

Homelessness Resources: Youth

Youth experiencing homelessness are a rapidly growing part of the homeless population who often are challenged by personal trauma or sexual orientation.

Approximately 30 percent of people experiencing homelessness are younger than age 24, according to the [Department of Housing and Urban Development's \(HUD\) 2018 annual report on Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Programs Homeless Populations and Subpopulations \(PDF | 87 KB\)](#). The growth of homelessness among youth and young adults, as well as their unique circumstances and needs, prompted HUD to establish 2017 as a baseline year for tracking progress toward ending youth homelessness.

The trauma of homelessness, even short term, can have a major effect on a youth's future development. Children who experience homelessness have significantly higher rates of emotional, behavioral, and immediate and long-term health problems. They often [struggle with self-esteem](#), which puts them at risk for substance use, suicide, and other negative outcomes. They have numerous academic difficulties, including below-grade level reading, high rate of learning disabilities, poor school attendance, and failure to advance to the next grade or graduate. Four out of five children who are experiencing homelessness have been exposed to at least one serious violent event by age 12.

Risk factors associated with adult homelessness—[mental and substance use disorders](#), poverty, and lack of educational employment opportunities—are often also true for youth homelessness. But, service delivery for individuals under the age of 24 experiencing homelessness must also consider other risk factors. Family conflict and "aging out" of the foster care or juvenile justice systems may play a significant role in a youth's experience with homelessness. According to the report [Missed Opportunities: Homeless Youth in America](#), one in 10 young adults (ages 18–25), and at least one in 30 adolescents (ages 13–17), experience some form of homelessness unaccompanied by a parent or guardian over the course of a year. Unaccompanied youth can find it difficult to find a place to live and someone willing to rent them a room. [Parenting teens experiencing homelessness](#) face their own unique challenges.

Furthermore, youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, or queer or questioning (LGBTQ) disproportionately experience homelessness. They are at high risk for family rejection, physical assaults and sexual exploitation in shelters and on the streets, [trauma](#), and mental and substance use disorders. Providing safe, supportive, and welcoming environments for LGBTQ youth is essential for reaching this vulnerable population.

Access more [mental and substance use disorders and homelessness resources](#) or search [SAMHSA's store](#).

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- » [Mental and Substance Use Disorders](#)
- » [Trauma and Violence](#)
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HUD Resources

Find contact information for homeless services organizations near you using the [Department of Housing and Urban Development's \(HUD\) Resource Locator](#).

Contact Us

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SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.

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