in 2015, and evaluate their experiences to improve the methods and process for a statewide enumeration planned in 2016, as resources permit.

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF THE FIVE PHASES

Phase	Estimated Timeline
Phase 1: Design	August 2014 – January 2015
Phase 2: Pilot Implementation	February 2015 – October 2015
Phase 3: Analysis and Evaluation	October 2015 – January 2016
Phase 4: Pilot Replication and Expansion	January 2016 – October 2016
Phase 5: Evaluation and Systemic Recommendations	October 2016 – April 2017

Overview of Phase 1 Activities

For Phase 1 of the Demonstration Project, The Institute was tasked with developing a detailed methodology for the Pilot Implementation to determine the number and characteristics of unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults in the six CoCs, which will be referred to as the Demonstration Youth Count. With the support of the Steering Committee, The Institute employed multiple research methods to inform the design of the methodology. First, a literature review of previous youth counts was conducted to acquire lessons learned and best practices. Second, focus groups and key informant interviews were organized to obtain suggestions and recommendations on strategies for the Demonstration Youth Count. **This report focuses on Phase 1:** synthesizing information drawn from the literature review and qualitative research, detailing the methodology proposed for the Pilot Implementation (Phase 2), and outlining the framework for future phases of the Demonstration Project.

The focus of this report is on Phase 1, designing the Demonstration Youth Count.

Methodology Review

In order to develop an informed strategy to conduct a statewide enumeration of unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults in Maryland, The Institute turned to previous youth counts conducted by other communities.[6] By reviewing past efforts, The Institute intended to acquire lessons learned and best practices that can be replicated, and enhance the efficiency and efficacy of Maryland's upcoming enumeration.

Youth counts by ten sites were evaluated for the Demonstration Project:

- **Massachusetts** – As of December 2014, Massachusetts is the only state that has conducted a statewide enumeration of homeless youth and young adults and published an in-depth evaluation of its experience and findings. This study served as the primary model for the proposed Maryland methodology.
- **Youth Count! Sites (4)** – Although nine sites participated in the federal Youth Count! Initiative, only four sites have published a report of their experiences and findings: *Cleveland, OH; King County/Seattle, WA; New York City, NY; Whatcom County, WA*. These reports where closely examined, while the process studied of these counts provided additional information on overarching lessons derived across sites from the Youth Count! Initiative.[7]
- **Maryland-specific counts (2)** – It was imperative that the review included examples from Maryland. *Baltimore City* and *Prince George County* were two jurisdictions in Maryland that have conducted to enumerate homeless youth.
- **Other Metro areas (3)** – The experiences of other metro areas (i.e. *Billings, MT; Clark County, NV; Washington, DC*) were assessed to ensure that a sufficient number of studies were included to perform a robust analysis.

It is important to note the youth counts implemented by many of these sites were largely influenced by the HUD PIT count (especially Massachusetts and the Youth Count! Initiative participants). The HUD PIT Count historically has been the primary source for data on homeless individuals, and its community-based structure has ensured that CoCs and other key stakeholders addressing homelessness were involved in the process. Therefore, many sites conducting youth counts have relied heavily on their experiences with the HUD PIT counts to guide their strategies. In some cases, the youth count was an addendum to the annual HUD PIT count, which largely shaped the structure and process of the youth count.

The following sections will compare and contrast the experiences of the ten sites, paying special attention to the following topic areas: enumeration methodology, survey design and administration, and planning efforts. Furthermore, recommendations, limitations, and

[6] This review was based on secondary research, relying on published reports available to the public. The Institute did not have direct contact with the authors of the reports or stakeholders involved with the planning and implementation of the enumerations.

[7] The Urban Institute was commissioned to conduct a process evaluation of the Youth Count! Initiative to identify lessons and promising practices from the experiences of the nine pilot sites. The nine pilot sites were Boston, MA; Cleveland, OH; Hennepin County, MN; Houston, TX; Lost Angeles, CA; New York City, NY; King County/Seattle, WA; Washington State; and Winston-Salem, NC.

best practices were drawn from the studies to highlight lessons that can guide Maryland in the near future. Appendix D provides a more detailed summary of the experiences of each site. In the sections that follow, the term "sites" is used to refer to the collective experiences of the 10 sites reviewed.

Definitions of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

As noted above, a single, consistent definition of unaccompanied homeless youth does not exist. Several federal agencies have developed definitions, but vary according to their objective and population of focus. Sites primarily referred to the common federal definitions developed by HUD, DOE, and/or HHS for their initial framework, and made modifications based on their specific situations and focus (See Appendix E for specific definitions employed by each site).

The maximum age examined to define youth was up to the age of 25, but the age range varied across sites. Sites like New York City and Whatcom County, Washington incorporated all ages under a maximum threshold, while others formulated both minimum and maximum ages (e.g. Seattle focused on youth between ages 12 – 25). All of the definitions included youth living in shelters or transitional housing; currently living in locations unsuited for human habitation (e.g. car, parks, etc.); or in temporary living situations (e.g. couch surfing, staying with a friend). In addition to estimating the number of unaccompanied homeless youth, many sites indicated attempts to gain a better understanding of a specific population of focus. For example, multiple sites made extra efforts to engage the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) communities during the count.

The age ranges varied across sites, but all used definitions that included youth living in shelters or transitional housing, in locations unsuited for human habitation, or in temporary living situations.

Planning and Engagement

The enumeration projects were multi-partnership endeavors, incorporating the knowledge and participation of organizations serving vulnerable youth, not necessarily homeless youth. A leading entity was typically identified to lead and manage the wide array of efforts occurring in multiple communities, providing coordination and support to the local organizations implementing the counts.

In Massachusetts, the Working Group – created by the Legislature, comprised of representatives across the homeless youth infrastructure – served as the leading entity, while the local CoCs served as the implementing bodies. The state budget allocated $150,000 for the 2014 Youth Count, and the Working Group offered each CoC a $4,750 grant to assist with implementation. Initial engagement efforts to get buy-in from key community stakeholders were initiated by the Working Group. Each CoC had autonomy on how to conduct the youth count, but the Working Group provided technical assistance to the CoCs throughout the implementation process. Within the participating CoCs, planning committees were created to manage participants and activities within their localities.

Sites also used the expertise of specific organizations to spearhead certain components of the enumeration. For example, in Washington DC, participating organizations that specialized in youth outreach managed the teams that were deployed during the survey period.

Count Strategies

Following the HUD PIT count methodology guidelines, all of the sites employed a PIT count strategy as a component of their methodology. Typically, a PIT count of homeless individuals involves a shelter count, non-shelter count, or both (See Appendix E for a summary of enumeration strategies employed across the ten sites):

- **Shelter count** – youth who spend the night in a shelter or a transitional housing program during the night(s) of the survey period are enumerated
- **Non-shelter count** – a broad approach that can encompass a service-based count and/or street count:
    - **Service-Based Count** – youth who utilize the services offered by participating providers during the survey period are enumerated
    - **Street Count** - youth on the streets during the survey period are surveyed to assess if they are unaccompanied homeless youth

The most common strategy for data collection utilized across the 10 sites was a combination of a shelter and service-based count, while seven sites also planned and conducted a street count. To supplement information collected from the PIT counts, multiple sites also used existing administrative data. King County obtained additional information from their state's homeless information system. Other sites, such as Cleveland, engaged local school systems in order to acquire data collected by the schools as mandated by the McKinney-Vento Act.

Surveys

Survey Design

The survey instrument dictated the type of information available for analysis. Sites typically referred to existing surveys used by other communities as models, making appropriate modifications. Some areas modeled their surveys based on past surveys used in their area – New York City referred to a 2007 NYC youth count survey, while Massachusetts consulted the 2012 Boston Youth Count. Other sites turned to surveys developed in other states. Washington, DC based their survey on a homelessness survey designed by Minnesota.

Core survey questions included in all the surveys were items assessing current housing status and demographic information (See Appendix G for more details on the survey instrument). The majority of the surveys also added items related to personal history, education and employment status, and service utilization. The length of the survey used across sites varied, ranging from 18 questions in Seattle to 58 questions in Billings. Many sites expressed concerns that the survey instruments were too long, leading to a notable amount of incomplete surveys.

Survey Administration

Survey periods varied across and within sites. For example, in Massachusetts the overall survey period encompassed two weeks during December 2013 and January 2014. However, local areas had discretion on when and how long to administer the survey within the two week period. Across the ten sites examined in this review, the survey period ranged from one night to two weeks. PIT Counts are for a single night; however, most of the sites that conducted their youth counts in conjunction with their HUD PIT count extended their survey period beyond one night for the purpose of their youth count.

For the street counts, the majority of the sites relied on volunteers to administer the survey. Participating agencies helped recruit volunteers, with local colleges serving as a valuable source of volunteers. Training was given to all volunteers where the following topics were discussed: primary objectives of the project, procedures to follow during the enumeration, and tips to identify unaccompanied homeless youth in the streets. The extensiveness of the training process differed across sites. Clark County offered the most complete training process, requiring volunteers to attend six, one-hour sessions and using an in-depth curriculum.

Volunteers typically were deployed in teams of two and three to survey youth who fit a certain profile. Some sites, such as Clark County and Washington DC, designated a lead person within the team who was either a staff member or a person who received additional training. Volunteers were assigned to cover areas that were identified prior to the count. Sites employed various approaches to identifying coverage areas for the street counts, which were dependent on the available resources and the scope of the enumeration project. Clark County conceived a countywide count; therefore, they divided the entire county into 3.5 X 4.5 mile grids and assigned at least one volunteer team to each grid. The majority of sites relied on the identification of "hot spots" to construct their coverage area. Volunteers were instructed to survey areas surrounding locations where youth were known to congregate. Common hot spots included shopping malls, parks, and recreation centers.

A paper survey was the main medium utilized across sites. However, sites differed in terms of administration modes; the most common modes were self-administration of either paper or electronic surveys and interviews. In some areas, youth appeared to prefer self-administering the survey, such as in Washington DC.

Marketing and Outreach

All sites utilized marketing and outreach processes to ensure that youth were aware of the project and the survey prior to the start of the enumeration. Traditional advertising efforts were utilized, such as flyers and posters, and placed in areas where youth are known to gather. Furthermore, social media was found to be an efficient way of connecting with youth. This was found to be particularly useful when the social media mechanism was continuously maintained. Submitting press releases early in the project also appeared to be a valuable strategy. Press releases led to newspaper and television interviews where

human-interest stories relating to youth homelessness could be explored and awareness both of the issue of youth homelessness and the upcoming count could be expanded.

Billings, Montana stood out with regard to marketing, as their public relations efforts utilized a method designed to invoke communitywide buy-in. Part of the marketing strategy in Billings was to ensure that even local establishments that were not necessarily connected to youth were knowledgeable and involved in the count. The lead entity established a presence on social media and consistently updated their Facebook page and Twitter feeds throughout the process of the enumeration.

In addition to the strategies to publicize the counts, magnet events – special events to attract homeless youth who do not typically use emergency shelter or other services – were held. All of Youth Count! sites reviewed and Massachusetts held magnet events. Typically, a service provider held the magnet event, offering food, drinks and other activities. Seattle held a "sleepover" event between 2 AM to 5 AM to attract youth who would otherwise be spending the night outside. In addition, Whatcom County used the magnet event as a kickoff event to start the survey period.

Youth & Young Adult Involvement

Youth and young adults who were homeless or have had past experiences with homelessness provided valuable insights on multiple aspects of the enumeration projects. They provided support in designing the survey instruments, formulating the coverage areas for survey administration, training volunteers, and administering the survey:

Youth and young adults with current or past experience with homelessness provided valuable input and support into the design and implementation of the counts.

- Massachusetts, Cleveland, and Whatcom County piloted survey instruments with youth. Their perspective was especially helpful in ensuring that youth would be able to comprehend the survey easily, providing feedback on word choice, structure, and overall readability.
- Massachusetts, Cleveland, and Seattle worked with youth to identify local hot spots where youth congregated, especially locations that were not common knowledge.
- Washington, DC involved youth during the volunteer training sessions. They provided recommendations on how to identify and approach homeless youth during survey administration.
- Massachusetts, Cleveland, New York City, Seattle, and Whatcom County had youth administer the survey during the count. These youth were able to identify unaccompanied homeless youth on the streets and connect them to participate in the process. However, Massachusetts did raise concerns with having youth as interviewers.

The firsthand knowledge of youth proved to be a source of pertinent information; however, some sites did face difficulties in recruiting youth. Many of the sites recommended heightening efforts toward involving youth in future counts.

Lessons Learned

Certain lessons and practices stood out from the experiences of other communities in order to offer guidance for Maryland. Below are ten key lessons deduced from the experiences of the ten sites reviewed.

1. ***Formulate a concrete definition of* unaccompanied homeless youth.** Many participating service providers already follow a specific definition of homeless youth. In Cleveland, confusion related to the definition led to participating service providers reporting estimates based on different definitions of homeless youth. Maryland will need to reach an agreement on a specific definition for all participants to follow for the Demonstration Project. Efforts will need to be expended to ensure that participants are aware of the definition.

2. ***Educate Continuums of Care and implementing bodies in the early stages of the enumeration process.*** Although many of the implementing bodies will have past experiences in implementing a homeless PIT count, they may not be aware of recent efforts to enumerate homeless youth. An initial educational component to ensure that all implementing bodies are aware of the scope of the project and the methodology may be necessary. Massachusetts hosted a conference that highlighted the objectives of the initiative, further expanded on the methodology and the survey instrument, and provided a forum where participants discussed the issue of youth homelessness. In Maryland, some of the CoCs have been part of the Steering Committee and at least one effort has been made to engage with each of the six pilot CoCs during Phase 1, but further efforts will be necessary.

3. ***Consider the advantages and disadvantages of incorporating the Youth Count into the annual Point-in-Time homeless count required by HUD.*** Some sites conducted their youth count in conjunction with the annual homeless PIT count, building on the homeless youth and young adults count requirements introduced by HUD in 2013. By coordinating with the HUD PIT count, the youth count can leverage existing capacity and knowledge that coincide with the homeless count. However, the coordination also presented challenges. Some CoCs in Massachusetts indicated that it created confusion, especially dealing with multiple surveys. Furthermore, the HUD PIT count is conducted in January, which many indicated may not be the most appropriate time to conduct a youth count as there could be a downward bias in the estimate.

4. ***Ask about housing status rather than directly asking about homelessness.*** Many surveys asked broader questions related to housing status, rather than homelessness. This approach allows the researcher the flexibility to construct estimates for different measures of homelessness. Massachusetts was able to calculate estimates for the HUD and ICH definitions of unaccompanied homeless youth.

5. ***Keep the survey short and succinct.*** Common complaints among respondents were related to the length and clarity of the survey instrument. To reduce the number of

incomplete surveys, prioritize the survey questions and place filter questions in the beginning of the instruments. Furthermore, be conservative with the use of sub-questions and skip patterns, which were often a point of confusion among respondents. Pilot test the survey with youth focus groups to test the appropriateness and readability of the survey instrument.

6. ***Require volunteers to attend organized training sessions.*** Training sessions with a fixed lesson plan should be a required component. For sites using a large share of volunteers who do not have experience working with homeless youth and/or administering surveys, the training sessions played a significant role. An adequate amount of time should be devoted to training to ensure that volunteers are knowledgeable and prepared. A prepared team of volunteers can reduce confusion on the streets and improve the efficiency of the counts.

7. ***Engage local school systems early in the process.*** Schools can help advertise the enumeration project and direct students to take the survey. However, many areas cited difficulties in engaging with schools. Only a handful of CoCs in Massachusetts had success in engaging schools. The New Bedford CoC held an school assembly to educate youth about the youth count and direct them to the survey.

8. ***Conduct debriefings after the enumeration with individuals involved with the process.*** Multiple sites interviewed participating service providers and volunteers to gain insight, feedback, and recommendations for future counts. Billings held a forum for volunteers where they could openly discuss their experience. Afterwards, they were given a survey to evaluate their experience with the enumeration process. It was clear that King County incorporated lessons from their 2013 count in their 2014 count. Youth involvement was minimal in the 2013 count, limited to helping identify hot spots. In 2014, responding to feedback, youth were involved across the entire process from planning to survey administration.

9. ***Use of incentives was a common strategy, but benefits from incentives are unclear.*** The majority of sites provided incentives to youth who worked on the enumeration project. Some cites, like New York City and Massachusetts (some areas only), also provided incentives to youth for taking the survey. However, the sites were not able to make conclusions regarding the effects of incentives on survey participation. CoCs in Massachusetts did indicate that they planned on continuing to offer incentives in the upcoming 2015 youth count.

10. ***Involve youth and young adults in the process; their insights on planning and outreach have been consistently identified as a useful source of information.*** Their consultation was valuable in identifying hot spots, piloting the survey, and participating in outreach efforts to publicize the count. However, some Youth Count! sites reported issues with youth serving as interviewers and concerns were raised regarding youth approaching strangers on the street.

Qualitative Research Results[8]

Background & Purpose

The Institute sought to obtain additional expert information in order to inform the development of a comprehensive strategy for data collection, including the type of data to collect, how to collect data, and recruitment strategies. The six pilot CoCs were asked to identify key individuals that would provide guidance on the logistics, recruitment, outreach for youth, and specifics for question domains and types of questions that should be considered for the Demonstration Youth Count. The goal was to provide recommendations from experts in the field on how to market and conduct the Demonstration Youth Count and what questions to ask that will yield information as to the experiences, needs, and barriers while also reaching the majority of unaccompanied youth and young adults, from age 14 through 24, in the six pilot CoCs site.

Data Collection

Data collection efforts were comprised of meetings, focus groups, and document review. In efforts to research comprehensive methodologies, each CoC was asked either to participate in or suggest potential individuals for interviews or focus groups. One focus group with service providers was held. Although the Demonstration Project Steering Committee was developed during the summer of 2014, the majority of the Phase I activities occurred from September through December of 2014. The Baltimore County CoC organized a focus group comprised of individuals providing housing and homelessness services to Baltimore County residents. A strong emphasis was placed on obtaining input from young adults, which resulted in a focus group with young adults that was organized by the Youth Empowered Society (YES) Drop-In Center.

The Baltimore Homeless Youth Initiative (BHYI) Youth PIT Count Workgroup had been holding ongoing meetings in efforts to plan for their January 2015 Baltimore City HUD PIT Count. Researchers from The Institute were invited to attend the BHYI Youth PIT Count Workgroup meetings. In addition, information discussed and provided during the Demonstration Project Steering Committee meetings as well as documents shared through the Committee were considered for data analysis or information that could inform the suggested methodology for the Demonstration Project. A list of types of data collection, participants, and days for collection are presented below.

Prior to each focus group and meeting attended for this work, participants were provided with a document that included a description that detailed the reasons for the focus group or meeting attendance. This description is included in Appendix H. Focus group questions for the youth were developed by The Institute with input from the YES program director. Youth focus group questions are included in Appendix I. Youth and young adults who participated in the survey were given $30 (in cash) as an incentive to participate. Focus

[8] An Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol was not required since, during Phase I, work was done for DHCD related to the design of a methodology to enumerate homeless youth. The Institute did not conduct research, collect identifiers, or meet with any vulnerable populations (as defined by the IRB). Youth (individuals under 18) were not permitted to participate in the focus group.

group questions for the CoCs were developed with input from the Demonstration Project Steering Committee. Questions are included in Appendix J, along with the list of meetings, dates, and organizations represented.

Data Analysis Methodology

Data analysis involved a triangulation of using the analysis from the focus groups as well as document analysis. A description of each method is provided below.

Focus Group Analysis. All focus groups were analyzed with the goal of providing an organized description of the how to capture youth and young adult experiences with homelessness and how these experiences can be captured in the Demonstration Youth Count (following recommendations from Sandelowski, 2000). Both focus groups were audio recorded. Memos and notes were taken during the focus groups. The focus groups were listened to and interpreted to identify themes. Descriptive interpretation guidelines as suggested by Krueger (2009) and Rabiee (2004) were followed. Specifically, the audios were interpreted by reviewing words, context, internal consistency, frequency, intensity of comments, specificity of comments, extensiveness (of comments), and big ideas. Memos and notes on concepts and ideas were identified and descriptive categories were formed. The audios as well as all memos and notes were reviewed, compared, and contrasted to finalize salient themes.

Meeting and Document Analysis. Extensive notes were taken during the meetings listed above. In addition, several documents and emails relating to either Baltimore PIT Count or the DHCD Youth Count project were shared with The Institute. The notes from the meetings and documents were all considered for analysis. All documents were examined and interpreted in efforts to elicit meaning and understanding for the Demonstration Youth Count (following recommendations from Bowen, 2009 and Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The documents were helpful in providing background information, suggestions for the Demonstration Youth Count, and provided supplementary insights and information that ultimately helped inform the recommendations. Documents were also used to help corroborate findings from the focus group.

Final Product. The results include a triangulation, or combination of findings from the focus groups, meeting attendance, and document review. An iterative process occurred to determine similarities, comparisons, or contrasts between each data collection method. Findings were them combined, organized, and are presented below.

Limitations

All individuals and agencies interviewed during this process represented services and communities of Baltimore City and Baltimore County. This was the result of the short timeframe for Phase I activities and it means that findings may not generalize to other CoCs. However, one of the earlier Steering Committee meetings focused on a review of the Prince George's County methodology, and at the BHYI Youth PIT Count Workgroup meetings and the Steering Committee meetings, there were intense discussions regarding how to count youth in other CoCs and other geographic areas in Maryland.

Findings from these discussions, in addition to the findings from the focus groups, meetings, and document summaries, are presented below.

Additionally, **the recommendations for the Phase 2 methodology are based on the methodology review (described above) and the input of the DHCD Youth Count Steering Committee, as well as the findings from the qualitative review below**.

Results

Three main themes were yielded from the analysis: Concerns and Recommendations for the Demonstration Youth Count; Marketing; and Format and Specific Questions. The themes, along with specific considerations and suggestions for the Demonstration Youth Count are described below.

Concerns & Recommendations for the Demonstration Youth Count

All parties involved in the methodology research discussed the complex nature of capturing the homeless experiences of unaccompanied youth and young adults. Six main areas and themes were discussed and are presented below. Each theme was discussed as areas that should be considered for the Demonstration Youth Count.

Type of homelessness. It was discussed that it is complicated to capture the type of homelessness that unaccompanied youth and young adults may be experiencing. In addition, it was a concern that some youth and young adults would not view traditional levels of housing instability as actually being unstable housing. For example, some participants reported that young adults who couch surf would consider themselves as stably housed because they were not sleeping on the street. There will need to be questions on the survey that address each youth's individual experience with housing and homelessness. In addition, the word homelessness was seen as stigmatized word for the youth and it was suggested that the term "homelessness" not be used in the early parts of a survey or interview.

Participants generally defined homelessness as not having a true or real place to stay that is stable. The participants in the young adult focus group in Baltimore City identified some examples of "non-traditional" homelessness as including counting youth living on and off with friends; youth living in a house with double or triple the occupancy (aka "doubled up," which generally refers to sharing the housing of others due to loss of one's own housing for economic or other reasons); [9] youth living in a motel; youth living in a "bando" (abandoned house), vacant house, or on the street; and, youth who may have a home but did not want to return to their home for some reason.

[9] "Doubled-up" is a term use to refer to individuals who are in a "situation where individuals are unable to maintain their housing situation and are forced to stay with a series of friends and/or extended family member" (National Health Care for the Homeless Council, 2015). Identifying and counting 'doubled-up' individuals has been a challenge for researchers and policy makers, but understanding this group is an important component of addressing the needs of homeless youth and young adults (Hallett, 2012).

The young adults considered the group that may have a home but did not want to return to their home for some reason as "not really homeless" but more experiencing situational or periodic complications with housing. However, all professionals participating in focus groups or meetings felt this latter group was a significant group in terms of risk factors of poor outcomes, including future homelessness, and the number of youth experiencing this problem. For example, during the Baltimore County focus group, there was a consistent theme regarding the number of youth being "dropped off" by parents or caregivers and needing housing and emergency shelter as parents would no longer care for the youth. Behavioral problems, arguing with others in the house, and academic truancy were cited as reasons parents/caregivers were unwilling to house youth.

LGBTQ Youth. All professionals reported concerns and anecdotal reports that youth and young adults who identify as LGBTQ sometimes do not seek resources, such as staying in shelters, due to stigmatism or safety concerns. It was suggested to have the experiences of youth who identify as LGBTQ captured in the survey.

Pregnant or Parenting Youth and Young Adults. All professionals discussed the differences experienced by pregnant or parenting youth and young adults. Representatives from shelters or housing need agencies reported that they frequently see young mothers, described as mothers under the age of 24, who need immediate shelter. Needs, including available shelters and safety needs for the pregnant women, young parents, and children were considered as greater risks and challenges for providing resources and stable housing. Being either pregnant or parenting was seen as a potential reason for youth experiencing homelessness. There was some concern that pregnant or parenting youth and young adults are often not “counted” as homeless or experiencing housing instability because they may be grouped into other categories that involve pregnancy or child care needs.

Behavioral Health Complications. Youth and young adults who are experiencing behavioral health challenges (mental health, substance use, or both) were seen by focus group participants as a population that can be challenging to provide services for as well as to identify and include in the Demonstration Youth Count. If feasible, it was suggested that the survey could include a question regarding whether the youth were receiving any behavioral health services.

Incarceration. Young adults who participated in the focus group as well as those participants in the Baltimore County focus group reported that many of the young adults they know who experience housing instability had histories of incarceration or had recently been released from incarceration. As a result, it was suggested that there be a question on the survey related to incarceration.

Needs. The survey was seen as a way to formally document the experiences, barriers, and needs of unaccompanied youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. It was suggested that the survey should capture this type of information. This was seen as an opportune time to survey the youth (there likely would not be other opportunities or means to survey youth). Additionally, it was felt that the survey could provide vital

information that would help understand the needed resources and outreach that could help the youth.

Marketing

All focus group participants thought that magnet events would be the best way to implement the survey. Magnet events were described as social events designed to draw in unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults, particularly those who would otherwise not be identified through a service provider count. All professionals who were interviewed indicated that having food, clothing, and other tangible resources such as housing and employment information would draw in more youth. It was discussed that hiring youth ambassadors, which is defined as youth who would be paid to help recruit, explain, and possibly help administer the survey to unaccompanied homeless youth, would be beneficial.

Focus group participants thought magnet events would be an important part of the enumeration.

The young adults in Baltimore City who participated in the focus group felt a magnet event was the best way to reach all youth and young adults. In terms of recruitment, the young adults recommended advertising for a month prior to the event. This would allow for time to "get the word out." The young adults also felt having a youth representative to help organize, recruit, and implement the survey would add to the "believability" of the event and would subsequently draw more youth and young adults.

Young adults felt that word-of-mouth was the best method to recruit youth and young adults to participate in the survey. The youth felt it would take "a week or so" to get the word around to others, as many unaccompanied homeless youth know each other and seek services at the same agencies. Young adults reported that flyers advertising the days and times would be helpful and most youth would respond to them. It was suggested that flyers be distributed to: all shelters, high schools, the YES Drop-In Center, the Health Care for the Homeless, libraries, bus stops, soup kitchens, and in areas where there were large number of vacant or abandoned buildings. *Note:* The information obtained from the participating young adults may not be generalizable to other geographic areas of the state, and there may be specific populations of youth and young adults throughout the state who are not connected into the service networks that would not benefit from word-of-mouth or flyers.

In addition to the locations suggested by the young adults, participants in the Baltimore County focus group suggested outreach to the following places: all colleges or vocational centers, Prolog (a mental health service agency that provides showers), radio announcements, on public transportation, police outreach departments, and parking lots of big stores such as Wal-Mart. A number of pregnant or parenting women use WIC resources and it was thought that advertising at these areas would be beneficial. Additional suggestions were to advertise at work programs.

It was suggested that there could be multiple magnet event locations per CoC so that the "typical" spots could be accessed as well as other spots that would possibly reach youth who were less visible or less likely to use the services from the typical spots. Marketing for

the Demonstration Youth Count in these various spots was seen as a way to reach the intended population.

In addition to the marketing strategies above, having the CoCs work with other agencies in their area to market the Demonstration Youth Count by word-of-mouth, pass out flyers, and encourage their youth to attend, was seen as the most effective way of reaching all the youth. It was emphasized that the goal is to count (and serve) all unaccompanied youth and young adults between the ages of 18 through 24, and not just the youth and young adults that use formal services.

Focus group participants were asked if they thought the strategies of having a street count, mobile street effort or having someone located on street corners in the CoCs, would be a helpful way to both advertise and capture information for the Demonstration Youth Count. All professionals felt that it could be a useful way to engage youth who may not attend formal homeless resources centers (such as the YES Drop-in Center) and this would be helpful in the COCs that will not have access to formal resources that target homeless youth . However, the young adults who participated in the focus group reported that they would be suspicious of individuals on the street who were trying to collect information.

Demonstration Youth Count Format & Specific Questions

Survey Development. All parties interviewed (Baltimore City and Baltimore County only) reported they felt that capturing all or the majority of unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults, from age 18 through 24, in the CoC areas was feasible. Marketing, discussed above, was seen as an essential logistical element that could be spearheaded by the CoCs to help with the reach of the count. All participants were asked whether they preferred the survey to be in a self-report or interview format, and the professionals interviewed had a preference for a self-report survey format. Many professional participants were familiar with the 2014 Massachusetts report (discussed above), and the survey in the Massachusetts report was seen as a comprehensive survey that required some modifications for Maryland.

The members of the BHYI Youth PIT Count Workgroup finalized a 2015 HUD PIT survey that included three (3) questions focusing on unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults (in addition to the questions mandated by HUD). During this process, the workgroup identified several areas they felt were potentially important areas for inclusion in a youth count survey. These areas include reason for homelessness or unaccompanied status; methods of survival while homeless; access to resources and services the youth need to exit homelessness; school engagement; stability of current living situation; and sexual orientation and gender identity.

There were several suggestions by the participants in the Baltimore County focus group and the Demonstration Project Steering Committee in terms of type of questions to ask. All participants in these groups referenced the Massachusetts survey and felt that those questions, with either slight modification or additional questions, would be useful. Their suggestions are presented in Table 1.

Baltimore County focus group participants were particularly concerned about additional questions for young adults attending college. At the college level (vocational, 2-year, 4-year), it was discussed that youth have to self-identify as homeless and they often go unnoticed; often, they may not want others to know they are homeless due to a fear of interference with their educational enrollment. Another major concern from this group was the financial victimization and vulnerability of youth who were either homeless or who were considered to be unstable with their housing. It was discussed that many youth who attended college took out loans with a significant amount of interest. These loans helped pay for school and possible rent. It was thought that many youth were not prepared to handle the amount of money that came in one lump sum and this challenge added to their housing instability.

The young adults interviewed reported they were comfortable answering questions about their experience and would be comfortable answering questions for the Demonstration Youth Count in either an interview or self-report manner. The opinion of the young adults who participated in the focus group was that youth would openly talk about their experiences if they felt the adults wanted to help them and the information would help other youth and young adults. In addition, if the Demonstration Youth Count occurred at an event that provided food, warmth, and potential resources (employment or housing information), the youth would feel like it was "a safe and worthy" event. The youth had several suggestions for the type and manner of questions, which are presented below.

<u>Key Questions for Survey, as suggested in the Young Adult Focus Group</u>

- Do you have stable housing? [Define for the youth that this means a place that is yours where you pay rent and have your own bed and can go there every night. Clarify that sleeping at a friend's, on a couch, or for free in an abandoned or vacant building was not stable]
- What is your level of homelessness? Allow a list of that will asked if they were living with friends; in a shelter; in an over occupied house; in an abandoned or vacant house;
- Why are you homeless?
- What have you been doing to try and not be homeless?
- What do you need to not be homeless?

<u>Key Questions for Survey, as suggested in the Baltimore County Focus Group</u>

- Are you chronically homeless? If yes, how long?
- Add questions to capture experience of LGBTQ: Ask for sexual orientation and if identifying as LGBTQ was a reason for housing instability
- Questions that assess for financial exploitation (have you taken out school loans, if so, how many).
- If you are not in school, why are you not in school?
- Incarceration Experience

<u>Key Questions for Survey, as suggested in the BHYI PIT Count Workgroup</u>

- Reason for Homelessness/unaccompanied status
- Methods of survival while homeless (question about source of income with answer options that include sex work/survival hustling, etc.)
- Access to resources and services needed to exit homelessness
- School Engagement

- Stability of current living arrangement (to count couch surfing or doubled up)
- Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity

Key Questions for Survey, as suggested in the Steering Committee

- Ranking helpfulness of services; e.g. How helpful are the police to you (scale of 0 to 5).
- Yes/No questions for did they use a service [mental health services, medical services: a possible list of all providers in that COC area]
- If a service was not used, were there barriers?
- For youth who have a home but don't want to go home —why?
- Assessment of providers —what is in your area and what do you use?

Youth/Young Adult Representative. All parties suggested that an unaccompanied youth representative or a youth ambassador be present at the survey sites. The young adults suggested that a youth/young adult representative could contribute to the effort in two ways: to help recruit youth and young adults for participation, including via word-of-mouth (marketing), and to help give the surveys or interviews. Youth or young adults would be available to answer questions that any youth or young adult completing the survey (or interview) would have.

Similar to the young adult suggestions, all professionals recommended that each CoC hire several youth/young adult representatives. A youth/young adult representative was described as a paid position where the youth/young adult would help recruit for the surveys as well as attend the magnet events. Youth/young adults would be present at each magnet event and would help to answer any questions that youth and young adults taking the survey may have.

Incentives. All parties suggested a form of incentives for youth and young adults who complete the survey. Young adults who participated in the focus group reported they would complete a survey for as little as $5. The young adults preferred cash incentives but were willing to complete a survey for a gift card incentive. All professionals felt each youth or young adult should receive an incentive for completing the survey. The incentives may be CoC specific and the amount will be dependent upon the budget.

Proposed Methodology for Maryland Youth Count

The following recommended methodology was developed through an extensive examination of successful enumerations (both general counts and those focused exclusively on youth) and discussions with subject matter experts in Maryland, namely those on the Steering Committee. This recommended methodology is designed as a framework offering a consistent structure that can be used by all participating CoCs while allowing variation across each CoC in a way that will not compromise the overall validity of the process. Flexibility of the methodology is necessary as no two sites are alike in terms of population demographics, service provider availability, volunteer pool, and ease of transportation.

In order to successfully conduct a youth count in each CoC there will need to be a number of activities which will need to be in place leading up to the actual implementation of the

count. These include the development of a planning group (which should already be in place, but might need to be expanded) for the count; identification of youth ambassadors; development of marketing material; identification of volunteers to conduct a street count; training of volunteers; planning the kick-off event; and, finally, execution of the count).

The Maryland Demonstration Youth Count is a locally implemented enumeration. The Steering Committee will provide guidance, technical assistance, and some financial support, but the majority of the planning and implementation will occur at the local level within the six CoCs. A framework for the enumeration will be provided with certain expectations, but there will be room for variability in the design and implementation based on the geographic and demographic characteristics of the CoCs.

Timeline for Maryland Demonstration Youth Count

A **twenty-week process** (not including analysis) is suggested as a way to incorporate all of the components necessary for a successful enumeration. *The dates listed below are suggested dates for the process, which will be finalized during Phase 2.*[10]

Weeks 1-8 (June 8-Aug 2)**:**	**Planning & Development**
Weeks 9-13 (Aug 3-Aug 30)**:**	**Volunteer Recruitment, Shelter/Service Provider Preparation & Start of Media Campaign**
Weeks 14-17 (Aug 31-Sept 27)**:**	**Volunteer Training & Continued Media Campaign**
Week 18 (Sept. 28-Oct. 4)**:**	**Enumeration (Including kickoff & magnet events)**
Weeks 19-20 (Oct 5-Oct 18)**:**	**Debriefing**
Post Week 20:	**Analysis**

Weeks 1 through 8 would be focused on the identification of areas where the count should occur and the planning and development of the media plan for the CoC. **Weeks 9 through 13** are focused on identifying volunteers and preparing shelters and service providers for the count. **Weeks 14 through 17** consist of training volunteers, beginning the word of mouth campaign and implementing the social media process leading up to the actual count. **Week 18** is the actual enumeration. A single day count is unlikely to capture all homeless and unaccompanied youth. Therefore, a **one-week** long period is suggested as an opportunity to identify the maximum number of participants. The week should begin with a kick-off event consisting of opportunities for youth to gather with peers, obtain items of need, and receive a hot meal. This event should have information about when and where the street counts will occur to maximize the opportunity for word of mouth participation. **Weeks 19-20** would be the debriefing process, to obtain feedback from youth/young adult ambassadors, volunteers, shelters, and service providers on what worked well and what could be improved in the future. The analysis would occur after Week 20. (See Appendix L for a depiction of the process).

[10] By holding the enumeration at the end of September, Maryland avoids initial back-to-school activities, Labor Day, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Columbus Day. This timetable would need to be adjusted annually based upon the feedback received during the debriefing as well as the dates of holidays.

Central Planning Efforts

As the implementing bodies, the local CoCs will be directing the activities in their communities; however, **the Steering Committee will continue to provide support throughout the process and will serve as the Central Planning Body** in order to streamline implementation activities and promote consistency across the CoCs. During Phase 2 of the Demonstration Project, the role of the Steering Committee will shift to focus on the following activities:

1) Engaging all six CoCs in the beginning of Phase 2 to obtain buy-in for the Demonstration Youth Count;
2) Coordinating a conference or summit that will kick-off the local planning efforts for Phase 2;
3) Identifying and contracting with an entity to provide marketing expertise and a branding strategy for the Demonstration Project;
4) Providing ongoing technical assistance to CoCs, including developing and disseminating a toolkit of materials and resources to guide local efforts;
5) Providing guidance to The Institute regarding the expectations of the CoCs;
6) Ensuring engagement with the Department of Planning; and,
7) Coordinating the sharing of data, lessons learned, best practices, and challenges experienced during the planning, enumeration, and debriefing processes.

Local Planning and Implementation

Contracting

The six identified local CoCs will be responsible for working with the Steering Committee and The Institute to identify the entity that will be receiving the contract to support local implementation. In many instances, this will be the local CoC; however, there may be other entities that the CoC believes are more appropriate to conduct this work on their behalf. Upon identification, The Institute will entering into a procurement process with the six local entities in order to provide a small amount of funding to support staff time, stipends to youth/young adult ambassadors, incentives for participation, materials costs, and other expenses likely to be incurred.

Youth and Young Adult Participation

It is imperative to the success of the enumeration that youth and young adults are included in the planning process. Each CoC will be expected to engage youth and young adults in the Demonstration Youth Count, ideally in order to participate in the identification of places where youth are likely to congregate, develop marketing materials and strategies, and ideally act as ambassadors for the Demonstration Youth Count. These youth and young adults would be given stipends (cash or gift cards) for their time. It is necessary to identify and invite several youth and young adults to planning events to ensure that at least one youth or young adult is present to offer advice and guidance.

Planning Workgroup

If the CoC does not already have a planning workgroup one should be developed prior Week 1 of the local planning process. The planning workgroup[11] should have representation from a variety of stakeholders who serve or interact with homeless or unaccompanied youth and young adults in the CoC. **Youth and/or young adults must be represented on this planning workgroup.** Ideally, there will be representation from youth-serving state agencies (the local departments of health (including behavioral health), juvenile services, and social services, local school system, and local management board) as well as local service providers. The planning workgroups should be convened by the middle of the spring to begin their initial planning work. The official start of the process (weeks 1 through 8) will consist of detailed planning for the enumeration.

The planning workgroup will be charged with a number of tasks, to include:

1) Identifying the shelters, service organizations, and hot spots necessary to successfully conduct the youth count;
2) Developing a local media strategy;
3) Creating a volunteer recruitment and training process;
4) Familiarizing themselves with the Demonstration Youth Count methodology and instrumentation;
5) Identifying resources that may be needed to implement the methodology;
6) Requesting technical assistance as needed;
7) Developing a method to incentivize survey respondents;
8) Planning local kickoff and magnet event(s); and,
9) Engaging with youth-serving agencies.

Volunteer Recruitment & Training

Planning workgroups will need to identify and recruit volunteers to participate in the recommended street count. These volunteers will need to be available for training prior to the actual enumeration and then be reliable to show-up and participate. Potential volunteer pools should be identified by the planning workgroup in the first few weeks of the planning process. Outreach activities should occur in weeks 9 through 13 of the planning process. Local community colleges, universities, military installations, and faith-based organizations are potential sources of volunteers for the enumeration. Each CoC will develop its own pool of volunteers. It is recommended that volunteers are sent out in teams of two (at a minimum) or three for the street counts. The number of volunteers necessary will depend on the number of hot spots identified by the planning workgroup.

It is recommended that all volunteers be given at least one hour of training prior to the enumeration. Ideally this training will occur during Week 17 (the week prior to the enumeration). The training will consist of opportunities to familiarize volunteers with the instruments and to role play ways of identifying and engaging potential participants. If the CoC is using a tablet or other electronic device to conduct the survey then an additional

[11] Planning workgroup refers to the local body responsible for the implementation of the Demonstration Youth Count.

hour of training is recommended to familiarize volunteers with the device and to go over basic trouble-shooting issues.

Each volunteer should be provided with a laminated sheet of paper containing a script that consists of suggested simple language to engage potential participants and contact phone numbers. The contact phone numbers should consist of identified trouble-shooters who can be available during the street count to help volunteers, as well as emergency and resource numbers that can be used or supplied to participants as necessary.

Commonly covered topics during trainings should include (1) the purpose of the count, (2) safety, (3) survey protocol, (4) strategies for asking sensitive questions, (5) location assignments, and (6) how and when participants will be incentivized for their participation.

Advertising/Marketing

DHCD, The Institute, and the Steering Committee will identify an organization or individual with marketing and branding expertise to develop the branding and state marketing plan. This will be developed in the first part of Phase 2. Materials will be developed that can be modified by the CoCs for local use. Planning workgroups will be encouraged to develop additional materials for dissemination. The materials should be eye-catching and simple, identifying the date of the kick-off event and/or magnet events, the importance of the enumeration, links to the social media sites related to the enumeration, and that there will be a street count (with general locations). Some templates can be seen in Appendix M: Template material for Youth Count

The planning workgroup should reach out to local agencies, service providers, and areas where youth congregate for permission to post information about the enumeration. At Week 14 (one month before the week of the enumeration), these materials should be posted at the previously identified areas.

At Week 16, the youth and young adults who have been participating as volunteers in the planning workgroup and others should help start the word of mouth campaign. The word of mouth campaign should not be scripted as that would appear disingenuous to potential participants. Youth and young adult volunteers and ambassadors can be encouraged to pass the word around about the upcoming kick-off event and the importance of participation in the count.

If the CoC does not already have a presence on social media this should be developed and populated with information prior to the materials being distributed. At a minimum Facebook and Twitter should be utilized; other social media opportunities that are popular with homeless or unaccompanied youth and young adults (as identified by the youth and young adults representatives on the planning workgroup) also should be considered. At a minimum these sites should provide information about the kick-off event and the timing/location of the street counts.

After the enumeration the social media sites should continue to be updated so that youth and young adults remain engaged. This is particularly important as it would be ideal to get

their feedback on the results of the enumeration, as well as to keep them aware of resources and opportunities, as well as any future enumerations.

Enumeration

The Demonstration Youth Count enumeration will consist of a one week period (Week 18) with some sort of a kick-off or magnet event on the first day which consists of food and opportunities to pick up supplies. A *draft* of a recommended survey instrument is included in Appendix N: Draft Survey Instrument[12] This survey will be filled out by the youth/young adults themselves unless they ask for assistance. The enumeration should consist of two primary components: a survey (administered through a shelter count, a service provider count, a street count (including the kick-off event)) and the use of administrative data. The first three facets involve getting youth and young adults participants to respond to the survey created for the enumeration. It is recommended that youth and young adults be given some reward (gift cards) for filling out the survey. Each CoC can determine at which point these rewards will be provided.

Components of Maryland's Demonstration Youth Count:

1) **Survey of Youth & Young Adults through:**
   - **Shelter count** – youth/young adults who spend the night in a shelter or a transitional housing program during the night(s) of the survey period;
   - **Service-Based Count** – youth/young adults who utilize the services offered by participating providers during the survey period;
   - **Kick-off/Magnet event(s) and Street Count** - youth/young adults participating in the kick-off event or on the streets during the survey period are surveyed to assess if they are unaccompanied homeless youth/young adults;

2) **Administrative Data Count –** Data analysis of youth/young adults identified as homeless in the local homeless management information system (HMIS) or by local child-serving agencies including but not limited to schools, juvenile services, child welfare, and the local health department.

Shelters and service providers identified by the planning workgroup in the planning phase will be asked to assist in the enumeration as they have in prior counts. The survey instrument will be provided to them along with guidance on how the survey should be distributed, filled out and collected.

Survey instruments will be distributed, filled out, and collected as part of the kick-off/magnet events. Incentives in the form of gift cards do not need to be provided to respondents at the kick-off event as there are already incentives in place (in the form of food and supplies), although this decision is up to the CoC.

[12] The survey instrument will need to be reviewed by young adults for their input regarding the ease of readability and the ordering of the questions. This will occur in the first part of Phase 2.

Street counts should occur at several hot spots throughout the CoC over the week of the enumeration. It is up to the CoC to determine the length of time volunteers will be at each hot spot. It is recommended that each hot spot be covered for a minimum of two hours, two different times during the week and that there are teams of two to three volunteers during each coverage period in each hot spot. Hot spots should include malls, parks, recreation centers and other areas identified by the planning workgroup and youth ambassadors as places where homeless and unaccompanied youth congregate.

Agencies should be asked to supply administrative data on any youth who were identified as homeless or unaccompanied in their data systems. This administrative data will not be as rich a source of information as the surveys because it will only have basic information, but it will offer opportunities to extend the enumeration. Agencies will be provided with the method to uniquely identify an individual (first initial, last initial, month of birth, day of birth, year of birth, and CoC number). Then they will be asked to provide the unique identifier, the gender and race/ethnicity of each individual identified as homeless or unaccompanied during the six-months prior to the Demonstration Youth Count enumeration. This information will be incorporated into the overall enumeration.

Post-Enumeration

There will be a debriefing period within two weeks of the end of the enumeration. Planning workgroups will be expected to determine the best methods for this process based on their CoC. Methods could include use of electronic surveys, follow up phone calls, focus groups, and key informant interviews.

Planning workgroups will provide their data to The Institute to begin the analysis phase, which will mark the conclusion of Phase 2 and the beginning of Phase 3 – Analysis & Evaluation. Phase 3 will focus on documenting the experiences of the six CoCs in Phase 2 and analyzing the data collected from the enumeration. In addition to the local debriefings, the Steering Committee will lead a debriefing of participating CoCs to assess their experiences and obtain feedback to improve future youth counts in Maryland.

During Phase 3, the Steering Committee will work with the CoCs to create an opportunity to present preliminary data to youth and young adults and to gather feedback on the process.

In addition, data collected from the multiple sources will be cleaned and processed for analysis. Overall, both qualitative information from the debriefings and quantitative data from the surveys and administrative sources will be synthesized and evaluated for the Phase 3 report.

Conclusion

Homelessness among youth and young adults is a chronic and growing social problem in the United States. Although multiple interventions have been directed toward assisting this vulnerable population, gaps and misalignments in service delivery remain pervasive.

This misalignment is partly due to the lack of accurate and relevant data. Knowledge of the size and scope of homelessness among youth and young adults is limited, hindering efforts to prevent and end homelessness among this population. With the Demonstration Project, Maryland has taken the critical next step in closing this knowledge gap and appropriately addressing the unique needs of this vulnerable population. By employing a more comprehensive enumeration specifically designed for youth and young adults, Maryland is building the foundation to systematically identify homeless youth and young adults and promote a relevant and responsive service delivery network.

The Steering Committee anticipates that the information learned from this process will contribute to the work of the Interagency Council on Homelessness, as well as other committees, workgroups, and councils who seek to end and prevent homelessness. Information derived from the Pilot Implementation will advance efforts to end homelessness among youth and young adults in Maryland. Lessons learned from the experiences can inform future youth counts and serve as a framework for CoCs not involved in the Pilot Implementation. Information acquired through the Demonstration Project will help to ensure that "public and private entities in Maryland will understand the scope and nature of unaccompanied youth homelessness in our state and will have the capacity to effectively identify homeless youth and connect them to housing and services" (Maryland Task Force, 2013, p. 2)

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Appendix A: Federal Definition of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

(From the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth)

Definitions of Homelessness for Federal Programs Serving Children, Youth, and Families

The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act in 1987 was the first major federal statutory response to homelessness. The Act, now known as the McKinney-Vento Act, remains the only major federal legislation responding to an increasingly large population of Americans experiencing homelessness. Title IV of the Act authorizes emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent housing, and supportive services programs – all under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In 1995, HUD adopted a —Continuum of Care process whereby appropriated funds for those programs are made available on a competitive basis to geographic areas, with responsibility granted to the geographic area to recommend the array of housing and service projects to be funded. In 2009, the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009 reauthorized Title IV of the McKinney-Vento Act and prompted the issuance of new regulations by HUD – to be released soon. These regulations will broaden the definition of —homeless- previously HUD‘s definition was narrower than the definition used by the U.S. Department of Education. (The education definition is found in Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act, and the HUD definition is found in Subtitle I of the McKinney-Vento Act.) In addition, authorization for funding services for youth facing homelessness is included in the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) and related legislation (e.g., Reconnecting Homeless Youth Act of 2008); implemented by the Family and Youth Service Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. These federal definitions overlap and diverge in ways that can cause confusion. The following chart illustrates the similarities and differences between these three federal agencies’ definitions of homelessness; note that the broadening of HUD‘s definition will include specific conditions that are complex. Also, note that —youth is not defined in any federal statute pertaining to homelessness, although RHYA defines —homeless youth.

	EDUCATION DEFINITION	HUD DEFINITION – 2011	HUD DEFINITION – Current	HHS – RHYA DEFINITION
Statutory Reference:	Section 725 of Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act, 42 USC 11301 et seq.	Section 103 of Subtitle I of the McKinney-Vento Act, 42 USC 11301 et seq., 24 CFR 91.5, 24 CFR 576.3, 24 CFR 576.21	Section 103 of Subtitle I of the McKinney-Vento Act, 42 USC 11301 et seq.,	Section 387 of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, 42 USC 5701 et seq., 45 CFR 1351.1
Federal Programs and Agencies Using This Definition:	- Elementary and Secondary Education (ED) - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (ED) - Higher Education Act (ED) - Head Start Act (HHS) - Child Nutrition Act (USDA) - Violence Against Women Act (DOJ)	- Homeless Assistance Programs (HUD) - Emergency Food and Shelter (Homeland Security) - Department of Veterans Affairs (all programs) - Department of Labor (all programs)	- Homeless Assistance Programs (HUD)	Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Programs (HHS)

LIVING SITUATIONS COVERED BY THESE DEFINITIONS

	EDUCATION DEFINITION	HUD DEFINITION – 2011	HUD DEFINITION – Current	HHS - RHYA DEFINITION
Unsheltered Locations	**Yes:** "(ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (within the meaning of section 103(a)(2)(C)); (iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings"	**Yes:** "an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings."	**Yes:** "an individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;"	**Yes, if the youth cannot live with relatives and has no other safe place to go:** "a youth… for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative, and who has no other safe alternative living arrangement."
Emergency Shelters and Transitional Housing	**Yes:** "children and youth who are living in emergency or transitional shelters"	**Yes:** "a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations"	**Yes:** "an individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements"	**Yes, if the youth cannot live with relatives and has no other safe place to go:** "a youth… for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative, and who has no other safe alternative living arrangement."

LIVING SITUATIONS COVERED BY THESE DEFINITIONS

	EDUCATION DEFINITION	HUD DEFINITION – 2011	HUD DEFINITION – Current	HHS - RHYA DEFINITION
Motels and Hotels	**Yes, if there are no appropriate alternatives:** "children and youth who are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations"	**No, except for "welfare hotels":** "an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill);"	**Generally, no, except for the following situations:** - "hotels and motels paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations." - "an individual or family who has a primary nighttime residence that is a room in a hotel or motel and where they lack the resources necessary to reside there for more than 14 days, who has no subsequent residence identified; and lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing;" - "any individual or family who is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life threatening conditions in the individual's or family's current housing situation, including where the health and safety of children are jeopardized, and who have no other residence and lack the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing" - "unaccompanied youth and homeless families with children and youth defined as homeless under other Federal statutes who have experienced a long term period without living independently in permanent housing; and have experienced persistent instability as measured by frequent moves over such period; and can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time because of chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance addiction, histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse, the presence of a child or youth with a disability, or multiple barriers to employment."	**Yes, if the youth cannot live with relatives and has no other safe place to go:** "a youth… for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative, and who has no other safe alternative living arrangement."

LIVING SITUATIONS COVERED BY THESE DEFINITIONS

	EDUCATION DEFINITION	HUD DEFINITION – 2011	HUD DEFINITION – Current	HHS - RHYA DEFINITION
Staying with Others ("Doubled-Up")	**Yes, if it is due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar situation (within the definition of lacking fixed, regular, and adequate situations):** "…individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (within the meaning of section 103(a)(1)); and (B) includes — (i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;"	**No**	**Generally, no, except the following situations:** "an individual or family who will imminently lose their housing, including housing they are sharing with others, as evidenced by credible evidence indicating that the owner or renter of the housing will not allow the individual or family to stay for more than 14 days, and who has no subsequent residence identified; and who lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing: - "any individual or family who is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life threatening conditions in the individual's or family's current housing situation, including where the health and safety of children are jeopardized, and who have no other residence and lack the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing"‖ - "unaccompanied youth and homeless families with children and youth defined as homeless under other Federal statutes who have experienced a long term period without living independently in permanent housing; and have experienced persistent instability as measured by frequent moves over such period; and can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time because of chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance addiction, histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse, the presence of a child or youth with a disability, or multiple barriers to employment."	**Yes, if the youth cannot live with relatives and has no other safe place to go:** "a youth… for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative, and who has no other safe alternative living arrangement."

LIVING SITUATIONS COVERED BY THESE DEFINITIONS

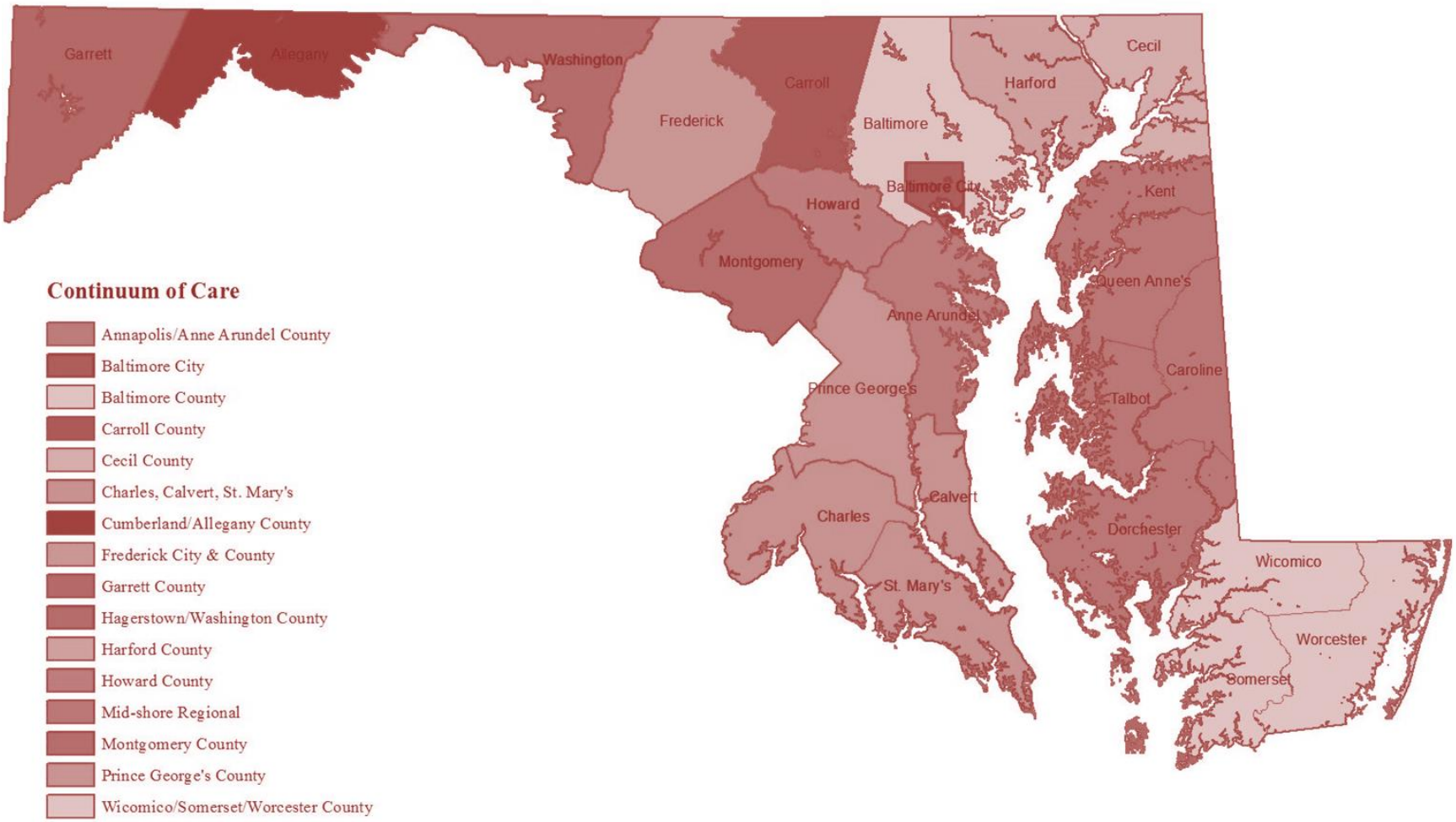
	EDUCATION DEFINITION	HUD DEFINITION – 2011	HUD DEFINITION – Current	HHS - RHYA DEFINITION
"At Risk of Homelessness"	**No such definition.**	**No such definition.**	**Defines "at risk of homelessness" to include <u>all</u> families with children and youth defined as homeless under other Federal statutes.** (1) AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS.-The term `at risk of homelessness' means, with respect to an individual or family, that the individual or family- (A) has income below 30 percent of median income for the geographic area; (B) has insufficient resources immediately available to attain housing stability; and (C) (i) has moved frequently because of economic reasons; (ii) is living in the home of another because of economic hardship; (iii) has been notified that their right to occupy their current housing or living situation will be terminated; (iv) lives in a hotel or motel; (v) lives in severely overcrowded housing; (vi) is exiting an institution; or (vii) Otherwise lives in housing that has characteristics associated with instability and an increased risk of homelessness. Such term includes all families with children and youth defined as homeless under other Federal statutes.	**No such definition. However, RHYA does define "youth at risk of separation from family:"** YOUTH AT RISK OF SEPARATION FROM THE FAMILY.—The term _youth at risk of separation from the family' means an individual— (A) who is less than 18 years of age; and (B) (i) who has a history of running away from the family of such individual; (ii) whose parent, guardian, or custodian is not willing to provide for the basic needs of such individual; or (iii) who is at risk of entering the child welfare system or juvenile justice system as a result of the lack of services available to the family to meet such needs.

SOURCE: National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. (2011). *Definitions of Homelessness for Federal Program Serving Children, Youth, and Families* [Comparison Table]. Retrieved from https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/homelessness_definition.pdf

Appendix B: Demonstration Project Steering Committee Members & Staff

Rhea	Acuña	The Institute for Innovation & Implementation, UM SSW
Valerie	Ashton-Thomas	Maryland State Department of Education
Adrienne	Breidenstine	The Journey Home (Baltimore City CoC)
Sue	DeSantis	Baltimore County Department of Planning
Carol	Gilbert	Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development
Elizabeth	Greeno	The Institute for Innovation & Implementation, UM SSW
Deborah	Harburger	The Institute for Innovation & Implementation, UM SSW
Torsten	Knabe	Office of Delegate Mary Washington
Jim	Kunz	McDaniel College
Ingrid	Lofgren	Homeless Persons Representation Project
Ross	Pologe	Prince George's County Department of Social Services
Adam	Schneider	Healthcare for the Homeless
Terry	Shaw	The Institute for Innovation & Implementation, UM SSW
Heather	Sheridan	Maryland Department of Human Resources
Mary Jo	Slowey	Baltimore County Public Schools
Mary	Washington	Maryland General Assembly

Appendix C: Map of Maryland's Continuums of Care



Appendix D: Summary of Youth Count Experiences of Sites Assessed for the Methods Review

Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (Special Commission) was established to gain a better understanding of the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth. The Identification and Connection Working Group (Working Group) formed by the Special Commission served as the Coordinating Entity in charge of developing the enumeration methodology and coordinating 18 CoCs to conduct the first-ever statewide enumeration of homeless youth in the nation. Currently, Massachusetts is the only state that has attempted a statewide enumeration of homeless youth. A total of $150,000 was allocated in the state budget for the 2014 Youth Count, and future funds have already been designated for the 2015 Youth Count.

Between December 2013 and January 2014, the Youth Count was carried out by the 18 CoCs in Massachusetts. This survey period was chosen in order to coordinate with the HUD PIT Count and take advantage of the existing capacity. The Working Group provided a grant of $4,750 to the CoCs to assist with the implementation. Each CoC had autonomy on how to conduct the youth count. The majority created a planning committee to coordinate the local efforts of participating organizations. The Working Group also provided technical assistance and materials throughout the process. The majority of the technical assistance were related to outreach strategies, school engagement, and survey administration. The Working Group also provided sample materials, including flyers for advertisement, interview scripts, and overview briefs for recruiting service providers.

All of the CoCs conducted a ***shelter*** and ***service-based count***. However, only 13 of the 18 CoCs conducted a ***street count***. Service providers and youth were consulted to identify hot spots for youth and these areas were targeted during the street counts. All of the CoCs conducted a service-based count, which included schools, soup-kitchens, and other service providers. The success of the service-based count depended heavily on building partnerships and resolving potential implementation issues early in the planning process. Marketing efforts to publicize the Youth Count and increase participation also varied across the CoCs. Most CoCs used at least basic marketing strategies, such as word of mouth, flyer advertising, and newspaper ads. A few developed more innovative marketing strategies depending on their local context, taking advantage of social media and other digital platforms.

The survey tool used for the statewide Youth Count was largely based on the survey used for the 2012 Boston Youth Count. After research and analysis, revisions were made to the Boston survey and feedback from key stakeholders and youth focus groups were integrated. The final draft of the survey included 37 questions – including demographics, status and history of homelessness, education and income, subpopulations, and services – and 1 open ended question to obtain addition information that survey participants were

willing to share. At the end of each survey was a space for a unique identifier code to facilitate data entry.
The majority of the CoCs had a positive view of the survey instrument. However, the main critique pertained to the length and language. A few of the sites indicated that the survey was too long and experienced difficulties in getting youth to complete the entire survey. Some word choices in the survey items led to confusion among youth. In addition, CoCs with more diverse population also reported issues regarding language barriers. Depending on the racial and ethnic composition of the area, it may be beneficial to have various translations of the survey.

Survey administration began on the same night as the PIT Count for all areas. However, the duration of the survey period differed, ranging from 2 days to 2 weeks. In certain areas, youth were rewarded for completing the survey and many sites plan to continue to offer incentives in the future. However, the impact of the rewards on participation is unknown. Four CoCs held magnet events and used these events to survey the youth. CoCs were instructed to allow the youth to complete the survey by themselves, with volunteers available if questions arose. However, some CoCs did not follow the protocol and administered the survey interview style.

Youth Count! Initiative
Youth Count! is an interagency partnership in response to the Obama administration's goal of ending youth homelessness by 2020. In order to improve the accuracy of current estimates of youth homelessness, nine pilot sites were chosen to conduct counts of unaccompanied homeless youth to test new strategies and methodologies. With lessons learned from the experiences of these pilot sites, the Obama administration hopes to formulate national guidelines to inform future youth homeless counts.

TABLE 3: YOUTH COUNT! PILOT SITES

Site	Available Report
Boston, MA	
Cleveland, OH (Cuyahoga County)	✓
Hennepin County	
Houston, TX	
Los Angeles, CA	
New York City, NY	✓
King County/Seattle, WA	✓
Washington State (Whatcom County)	✓
Winston-Salem, NC	

As of December 2014, four sites have independently published reports summarizing their strategies, implementation, and results. The following section will provide a broad overview of the experiences of these sites.

Cleveland, OH (Cuyahoga County)

Several community partners worked together to perform the 2013 Youth Count! in Cuyahoga County, with the Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services implementing the survey, Bellefaire JCB leading the outreach, and Case Western Reserve University conducting the data analysis. Data was collected from two primary sources:

1. ***Shelter*** and ***non-shelter*** counts were conducted between January 23 and January 28. Youth were able to access a web-based survey in various locations, including participating ***shelters*** and ***service providers*** (e.g. drop-in centers), magnet events, and known youth hot spots (e.g. shopping mall). However, for the majority of the survey responses, the web based survey was not utilized by the youth; instead, staff administered a paper based survey and inputted the data on the online form. Furthermore, surveys to youth on the ***street*** were also administered. Although the Youth Count! was not part of the general PIT homeless count, PIT counters had access to the Youth Count! survey to administer to any youth they encounter.
2. ***Administrative data*** on school-age homeless youth provided by the Cleveland Metropolitan School District were utilized. Specifically, the data only included students that participated in Project ACT, the district's homeless student program.

Cleveland identified two major problems encountered during the 2013 Youth Count! First, the lack of consistency in definition led to confusion among participating stakeholders. In the end, the school district reported homeless youth counts based on the McKinney-Vento Act and participants involved in the count engaged by the CoCs primarily used the HUD definition. Inconsistencies in the definition led to limitations in the compilation of data. Second, feedback suggested that the clarity and placements of survey items should be modified to improve the survey instrument. Youth did not fully comprehend the core question measuring homelessness status. Furthermore, filter questions were scattered throughout the survey, reducing the utility of partially completed surveys.

New York City, NY

The New York City Youth Count was a collaborative effort between the NYC Coalition on the Continuum of Care (NYC CCoC), NYC Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD); NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS) and the Empire State Coalition of Youth & Family Services (Coalition of Homeless Youth).

Shelter and ***service-based*** counts were conducted on January 28, 2013 between 10:00 p.m. and 4:00 a.m. in NYC to gain information on the number and characteristics of homeless youth in NYC. Marketing efforts to publicize the count was initiated on December 2012. Efforts include flyer advertising, social media utilization, and stakeholder mobilization. NYC CCoC and DYCD organized 14 late-night drop-in centers and five supportive housing residences to participate in the Youth Count. To ensure adequate coverage of the city, six drop in centers were located in Manhattan and at least one was located in each of the remaining boroughs. Youth present in one of these locations during the night of the count were surveyed and counted. Metrocards and food were available to reward youth for participation.

The 2007 unaccompanied homeless youth survey administered by the Empire State Coalition served as the basis for the survey instrument. Revisions were made based on consultations with relevant community stakeholders. The final survey instrument was comprised of 27 survey items assessing the following topics: homeless status, demographic characteristics, sexual orientation, support system, and connection with school, employment, and criminal justice.

Seattle, WA (King County)

Since 2011, King County has conducted *Count Us In*, an annual enumeration of youth between ages 12-25 who are unstably housed or homeless. The count complements the *One Nigh Count*, an annual effort to estimate total homelessness in King County. A steering committee comprised of representatives from the King County Committee to End Homelessness, the City of Seattle, the United Way of King County and relevant service providers oversaw the planning and implementation of the effort, including training workers and volunteers. Each count builds on the strategies and lessons learned from previous years, with representatives from count participants debriefing the steering committee after each annual count.

The most recent count occurred in January 2014 (i.e. from January 23, 2014 midnight – January 24, 2014), and will be the focus of this analysis.[13] Estimates of unaccompanied homeless youth were derived from three sources: ***(1) a shelter count, (2) a non-shelter count (i.e. service-based and street) and (3) administrative data*** extracted from the state's homeless management information system, Safe Harbors**.**

The steering committee engaged agencies and community organizations to participate in the count. The number of partners has expanded each year, with efforts made to involve organizations that are not directly involve with youth homelessness, including libraries, recreation centers, and other service providers that work with vulnerable youth and families. In 2014, 22 of the 46 participating organizations were new participants, with 18 part of the library system (Following feedback form prior counts, the steering committee specifically engaged libraries since stakeholders observed that youth were congregating in this area). A small stipend was provided to participating agencies. Although agencies had the flexibility on how to spend the stipend, the majority used the funds to encourage youth to participate in the survey.

Outreach efforts were mobilized in order to maximize survey responses from youth. Youth representatives were engaged throughout the process of the count, from planning to implementation. They provided feedback to improve the survey instrument, consulted with participating agencies to plan and formulate strategies to attract youth, and worked during the actual count to connect with youth and convince them to complete the survey.

[13] The 2013 *Count Us In* was conducted to represent the count for the Youth Count! Initiative, but the January 2014 report was reviewed since it was the most current report and provided additional information on youth engagement.

A particularly successful event to attract youth was the "sleepover" event. During the night between January 23 and January 24, certain providers hosted sleepover events where they encouraged unaccompanied homeless youth to gather in their locations in order to capture youth who would otherwise be sleeping on the street that night.
In addition to the shelter and non-shelter counts, administrative data was collected from Safe Harbors HMIS. Unaccompanied youth in the system that indicated that they stayed in shelters or transitional housing programs on the night of January 22 were included in the enumeration.

Washington State (Focus on Whatcom County)
Four counties participated in the Youth Count! to enumerate unaccompanied homeless youth for the Washington Balance of State: Whatcom, Clallam, Skagit, and Thurston. This section will provide an overview of the experiences of one of these counties, Whatcom.
As part of a 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness initiated in 2005, Whatcom County Health Department, City of Bellingham, Whatcom County Coalition to End Homelessness, and Whatcom Homeless Service Center at Opportunity Council has sponsored an annual point-in-time count of homeless individuals in Whatcom County. Beginning in 2013, targeted efforts were directed towards conducting a separate youth homelessness count to supplement current efforts in response to the Youth Count! Initiative. The Northwest Youth Service, an agency that provides shelter and services to homeless youth, served as the lead agency for the youth count.

Whatcom County's methods to count overall homelessness served as the basis of its overall youth count strategy. Similarities were prevalent in the volunteer recruitment and training component of the count. However, there were major differences between the Youth Count and the overall count:

- Survey – a distinct survey tailored for the youth population was designed
- Coverage – hot spots where youth tend to congregate were identified.
- Volunteers – youth volunteers were especially recruited for this effort

The Youth Count was comprised of both ***shelter*** and ***non-shelter*** (i.e. service-based and street counts) components. A magnet event kicked of the sheltered component of the count that took place between January 24 and February 6. Staff of participating agencies surveyed youth participants. Participating agencies followed different survey periods. For example, some shelters only surveyed youth participants on the night of January 24, while others chose to use the entire survey period. The street component took place on the night of January 24th only, and was primarily limited to the city of Bellingham. Youth workers played a significant role in the street count. Former unaccompanied homeless youth were paid to help develop a strategy for the non-sheltered component of the count. For its 2014 annual homeless count, these targeted efforts were continued in order to obtain data on unaccompanied homeless youth in an ongoing basis.

Maryland
Independent entities in Maryland have commissioned the assistance of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health to investigate and estimate unaccompanied homeless

youth in a couple of jurisdictions. In particular, Baltimore City and Prince George's County have published reports detailing the results of counts specifically for their jurisdictions. The primary purpose of these counts was to inform stakeholders on how to better serve the needs of homeless youth; therefore, the focus of the reports was not on the methodological components. Nevertheless, the experiences of these jurisdictions highlight the efforts that have been implemented in Maryland.

Baltimore City

Several enumerations of homeless youth have been undertaken in Baltimore City in recent years. Specifically, the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and Baltimore Homeless Youth Initiative conducted homeless youth counts in 2007, 2009, and 2011. All the counts were point-in-time, ***service-based counts***, with representatives engaging service providers to participate.

The Youth Counts took place on the same dates as the Homeless Census in Baltimore City. Departing from previous years, the 2011 youth count was not conducted in conjunction with the Homeless Census. In 2009, performing the count in conjunction with the Homeless Census led to problems related to unique identifiers that diminished the accuracy of the estimates.

Nearly 60 organizations were contacted to participate in the service-based count, but only 16 provided data. Providers kept track of homeless youth they served on January 25, 2011 or on their caseload on December 2010 – January 2011. In addition to service providers, the Baltimore City Public Schools provided ***administrative data*** on homeless students within their schools. All data was transmitted in digital form, primarily Excel.

Prince George's County

In 2011, Prince George's County Department of Social Service (DSS) contracted with Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health's Center for Adolescent Health (CAH) to enumerate homeless youth in the county and gain a better understanding of the scope and needs of the problems faced by this vulnerable population. The project had two main objectives:

1. Utilize surveys to estimate the number of unaccompanied homeless youth under the age of 25
2. Assess the priority needs of this population group through focus groups in order to direct programming

Two data collection methods were implemented to meet the project objectives. First, a ***service-based count*** was employed. Representatives from CAH engaged with service providers in the region to participate in the enumeration project. With the exception of one provider, participating providers surveyed youth who engaged with their services between June 6 and June 19. One provider sent outreach workers to hot spots to interview unaccompanied homeless youth, so there was a minor non-sheltered count component. The survey instrument used for service-based count was developed in consultation with CAH.

Seven ***focus groups*** were conducted, which included different sub-groups of youth between the ages of 16-24. Groups that tend to be overrepresented in the homeless youth population were targeted in the focus groups, including LGBTQ youth, system involved youth, and women in transitional or emergency housing. The focus group was comprised of two questions:

1. Where and how can DSS reach unstably housed young people?
2. What are the greatest needs of unstably housed young people?

Participants in the focus groups were counted in the enumeration, but their main purpose was to provide qualitative information for programming.

Other Areas

Given the lack of knowledge of the size of unaccompanied homeless youth and the scope of the problem, areas across the United States have amplified efforts to better understand and serve this population. The following section summarizes the methods employed by several metro areas in the United States.

Billings, MT

In 2012, a VISTA project to enumerate the number of homeless youth was conceptualized and initiated in Billings, MT. The Tumbleweed Program, Inc.– a local provider serving homeless youth and families – served as the Coordinating Entity, directing and managing the VISTA members.

VISTA members engaged homeless youth providers as part of an outreach effort to spread awareness of the count and to recruit volunteers. In addition, the outreach efforts served as a learning opportunity for the VISTA members where members were able to gain a more comprehensive understanding of homeless youth and the current service infrastructure in Billings. They visited a variety of organizations, including detention and shelter care facilities, and connected with these service providers. Many organizations they visited provided support during the length of the project, offering guidance and recruiting for volunteers.

The enumeration was a ***street count*** conducted between July 12 and July 14. A survey was designed for the count, consisting of 42 questions. Volunteers attended two, one-hour training sessions where they were given a certificate of completion and a T-shirt. A detailed training manual was created, outlining procedures, logistics, and basic information regarding identifying homeless youth.

The survey instrument was reviewed by Tumbleweed, Inc., individual and family counselors, and runaway and homeless youth counselors. Accounting for the invasive nature of some of the questions, personal interest questions were dispersed across the survey. Eleven questions were deemed priority for future analysis and were printed in red font to alert volunteers. Volunteers were instructed to focus on these questions if they recognized respondents losing interest in the survey. However, the survey instrument itself led to difficulties during the project. Many respondents found the survey too long

and left many questions unanswered. Furthermore, issues were raised regarding the clarity of some of the questions and difficulties presented by multiple skip patterns.

The areas covered by volunteers were based on known hot spots for youth. Five canvas zones were identified; the zones did not cover the entire city, but attempted to cover all areas were unaccompanied youth were most likely located. Teams of two or three volunteers were assigned to a zone. Volunteers were scheduled for 3 hours shifts, spanning from 9 am to 10 pm. A week after the count, volunteers also attended a two-hour debriefing. In a group environment, volunteers openly discussed their experiences during the count. Volunteers also filled out a survey soliciting their personal opinion on the count process.

Marketing and advertising strategies were aimed at informing and involving the wider community. A banner was hung across a pedestrian bridge in the city. Flyers and post cards were distributed across local business. Media releases were submitted prior to the count, which led to newspaper and television interviews. Tumbleweed, Inc. was also active in social media (i.e. Facebook and Twitter), continuously updating communities on the progress of the project. In addition, VISTA members presented to various organizations to inform stakeholders about the project and made efforts to attend community events.

Beyond the street count, an attempt was also made to involve local service providers to administer the survey. However, this component was largely lacking due to insufficient coordination and inefficient planning.

Clark County, NV

In 2005, a point-in-time count specifically targeting unaccompanied homeless youth was planned and executed by a consortium of local service providers: Nevada Partnerships for Homeless Youth (NPHY), St. Jude's Ranch for Children, the WestCare Foundation, and Girls and Boys Town. A simultaneous shelter and non-shelter counts comprised the enumeration that occurred on November 17, 2005.

The ***shelter and service-based counts*** were possible as the consortium reached out to providers that were likely to provide services to homeless youth. Enumeration sheets were sent to 100 providers, and they were tasked to tally the number of homeless youth they served that night. However, only 41 service providers responded.

The ***street count*** was a larger endeavor that required extensive planning and training well ahead of the count. A large-scale recruitment effort was directed towards gathering enough volunteers to conduct the street count. The consortium contacted a wide array of organizations for volunteers, including large employers, trade associations, post-secondary institutions, and social clubs. In addition, a press release was submitted, informing the public about the count and appealing for volunteers. The recruitment effort led to 123 volunteers, with social science students from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas accounting for a large share of the volunteers.

Volunteers were required to attend six, one-hour training sessions, with one of the sessions scheduled the night before the point-in-time count. A detailed training curriculum was created for the volunteers and the sessions covered the following topics: project scope, appropriate behaviors during the count, and recommendations for identifying homeless youth.

To ensure that the entire county was covered, the county was organized and divided into 3.5 miles X 4.5 miles quadrants. Volunteer teams were given a map and assigned to specific grids. Each volunteer team had a count team leader, who had to attend an extra training session and was given extra responsibilities. On the night of the count, volunteers were deployed from one of four distribution centers at 7 p.m. The earliest team returned at 10 p.m., while the latest team returned at 2 p.m.

To assess the validity of the estimates produced by the initial count, a re-count was conducted on February 16, 2006. Volunteers were employed to conduct a recount in a randomly selected sample of grids. Researchers conducted independent t-test to evaluate if there were statistically significant differences between the estimates derived from the original and follow up counts. No statistically significant differences were found.

Washington, DC

With help from the DC Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) and the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy at George Washington University, DC Alliance of Youth Advocate (DCAYA) conducted a point-in-time count between March 7 and March 21, 2011. The data acquired from this study was part of multiple efforts in DC to formulate data-driven policy recommendations to address the homeless youth population.

The enumeration utilized both a shelter and non-shelter count. DCAYA engaged with community stakeholders to serve as hub sites during the count. Participating organizations included shelters, transitional housing programs, service providers, and other entities where youth congregated (e.g. schools, recreation centers, and afterschool programs). Hub sites were locations where workers and volunteers can direct youth to take the survey. In total, 60 organizations participated in the count, representing 70 hub sites.

Outreach teams were deployed to administer the survey and/or direct them to hub sites to take the survey. Volunteers and a staff member, who led as the point person, formed the outreach teams. Three local organizations with expertise in outreach to homeless youth managed the teams. Volunteers were primarily recruited from DC area universities and local service providers. A training session was held for volunteers, closely following a training curriculum used by local service providers. In addition, youth who were currently homeless attended the training session to provide personal insight and guidance to volunteers.

The survey instrument designed for the count was based on the survey utilized in Minnesota, with guidance from the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy. In order to meet IRB requirements for interviewing minors and maintaining the confidentiality of respondents, the interviewers were instructed to read a statement of explanation.

Interviewers were supposed to read the survey aloud to respondents, but the majority of the respondents were more comfortable self-administering the survey.

The length of the survey was considered a problem. It was 10 pages long with 38 questions, but added up to between 70-110 questions when all the sub-questions were considered. Researchers estimated that it took about 30-40 minutes for a youth to complete the survey. Furthermore, the language and the structure of some of the survey items led to confusion among youth.

Appendix E: Cross-site Comparison of Definition of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

The following definitions were utilized by the sites as documented by the reports:

Massachusetts	Person **24 years or younger**; a person who is not in the physical custody or care of parent or legal guardian; and a person who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residents"
Cleveland, OH	Unaccompanied homeless youth **age 24 and under**
King County/Seattle, WA	Youth and young adults **aged 12-25** who are unstably housed or homeless
New York City, NY	Respondents who met the HUD definition of a homeless youth
Whatcom County, WA	Youth and young adults **under 25 years old** who are either literally homeless or who have unstable housing and are at risk of becoming literally homeless
Baltimore City, MD	Unaccompanied youth and young adult **ages 13-25**, on their own, apart from parents or guardians; young people who are living in shelters or transitional housing; "unstably housed youth" who are couch surfing – staying temporarily with friends, extended kin networks, or lovers; young people who were in foster care or juvenile justice custody, but have left the system without placement
Prince George's County, MD	Homeless or unstably housed people **under the age of 25**
Billings, MT	Youth ages **13 to 21** who were precariously housed, who were sheltered and unsheltered or living in places unfit for human habitation. Those who self-identified as "couch-surfers" were also enumerated as their living condition is neither adequate nor fixed
Clark County, NV	Unaccompanied youth **12 to 20 years of age** who are either unsheltered (living on the streets, in parks, vehicles, or other public areas), currently residing in a runaway/homeless youth shelter, or couch surfing in the absence of a parent or legal guardian

Washington, DC	**Children and youth through age 17** who are living apart from their parents or guardians and **young adults between 18 and 24** who are economically and/or emotionally detached from their families and lack an adequate or fixed residence. This includes: children and youth who are unstably housed, living in doubled up circumstances, in transitional housing programs, emergency shelters, on the street or in a space not designed for human habitation

Appendix F: Cross Site Comparison of Enumeration Strategy

	Shelter	Non-shelter		Administrative Data
		Service-based	Street	
Location				
Massachusetts	✓	✓	✓	
Cleveland	✓	✓	✓	✓
Seattle	✓	✓	✓	✓
New York City	✓	✓		
Whatcom County	✓	✓	✓	
Baltimore City	✓	✓		✓
Prince George County	✓	✓		
Clark County	✓	✓	✓	
Billings, MT			✓	
Washington, DC	✓	✓	✓	

Appendix G: Cross-site Comparison of Survey Instruments

(Only certain sites included a copy of the survey instrument)

	MA	NYC	Seattle	Prince George's Co.	Billings	Clark Co.
Duplication Inquiry (e.g. have you taken this survey already)	✓	✓	✓			
Housing Status (e.g. where did you sleep last night)						
Present	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Past	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Future	✓		✓	✓		
Residency (e.g. are you current staying in the area where you are taking the survey)						
Present	✓			✓	✓	✓
Past	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Future						
Demographics						
Age	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Ethnicity	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Gender	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Race	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Sexual Orientation	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Transgendered		✓				✓
Language		✓			✓	✓
Personal History						
Cause of Homelessness	✓	✓		✓		✓
Family History	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Past Homelessness	✓					
System Involvement	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Sexual Abuse					✓	✓
Education & Employment						
Education Status / Attainment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Employment Status		✓	✓		✓	
Income Source	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Military	✓	✓				
Risk & Protective Factors						
Peers	✓					
Pregnancy	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Parenting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Physical Health		✓		✓		✓
Mental Health		✓			✓	✓
Substance Use and/or Abuse		✓		✓		✓
Sexual Behaviors				✓		✓
Delinquency/Criminal Behavior						✓
Service						
Utilization	✓	✓		✓		✓
Service/Program Type	✓	✓				✓
Need/Recommendation	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Total Question	37	30	18	42	42	58
Total Pages (Questions Only)	2	5	1	6	5	12

Appendix H: Meeting Types, Dates, and Organizations Represented

- November 6, 2014 & December 4, 2014: Demonstration Project Steering Committee Meetings
  Participants represented the following agencies and organizations: Baltimore County Public Schools, Baltimore County Department of Planning, DHCD, Department of Human Resources, Healthcare for the Homeless, Homeless Persons Representation Project, Maryland General Assembly, Prince George's County Department of Social Services, The Institute, and The Journey Home.

- November 11, 2014 & December 2, 2014: Baltimore Homeless Youth Initiative (Baltimore PIT Count was an agenda item)
  Participants represented the following agencies: Homeless Persons Representation Project, YES Drop-In Center, Loving Arms, YO! Centers, The Family League of Baltimore City, Health Care for the Homeless, AIRS, City Steps, Youth Equality Alliance(with focus on LGBTQ population), and Women's Law Center

- November 21, 2014 Focus Group scheduled through Baltimore County CoC
  Participants represented the following agencies: Community Assistance Network (shelter and resource provider); Baltimore County Department of Social Services, Maryland State Department of Education, Baltimore County Public Schools Office of Homeless Education, Baltimore County Department of Social Services, and Services for the Homeless

- December 2, 2014, Focus Group with Young Adults from the YES Drop-In Center
  Participants: 11 participants between the ages of 18-24. Ten males and one female.

Appendix I: Document Given to Focus Group Participants

What is the Maryland Unaccompanied Homeless Youth and Young Adult Count Demonstration Project (Demonstration Project)?

Legislative mandate (MD HB794) has directed the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to establish the Demonstration Project to better understand the number and the characteristics of unaccompanied homeless youths in Maryland's jurisdictions. The Institute for Innovation and Implementation will serve as the Coordinating Entity to oversee the Demonstration Project, which includes developing a methodology to determine the number and characteristics of unaccompanied homeless youth and engaging and supporting key stakeholders to conduct the enumeration.

The immediate goal of the Demonstration Project is to engage youths and key stakeholders to participate in the Demonstration Project, conduct the enumeration, and integrate support services in the data collection process. Information gained from the Demonstration Project will be utilized to connect youth to service providers and/or reunite them with caregivers and build a more efficient and responsive housing and homeless service infrastructure.

Why do they want to interview me?
You have been invited to participate in an interview or focus group. In efforts to understand the work being done with our unaccompanied homeless youth (age 14-25) in Maryland and to gather information relevant to the data collection process, we are interviewing agency staff, community resources, or other personnel involved in the lives of our youth. (There are future plans to separately interview our youth).

The interviews will last anywhere between 30-45 minutes. Focus Groups will last anywhere between 60-90 minutes. I would like to record all interviews or focus groups. This is because it is difficult, if not impossible for me to take notes on all the information I glean from the interviews or focus groups. The audio recordings are transcribed and then I will analyze them for content. All audio recordings will be destroyed after the project ends. You are not identified in any analyses or reports. The goal is to get an understanding of resources, barriers, and recommendations for unaccompanied homeless youth (age 14-25) in Maryland.

I hope I have answered any questions you may have. Should you have additional questions, you can contact me:
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Appendix J: Questions for Youth Count Focus Group

1. Can you please give your age? [Necessary question to make sure youth are over the age of 18]
2. How did you find out about this program? [Question geared to understand how youth connect to resources]
3. How often do you use the services?
4. What other services related to housing and homelessness have you used?
5. About how long have you experienced homelessness?
6. Do you have a history with child welfare?
    a. Did you live outside of your home with your mom and dad in a foster home or group home?
    b. Did you ever live with a relative?
    c. Did you age out of care—so when you turned 21 you aged out of care? If yes, did you have housing or housing supports set up? Struggle
7. We are trying to help by counting youth who have experienced homelessness—do you have any suggestions?

Appendix K: Question for CoC Focus Group Participants

1. Please describe for me your program & role
   a) Prompt: identify specific goals and objectives of initiatives for services for unaccompanied homeless youth (age 14-25)
   b) Prompt: Is there a mission statement?
   c) What does your program specifically provide for 14-25 year old youth OR does your program provide services for younger children and/or families that would later assist 14-25 year old youth?
   d) Does your program provide services for migrant or immigrant youth?
   e) Does your program provide supports for precariously housed youth?
   f) How is your program funded?
   g) Do you incorporate the community or other outside resources with your services (e.g., do you provide the youth with outside resources such as educational, housing supports)?
2. How are these resources available to and for the intended population [unaccompanied homeless youth, ages 14-25]?
   a. Prompt: how do the youth know about them (do you recruit?)
   b. Prompt: how often are they resources available?
   c. Prompt: how long are these resources available?
3. How effective do you think your program is? Please give specific examples?
   a. PROMPT: Link back to program goals/intention of services
4. How do you think youth define housing (what would they consider stable housing?)
5. How do you track services provided?
   a) How do you count how many clients you have served?
   b) Do you keep files or electronic tracking systems of services used?
   c) Do you have research collected based on your services or population served?
6. What does your agency (COC) need in order to provide innovative services to youth AND track/count the youth you serve?
   a. PROMPT: staff time, volunteers, specific resources, etc.

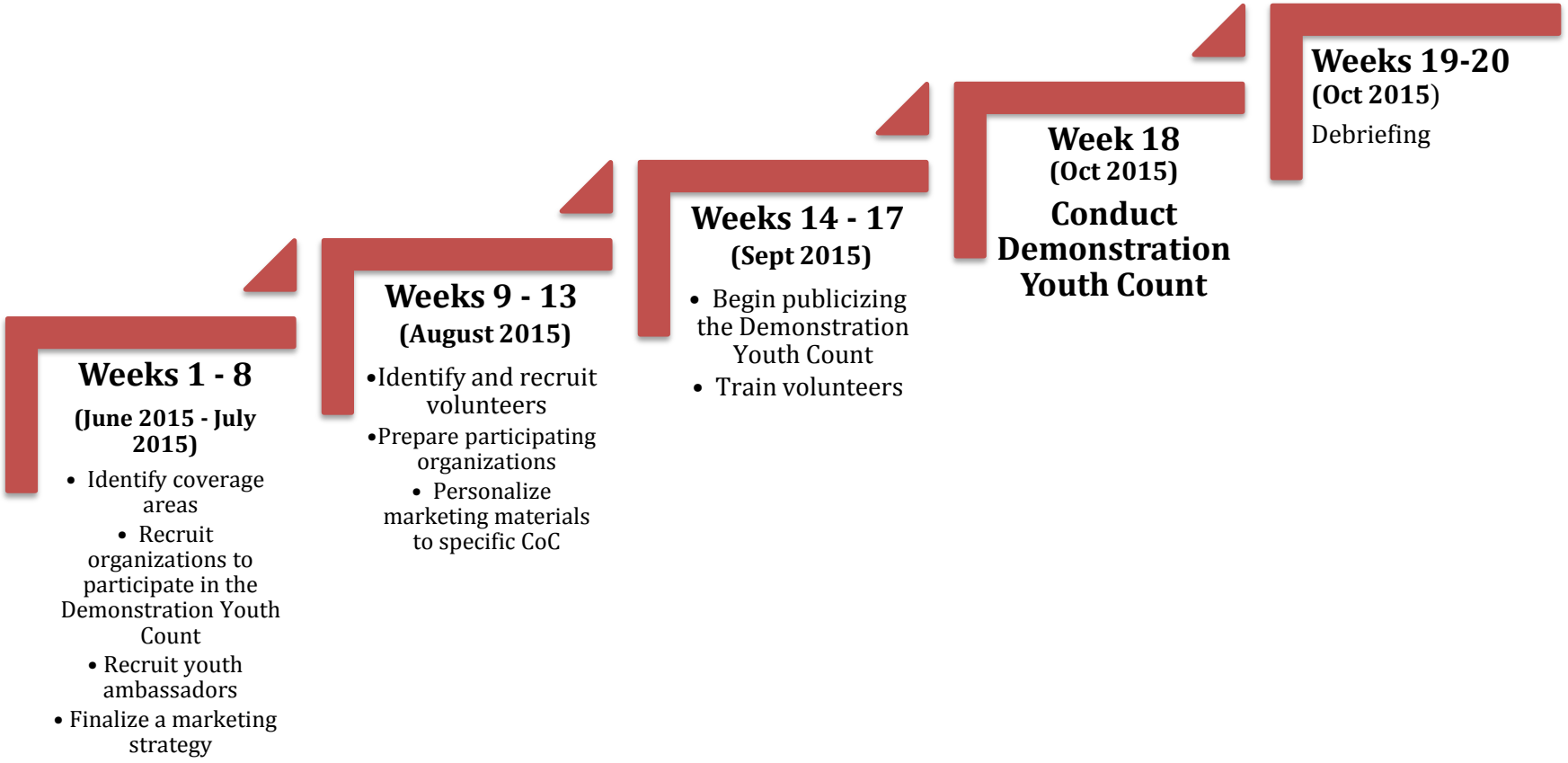
If Time Allows Questions:

7. Are there resources or website information available for youth?
8. Do you have youth input for your initiative/agency?
9. Does your agency or initiative address youth transitional planning for aging out of care? If yes, how?
10. Do you know about Maryland's benchmarks for youth age 14-25?
11. How does this program address these benchmarks?
12. Do you provide services for LGBTQ youth? If yes, what services?
13. If no, would you provide services?
14. What types of support do you think you would need in order to provide a safe and stable home for LGBTQ youth?
15. What training do you think you need to be able to provide services for LGBTQ youth who are also facing homelessness?
16. Do you provide culturally sensitive services for youth? If yes, what services?
17. Do you provide services that address any of the following for youth:

a. Relationships
b. Employment
c. Finances
d. Health or Mental Health
e. Mentoring or Support
f. Other

18. Do you think there are specific needs in any of the above areas for youth?
19. What do you see has housing needs for youth?
PROMPT: is there a difference by age (14-16, 17-19, etc.).
20. What recommendations do you have for policy changes?
21. What recommendations do you have for Youth Count in terms of evaluating the number of unaccompanied homeless youth in Maryland?

Appendix L: Estimated Timeline for Local Planning Workgroup



Appendix M: Template material for Youth Count

Material from the Massachusetts Youth Count

Volunteer Outreach

Street outreach volunteers are needed to help distribute the 2015 Youth Count Survey of Homeless and Unaccompanied Youth in *[CoC name].* This survey will be instrumental in improving services for young people experiencing housing instability and in working toward policy change that will hopefully prevent young people from becoming homeless. Outreach is a critical component in the distribution of the survey, and we need as much assistance as possible.

What: Ask target age-range youth and young adults you work with or have identified in your area to fill out a brief questionnaire regarding their current housing status.

When: Throughout the week of *[timeframe].* There is no minimum quota of volunteer time, and any amount of time that one can contribute is appreciated and very important.

Where: This survey is intended to reach youth in all neighborhoods of *[CoC].* Surveys should be administered at local provider organizations and through street and peer outreach teams.

How: Surveys are intended to be completed by youth, rather than administered in an interview fashion. The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete, and volunteers should begin by introducing themselves and asking youth if they would be willing to complete a survey.

***Sample Introductory Script*:**

"Hi, do you have a few minutes to help understand service needs of youth in the area? My name is_____ and I am working with a community project here in the city. We are trying to learn more about young people's needs in order to better plan youth programs. By filling out this survey you could really help the situation of other young people. All of the information you provide us will be kept confidential. We won't ask for your name anywhere on this survey.

Would you be willing to take 10 minutes of your time to answer a few questions?"

Pointers in Street Outreach:

Body language is key: Keep your hands visible, arms unfolded, and approach with a smile. Dress casually. Hold the clipboard by your side while you approach the youth or have it in a tote bag to retrieve if they consent.

Answering questions: If they seem unsure about taking part of ask many questions, you can encourage them by confirming that their participation matters. If they say they are in a hurry or waiting for the bus, tell them that it is a quick survey, and that it is ok if they don't fill out every single question. If they ask where it is going or what it is about, tell them it is for a community project seeking information about young people's living situation (avoid explicitly using the word "homeless").

Give clear instructions: The youth should fill out as much as they can but are not required to complete every question.

Be upfront: If the youth is suspicious, assure them that you are just a volunteer with a community project and NOT from the government, law enforcement, or CPS.

Encourage their impact: Assure the young person that providing their information will go on to help improve services for youth. We want to hear the voice of young people. Is there more that you think the city needs to do for young people? This is how we show we care about their opinion.

Don't push the envelope: Young people will make it clear if they want nothing to do with your soliciting. If this is the case, move on. If they are standing with a group of friends, ask if they each would like to fill it out together. Remember that the youth you encounter may come from very diverse backgrounds, so there is no room for judgment or categorizing. Be friendly and outgoing. Many of them will be happy and excited to contribute.

Poster Examples: (CoC specific templates can be provided)

Appendix N: Draft Survey Instrument

This survey is being administered by the Youth Count Steering Committee on Homeless and Unaccompanied Youth and this local Continuum of Care so that the state and local providers can better understand the housing and service needs of youth and young adults under the age of 25. Your answer will remain confidential. We greatly appreciate your participation!

1. Have you taken this survey already this week? ○ Yes ○ No

Demographic Characteristics

2. What is your date of birth? (mm/dd/yyyy) ____/__/_____
3. Please select your age category: ○ 17 and younger ○ 18-24 ○ 25 and older
4. Where were you born? ○ In this city/town ○ Another place in Maryland
   ○ Outside of Maryland, but within the United States
   ○ Outside of the United States
5. Are you currently in school? ○ Yes ○ No
6. If yes, are you in: ○ Middle school ○ High school ○ GED program
   ○ Vocational training program ○ College
   ○ Other, *please describe* _____
7. What is the highest grade or year of school that you have completed? *Please check one.*
   - ○ a. No education
   - ○ b. 8th grade or less
   - ○ c. 9-11th grade
   - ○ d. High school diploma
   - ○ e. GED certificate
   - ○ f. Some college credits
   - ○ g. College degree
   - ○ h. Post-secondary training
8. What is your race/ethnicity? *Please check all that apply.*
   ○ Black/African American ○ Native American ○ Asian/Pacific Islander
   ○ White ○ Multiracial ○ Other *(please specify)*: _____
9. Are you Hispanic or Latino/a? ○ Yes ○ No ○ Don't Know
10. What is your gender identity? ○ Female ○ Male ○ Transgender, FTM
    ○ Transgender, MTF ○ Other _____ ○ Prefer not to answer
11. What is your sexual orientation? C*heck the answer that best describes you.*
    ○ Straight ○ Lesbian ○ Gay ○ Bisexual ○ Queer ○ Other _____
    ○ Prefer not to answer
12. Are you pregnant? ○ Yes ○ No ○ Not applicable
13. Do you have children? ○ Yes ○ No
14. If yes, *how many children* ____ and do they live with you? ○ Yes ○ No
15. Have you ever served in the military? ○ Yes ○ No
16. Have you ever been in foster care? ○ Yes ○ No ○ Don't Know
17. Have you ever lived in a group home or residential program?
    ○ Yes ○ No ○ Don't Know

18. Have you ever stayed overnight or longer in juvenile detention a secure facility or residential program for young people as a result of criminal behavior or police involvement? ○ Yes ○ No
19. Have you ever stayed overnight or longer in an adult jail or prison?
○ Yes ○ No
20. What is the first letter of your first name? _____
21. What is the first letter of your last name? _____

Current Housing Status

22. Are you still living with your parent/guardian/foster parent? ○ Yes ○ No
23. If not, what are the reasons you are not living with a parent/guardian/foster parent? *Please check all that apply.*

- ○ a. I was fighting with my parent/guardian/foster parent
- ○ b. I left foster care and could not return home
- ○ c. I was released from jail or a detention facility
- ○ d. My parent/guardian/foster parent or another household member was abusive (sexually, physically, or emotionally) or neglected me
- ○ e. My parent/guardian/foster parent told me to leave before I turned 18
- ○ f. My parent/guardian/foster parent told me to leave after I turned 18
- ○ g. My parent/guardian/foster parent was experiencing homelessness and/or my family lost its housing
- ○ h. My parent/guardian/foster parent abused drugs or alcohol
- ○ i. I was/am pregnant or got someone pregnant
- ○ j. My sexual orientation and/or gender identity
- ○ k. My use of drugs or alcohol
- ○ l. I wanted to leave
- ○ m. My house was too small for everyone to live there
- ○ n. I did not feel safe because of violence or unsafe activities in my house
- ○ o. My parent/guardian/foster parent died/passed away.
- ○ p. Other:_____

23. Are you currently staying in the city/town where you are taking this survey?
○ Yes ○ No
24. If so, for how long have you stayed/lived here? ○ Fewer than 6 months
○ 6-12 months ○ More than 12 months
25. If not, where are you staying now (city/town)? _____

26. Please check where you stayed on the night of ***[PIT Count Date]*** and the 60 days prior to that.

	Check only one	***Check all that apply***	
	On the night of *[PIT Count Date]*	**In the last 2 weeks**	**In the last 2 months**
In a house or apartment with my immediate family (parent or guardian) that we rent or own.	○	○	○
At the house or apartment of another family member or friend	○	○	○
At the house or apartment of a stranger	○	○	○

At the house/apartment of my foster parent	○	○	○
At my own apartment or a room I rent	○	○	○
At a shelter/motel paid for by a government-funded or non-profit organization	○	○	○
In a transitional housing program	○	○	○
In a group home	○	○	○
Outside in the park, on the street, in a tent, transit station, car, etc.	○	○	○
Inside in an abandoned building, squat, porch, basement, hallway, etc.	○	○	○
In a treatment or medical facility (such as a hospital, detox)	○	○	○
In a jail or juvenile detention facility	○	○	○
Other *(please specify)*_____	○	○	○

27. How long have you been staying at the place you spent the night of *[PIT Count Date]*.? ○ 1-6 days ○ At least 1 week, but less than 2 weeks
○ At least 2 weeks, but less than 1 month ○ 1-6 months
○ More than 6 months
○ I am no longer there. Where are you now: _____
28. Do you think you could sleep there for the next 14 days without being asked to leave? ○ Yes ○ No
30. How old were you when you first left home and were on your own? ___ years old
31. Have your parents/guardians ever experienced homelessness? ○ Yes ○ No
32. Do you have friends who currently are experiencing homelessness? ○ Yes ○ No

Access to Services

33. In the last year, have you tried to get help from any of the following services/programs? *Please check all that apply.*

○ I haven't tried to access help

Service Program	**I tried to get help**	**Was Help received, and if so how helpful was it? Circle one!**
		Not Received 0  1 2 3 4 5
Short-term housing (such as shelter or transitional living progr	○	0 1 2 3 4 5
Long-term housing (such as Section 8 or public housing)	○	0 1 2 3 4 5
Educational support (such as enrolling in school or GED)	○	0 1 2 3 4 5
Job training, life skills training, and/or career placement	○	0 1 2 3 4 5
Health care services, including emergency room services and ca help with health conditions/disabilities	○	0 1 2 3 4 5
Family support (such as conflict mediation or parenting suppor	○	0 1 2 3 4 5
Child care	○	0 1 2 3 4 5
Nutritional assistance (such as Food Stamps/SNAP or free meal	○	0 1 2 3 4 5

Cash assistance (such as Welfare benefits or Social Security Disability benefits)	○	0 1 2 3 4 5
Counseling or other mental health care services	○	0 1 2 3 4 5
Substance abuse/alcohol treatment program	○	0 1 2 3 4 5
Food banks	○	0 1 2 3 4 5
Local police officers	○	0 1 2 3 4 5
Other _____	○	0 1 2 3 4 5

34. Remembering instances where you did not get the help you needed, what were the main reasons? *Please check all that apply.*

○ a. No transportation
○ b. Sent me somewhere else
○ c. Language barrier
○ d. Put on waiting list
○ e. I did not want to fill out paperwork
○ f. I didn't have necessary documentation
○ g. I didn't hear back
○ h. I didn't know where to go
○ i. I didn't qualify
○ j. I didn't feel comfortable/safe
○ k. I didn't follow through
○ l. Other _____

Income

35. Do you have a personal source of income? ○ Yes ○ No

36. If yes, what are your sources of income? *Please check all that apply and tell us which is your primary source of income.*

Sources of Income	**I get income from this source**	**This is my primary source**
Full-time job	○	○
Part-time job and/or temporary job	○	○
Money from 'under the table' work	○	○
Cash assistance from a government-funded program (federal/state/lo	○	○
Social Security/disability payments	○	○
Unemployment benefits	○	○
Hustling/selling drugs	○	○
Sex work/turning tricks	○	○
Panhandling	○	○
Child support	○	○
Money from family members or friends	○	○
Other, please specify _____	○	○

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey! Is there anything you would like to share to help us better serve you and other young people like you?

_____

_____

_____

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY UNIQUE IDENTIFIER:
Code: First Letter of First Name/ First Letter of Last Name/ Gender Code [0=Female; 1=Male; 4= All Others]/ Birthday Month-Month/Day-Day/ Last 2 Digits of Year of Birth/ CoC code.