



News Release

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CONNECTING WITH YOUTH WHO ARE ON THEIR OWN AND EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN MARYLAND

Youth REACH MD—a coalition of state and local partners—is conducting a youth outreach effort March 1 through April 15 across nine regions in Maryland to better understand and address youth homelessness

The Youth REACH (Reach out, Engage, Assist and Count to end Homelessness) MD Coalition will soon launch an expanded survey and census of youth and young adults who are on their own and experiencing homelessness or housing instability across sixteen Maryland counties and Baltimore City. These youth are at increased risk for victimization, exploitation, poor physical and behavioral health, substance use, and other adverse outcomes. The goal of the project is to better understand the number, characteristics, and needs of these youth in order to inform policy and resource provision and improve outcomes for youth and young adults in Maryland.

The first Youth REACH MD demonstration count in 2015 (Maryland's first-ever survey and census of youth and young adults who were experiencing homelessness) identified 834 unaccompanied youth and young adults in 6 regions of Maryland who were experiencing homelessness during the three weeks of the count. The second iteration of this innovative pilot project, funded by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development with the support of the Maryland General Assembly and coordinated by The Institute for Innovation & Implementation at the University of Maryland School of Social Work, will identify youth and young adults under the age of 25 who are not living with a parent or guardian and who do not have a fixed, stable, permanent place to call home, in order to learn more about their experiences and the challenges they face.

“We have heard countless stories from child advocates and, more importantly, youth themselves, that homelessness is the reality for far too many of Maryland’s young people. Youth REACH MD, shows us the path forward to achieve the goal of ending homelessness for youth in Maryland,” said Delegate Mary Washington, PhD, the lead sponsor of the legislation that created and funded Youth REACH MD. “This issue has been at the heart of my legislative agenda for over three years, and I’m so pleased to be working with committed experts and volunteers in the field to develop real solutions.”

In 2015, 6 regions representing 8 jurisdictions participated in the count; in 2017, 9 regions representing 17 jurisdictions will be participating (new participants are noted with * below). Each of the regions selected a two-week period during the Youth REACH MD Count Window of March 1-April 15, 2017.

The locally selected Youth REACH Weeks for each region are (in chronological order):

- March 1-March 14, 2017:
 - Prince George's County
 - The Lower Shore (Somerset, Wicomico & Worcester Counties)
- March 8-March 21, 2017: Anne Arundel County
- March 12-March 25, 2017: Carroll County*
- March 14-March 27, 2017: Washington County
- March 19-April 1, 2017: Southern Maryland* (Calvert, Charles & St. Mary's Counties)
- March 20-April 2, 2017:
 - Baltimore County
 - The Mid-Shore* (Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's & Talbot Counties)
- April 1-April 14, 2017: Baltimore City

Information on each of the counts, including local contact information and links to local Youth REACH Facebook pages, can be found by visiting youthreachmd.com.

“The Institute is honored to partner with the State, local communities, and youth to design and implement outreach strategies tailored for the unique needs of each jurisdiction,” said Michelle Zabel, Director of The Institute for Innovation & Implementation at the University of Maryland School of Social Work. “We are excited about the increased focus on this issue and look forward to developing effective approaches for ending youth homelessness together.”

After completion of this expanded iteration of Youth REACH MD, The Institute will issue a report with findings and recommendations to address youth homelessness in Maryland, and develop a toolkit for other jurisdictions across Maryland to begin ongoing efforts to better understand the number, characteristics, and needs of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness in their area.

“The department is proud to support Youth REACH MD's census and survey efforts,” said Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development Secretary Kenneth C. Holt. “The valuable data and insight gained through these outreach activities will continue to inform and improve our agency's ability to engage with and provide services to Maryland's homeless youth.”

For more information, visit youthreachmd.com, and follow #YouthReachMD.

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