



# YOUTH REACH MD

Maryland's Unaccompanied Homeless Youth & Young Adult Count Demonstration Project

## 2018 Survey Guide

### General Tips

Each question on the survey was 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.

While our aim is to collect as many completed surveys as possible, 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.

Do not answer survey questions for a youth. If a youth does not understand a question or a given answer choice, you can provide more information to explain what a question or answer choice means, but try to give a simple, appropriate, and judgement-free explanation. If a youth is ever unsure of the answer to the question, you can advise them to make their best guess. Always be sure the answer to the question is the youth's, not your own interpretation of what the youth may have shared.

### Beginning Suggested Script

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 experiences with unstable housing and couch surfing. I would like to ask you a few questions about that. All of your answers will remain confidential. We will not share any information specifically about you with anyone and your answers will never be associated with your name. While we will be careful to keep your answers private, there is a small risk that someone outside of our team might see your answers if something unexpected happens. 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. You will receive \_\_\_\_\_ for taking the survey. It usually takes about 10 minutes to complete and your participation is completely voluntary.

Do you have any questions?

Would you like to participate?



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## Question Guide

### *Question 1: What county are you in right now?*

If the youth is unsure as to which county they are in currently, you can provide them with this information, but please refrain from providing any answers for the youth for the remaining questions.

### *Question 2: What city, town, or neighborhood are you in right now?*

If the youth asks why this information is needed, you can explain that this helps us gain a general sense of where services or programs might be useful. As with all questions, if a youth feels uncomfortable giving this information, you can remind them that their answers are confidential, but do not pressure a youth to answer the question.

### *Questions 3 & 4: What are your initials? What is your date of birth?*

If the youth asks why this information is needed, you can explain that this helps us to make sure we are not counting the same person twice, and that it will not be used to identify them. As with all questions, if a youth feels uncomfortable giving this information, you can remind them that their answers are confidential, but do not pressure a youth to answer the question.

### *Question 5: How old are you?*

If the youth is 25 or older, you can stop at this question. Thank the youth for their willingness to participate and provide them with any incentives and materials or resources available to them.

### *Question 6: Where did you stay last night?*

Youth should select the answer that best describes where they stayed last night. If none of the given answers describe where they stayed, advise the youth to select 'other' and to describe where they stayed in the space provided.

If asking this question at night, youth can select where they are currently spending the night.

To select the first answer choice, the youth does not need to have their name on the lease agreement.

### *Question 7: How long do you think you could stay there without being asked to leave?*

If the youth is unsure how to answer this question, advise them to make their best guess or select 'I don't know'.

### *Question 8: How long have you been staying at the place where you stayed last night?*

If youth are unsure of how to answer this question, ask them to make their best guess.

### *Question 9: Are you currently living with your parent/guardian/foster parent?*

Youth should select all that apply if they express feeling that one or more of the answers may be true.

### *Question 10: Why are you not currently living with your parent/guardian/foster parent?*

Youth should select all that apply. You can explain here that we understand that often these experiences are complicated and that there may be a number of different reasons that are applicable.

### *Question 11: Are you currently enrolled in school?*

If the youth is currently enrolled in school, they should select the 'yes' response that corresponds with the level of school in which they are currently enrolled, even if they are not frequently attending.



*Question 12: What is the highest grade or year of school you have completed?*

If the youth is currently in school, they should select what they have most recently completed (for example, if they are a senior in high school, they should select ‘9-11<sup>th</sup> grade’), except if the youth is currently in college, in which case they should select ‘some college credits’.

*Questions 13: How would you describe your race/ethnicity?*

If the youth identifies as having more than one race or ethnicity, advise them to select all that apply to them.

**TIP**

*A vocational training program is training for a specific career or trade, which a youth would typically enroll in after they complete high school or receive their GED.*

*Question 14 & 15: How would you describe your gender identity? Which of the following best describes how you currently think about your sexual orientation?*

Youth may be more sensitive to being asked these questions due to their personal nature, so it is good to explain why you are asking these questions and the importance of this information. Here is an example of what you could say:

*“The next two questions ask about your gender identity and sexual orientation. We ask about these because some research has shown that LGBTQ youth are more likely to experience housing instability, and gathering information about LGBTQ youth can help us better meet their needs. May I ask about your gender identity and sexual orientation?”*

If the youth expresses discomfort with these questions, you can advise them to select the ‘prefer not to answer’ option. As with all questions, youth are not required to answer.

*Question 16: Are you pregnant?*

If a youth expresses having a partner who is pregnant, advise them to select ‘no’ for this question and ask if there is a way we may be able to also survey their partner.

*Question 17 & 17a: Do you have children? If yes, how many children?*

If a youth expresses concern about child protective services, remind them that survey responses are confidential and individual question responses will not be shared with anyone, but youth should never be pressured to provide an answer with which they are uncomfortable providing.

*Question 17b: Do any of your children live with you?*

If a youth is unsure if their children live with them, you can ask them whether they have the primary responsibility for caring for their children on a day-to-day basis. If yes, then the youth should select ‘yes’ for Question 15c.

*Questions 18 – 22: Have you ever served in the military? Been in foster care? Lived in a residential treatment program? Stayed in juvenile detention? Stayed in an adult jail or prison?*

If a youth is unsure as to the answer to any of these questions, advise them to select ‘no’.

*Question 19a: What age did you leave foster care?*

If a youth is unsure at what age they left foster care, ask them to make their best guess.



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*Question 23: How many different places have you spent the night in the past 2 months?*

If a youth is unsure how many different places they have spent the night in the past two months, ask them to estimate or make their best guess.

*Question 24: Where have you spent the night in the past 2 months?*

Youth should select all answers that describe where they have spent at least one night in the past two months.

If a youth has stayed somewhere that is not one of the given options, advise the youth to use the 'other' option and to describe where they stayed in the space provided.

To select the first option, the youth does not need to have their name on the lease agreement.

*Question 25: Which of the following services or programs have you tried to get help from in the past year?*

Youth should select all that apply. If a youth is unsure if they sought or received help from a listed service or program, you can provide a brief, judgement-free description of the service or program. If the youth is still unsure, advise them to not select that response option.

*Question 26: What prevented you from getting all the help you needed?*

Youth should select all that apply, even if they were eventually able to receive the help sought. If they always received the help they needed without any difficulties or delays, then they should select the last option, 'I received all the help I needed'.

*Question 27: What would be the most helpful for you right now?*

Youth should select all that apply, even if the service or program is not currently available to them.

*Question 28: In the last two months, where did you get money/income?*

Youth should select all that apply; however, some youth may be uncomfortable selecting certain answer choices due to the personal nature of some of the options. If a youth expresses discomfort or concern, remind the youth that their survey answers are confidential and explain that this question helps us understand how we can better support youth in being able to get the resources they need, but do not pressure youth to answer the question.

*Question 29: Comments*

The youth may share any information they would like in this section. If the youth requests guidance, you can share that they can write anything that would help us better understand their situation or important information that we did not ask about in the survey.

## Ending Suggested Script

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 [magnet event info or contact info for CoC] or tell them to go to [youthreachmd.com](http://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]

