



Youth REACH MD SURVEY TRAINING

Reach out, Engage, Assist, & Count to end Homelessness
www.youthreachmd.com

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



What is Youth REACH MD?

Maryland's first, multi-jurisdictional, comprehensive survey and census of youth and young adults struggling with housing through an annual Youth Count.

The Goal?

- To learn how many youth experience homelessness in Maryland
- To better understand who these youth are and their experiences
- To learn how to better support youth
- To maximize funding and resources available to support youth
- To reduce and ultimately end youth homelessness in Maryland



Who are we looking for?

Youth and young adults who are...

1. Under the age of 25
2. Not in the physical custody or care of a parent/legal guardian
3. Without a fixed, regular, or adequate nighttime residence



About the Youth Count Survey

- The survey is 29 questions, and usually takes a youth about 10 minutes to complete
- Each question is designed to help us better understand more about youth who are experiencing homelessness in Maryland and the challenges they face.
- Each completed survey has tremendous value in helping us learn how to better address the needs of these youth and prevent future homelessness for youth in Maryland.



Voluntary & Confidential

This survey is completely voluntary.

- No youth should be made to feel guilty for not participating or coerced into providing information they do not feel comfortable sharing.
- The youth can choose not to take the survey, not to answer any question within the survey, or to stop taking the survey at any time.
- The youth does not need to answer all questions for their survey to be counted.

This survey is completely confidential.

- Always respect the youth's privacy and allow them to complete the survey on their own.
- We recommend providing an envelope to the youth with any paper surveys so the youth can return their responses confidentially in a sealed envelope.



Interviewing 101

Goal is to collect complete surveys of as many youth as possible so...

- **Be friendly and outgoing with potential youths.**
 - Most of us prefer to talk to friendly people.
- **Ask the questions as written.**
 - We have attempted to write the questions in language appropriate for people in this age group. Asking the questions exactly as written ensures that the answers to the questions mean the same thing, regardless of who is asking the questions.
- **Let the youth answer the questions.**
 - Some people will struggle with some questions and have to think or take time to answer. Other people may not be able to answer some of the questions. That is okay. If youths get stuck, don't help them answer.
- **Unless, they need clarification.**
 - You can answer questions that they ask, but keep in mind that we want to keep as close to the language of the question as possible, so try to keep your answers simple and do not guide the youth to any particular answer choice.



Interviewing 101

Goal is for youth to answer the survey questions as honestly and openly as they are comfortable with, so...

- **Be clear they can refuse to answer any question they are not comfortable answering.**
 - At the start of the interview let the youth know that they can refuse to answer any of your questions and that it is their right to refuse.
- **Be careful of your judgment.**
 - You most likely will encounter adolescents or young adults that talk about sex, drugs or past abuse. You may strongly disapprove of the topics being discussed or feel uncomfortable discussing them with an adolescent or young adult. However, it is important that you not show judgment toward the youth.
- **Be considerate of the youths feelings and level of discomfort.**
 - Just as you may be uncomfortable discussing some of the sensitive issues asked in the survey, the person you are interviewing may feel uncomfortable as well. Feel free to ask if the youth would like to take a break or if they need to get a glass of water. Some of the questions will bring up emotional issues for youth, be respectful of their emotional reactions and allow them the time they need to process these questions.



Example Introduction

Hi, my name is _____ and I'm working with the [Name of CoC or Implementing Entity] as part of Youth REACH Maryland. Youth REACH Maryland is a project to help us better understand the housing experiences of youth and young adults in Maryland, and how we can better help youth who may not have a stable or safe place to stay at night. To do this, we are surveying youth under 25 so that we can better understand their housing experiences. I would like to ask you a few questions about that. You will receive _____ for taking the survey. It usually takes about 10 minutes to complete and your participation is voluntary. All of your answers will remain confidential and we will not share any information specifically about you with anyone. Even though we will keep your answers private, there is a small risk that someone outside of our team might see them. There is also a small risk that you might feel uncomfortable answering some questions. However, you can skip any questions you don't want to answer or stop the survey at any time.

Do you have any questions?
Would you like to participate?



The Survey Questions

Follow along with a copy of the survey or the survey guide available at www.youthreachmd.com/materials



Basic information Questions

Goals & Notes

- Collect basic demographic information and data essential for coding purposes
- Collect general location information to target service development
- If 25 or older, stop the survey here

Questions

1. What county are you in?
2. What city, town, or neighborhood are you in?
3. What are your initials?
4. What is your DOB?
5. How old are you?



Living Situation Questions

Goals & Notes

- Understand the youth's current living situation
- If surveying at night, youth should select where they are currently staying
- Can select multiple answers for Questions 9 and 10
- If youth are unsure, encourage them to make their best guess

Questions

6. Where did you stay last night?
7. How long do you think you could stay?
8. How long have you been staying there?
9. Are you currently living with your parent/guardian?
10. Why are you not living with your parent/guardian?



Education Questions

Goals & Notes

- Understand the youth's education needs
- Question 11 - If youth are enrolled but not frequently attending, they should still select "yes"
- Vocational training is typically after high school
- Question 12 - if currently in school, select most recently completed. If in college, select "some college"

Questions

11. Currently enrolled in school?
12. Highest grade or year of school completed



Demographic Questions

Goals or Notes

- Gain more detailed demographic information
- Can select multiple races/ethnicities
- "Prefer not to answer" option for Questions 13 & 14

Questions

13. Race/Ethnicity
14. Gender Identity
15. Sexual Orientation



Life Experience Questions

Goals or Notes

- Yes/No Questions
- If youth is unsure, they should choose "no"
- Question 16 - If the youth has a pregnant partner, should select "no"
- Question 17 - Living with = responsibility for caring for children daily
- Question 19 - If unsure of their age when they left foster care, youth should make their best guess

Questions

16. Pregnant?
17. Children?
 - a. How many?
 - b. Living with?
18. Military?
19. Foster care?
 - a. Age of exit
20. Residential Treatment
21. Juvenile Detention
22. Adult Jail



Housing History Questions

Goals or Notes

- Better understand how youth's housing needs change over time
- If unsure of the number of places, youth should make their best guess
- Select all that apply for Question 24

Questions

23. Number of places spent the night in the past two months?
24. Where spent the night in the past two months?



Services & Supports Questions

Goals & Notes

- To understand the services youth seek/need and barriers they face to receiving help
- If a youth asks about a service, keep descriptions simple and judgement-free
- Youth should select all answers that apply for these questions
- If a youth is concerned about reporting illegal activity, remind them the survey is confidential

Questions

25. Services sought in the past year?
26. Barriers to receiving help needed?
27. Most helpful services right now?
28. Sources of income?



Comments

Goal

- Allow additional opportunity for youth to respond to the survey or share any information they feel is important and was not asked about in the survey

Question

29. Anything you would like to share to help us better serve you or young people like you?



Example Ending

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey! If you know of others who might be interested in participating you can tell them about [\[insert magnet event info or contact info for CoC\]](#) or tell them to go to youthreachmd.com for more information on how they can participate.

[provide incentives]

Is there anything we can help you with right now?

[provide *Need Help?* Card, list of resources and/or case management hotline number]



**Check out the Survey Guide for More
information**

www.youthreachmd.com/materials

Questions?

Contact your local Youth REACH MD Volunteer Manager

www.youthreachmd.com/locations

or

Email the YOUTH REACH MD Project Manager

amanda.miller@ssw.umaryland.edu

