



Report of Springfield's 2023 Survey of High-Risk and Homeless Youth

Research conducted by the Homeless Youth Taskforce of the Ozarks Alliance to End Homelessness and the Christian, Greene, and Webster Counties Continuum of Care. Data analysis and recommendations were provided by Christina Ryder, CSP of the Sociology and Anthropology Department at Missouri State University in June of 2023. Questions regarding data can be directed to cryder@missouristate.edu.

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This project is the 10th High-Risk and Homeless Youth Assessment Survey conducted since 2007, and was developed, and data collection was conducted by, the Homeless Youth Task Force of the Ozarks Alliance to End Homelessness and the Ozarks Christian, Greene, and Webster Counties Continuum of Care. Analysis of the data was provided by Missouri State University's Sociology and Anthropology Department (faculty member Christina Ryder, CSP/CSA (Certified Sociology Practitioner/Certified Applied Sociologist)).

During the first quarter of 2023, a questionnaire was provided to members of the Homeless Youth Subcommittee and partner agencies by the Homeless Youth Task Force that sought to explore the needs of at-risk and homeless youth in the Springfield, Missouri metropolitan area. Similar to 2021, survey interviews with youth were conducted and the majority of youth completed the questionnaire with the assistance of case managers or others that are responsible for providing services or referrals to services among Continuum of Care partner agencies. This collection methodology differed compared to pre-COVID surveys where online questionnaires were given to youth at the annual Springfield, MO 'Point in Time' count, otherwise referred to as 'Every Voice Counts' events. At the Springfield, Every Voice Count event, area nonprofits provide a one-day event designed to provide extensive and wrap around assistance for homeless persons or those at risk of homelessness (including applications for benefits, haircuts, clothing, and other basic need items) in addition to collecting vital information on who is experiencing homelessness in the community. Both youth and adults are asked to complete a basic survey regarding their experiences and what types of services may be most helpful. In addition to information collected at this event, 2007-2019 surveys were also distributed at various catchment nonprofits where many homeless youth frequent in order to obtain support and services. The data collection methodology for 2021 and 2023, unlike the data collection methodology in previous years, only captured the responses of youth that were either already, or desired to be, engaged with services or agencies. This likely influenced several responses, including answers to current homelessness and housing. This survey interview and collection methodology also potentially had several benefits for service providers as it allows for case managers and others to obtain additional information about youth life experiences and needs that may allow for additional resource connections and referrals to be made. As with prior years, the 2023 survey was also modified slightly in order to address potentially unclear questions or adjusted to better capture information of benefit to service providers. Given these adjustments in collection methodology, direct comparisons from statistics from 2007-2019 and 2021-2023 are limited and not recommended. Despite these limitations however, many of the same reported reasons for homelessness remain consistent in 2023 as they have since 2007 (namely abuse, trauma, limited housing options, and unemployment or underemployment). Where possible and comparable, 2023 data results in light of 2021 data results are discussed.

In 2023, 49 youth completed and returned a questionnaire (this is approximately the same number of youth who completed the survey in 2021). Not every respondent completed each of the questions on the form, and this is noted in the sections when applicable below, however, most surveys were complete. Of those that responded to the survey in 2023, all were between the ages of 14-23 (the age range utilized in Housing and Urban Development and other federal agencies to define a 'youth' is between the ages of 12-24). The majority of youth (65%) that were homeless or at risk for homelessness identified as 'White,' and 42% as either Springfield, Missouri or the greater metropolitan area of Springfield (Nixa, Republic, Ozark, Ash Grove) natives. Eighty percent identified as State of Missouri as their home, approximately half identified as either formerly a ward of the state or in foster care, 2 as military veterans, 12 percent of youth had children and/or were expecting a child, and 90% were either high school graduates or currently enrolled in some form of education (middle school, high school, college and/or high school equivalent

programs). These demographic percentages closely mirror 2019 and 2021 survey demographics, with the exception of nearly 23% more racial and ethnic diversity representation in survey respondents in 2023 than in 2019. It is also significant to note that in prior reports, and while not represented in the 2023 survey, respondents have been as young as 12 years old through 24 years of age.

Of 49 youth, approximately 47% reported to experiencing homelessness at least once in their lifetime, 26% of youth that were surveyed reported at the time of the survey as currently homeless on the day of the survey, and nearly 23% of all respondents reported that they considered where they stayed in the week prior to the survey unsafe. Among the sample for 2023 as in 2021, there was a reported difference in experiencing homelessness among those that identified as part of the LGBTQ+ community and gender non-conforming compared to those that identified as heterosexual and cisgender (see section IX “Subgroups and rates of homelessness on their own”). Previous reports, as well as national data suggest that non heterosexual identifying, as well as gender non conforming youth, are often at higher risk for running away or being asked to leave their home, are at a higher risk for homelessness in general, and are at a greater risk for exploitation once homeless (National Council of State Legislatures, n.d.). Members of the LGBTQ+ population and youth of color were disproportionately more likely to report having witnessed or being a victim of traumatic events in their lifetime including while homeless and being exploited in work related situations while homeless. LGBTQ+ youth were also more likely to report sexual exploitation while homeless. Female identifying youth and LGBTQ+ youth were also more likely to report staying somewhere unsafe, staying with a sexual partner longer for safety, and Similar to national data, those that reported being in the foster care system or a ward of the state at some point in their lives were also more likely to report experiencing homelessness.

As also with past reports and mirroring national data as well, exposure to significant life trauma (namely emotional, physical, or sexual abuse) and difficult family backgrounds appear to be primary factors that contribute to young people being homeless on their own, while lack of rental history, lack of income, unemployment/underemployment and limited shelter and access to basic need resources are likely important secondary factors (see sections X and XI below).

I. DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE SAMPLE- 49 persons

Age: The youngest respondent was 14 years old, and the oldest person was 23 years of age. 73% percent of respondents were age 18 or younger. The average (median) age of respondents was between 16 and 17 years old.

Gender: Twenty five respondents, 51% of the sample identified as male, and sixteen (33%) identified as female. Sixteen percent identified as ‘other’, gender non-conforming, and/or as non-binary.

Racial/Ethnic group: Thirty two youth (65% of the sample) were white, ten percent were Black, 4% as American Indian/Alaskan native, 2% as Asian American, and eighteen percent reported that they were of various two or more racial group backgrounds (N= 9). Four percent of the sample reported as being of Hispanic or Latino descent. Given the range of racial and ethnic self categorization options, race and ethnicity did not have any statistical significance on factors for reported reasons for homelessness. Race however does present youth with differing challenges while homeless. For example, 80% of those that identified as ‘Black or African American’ and a disproportionate number of other youth of color, reported that they were tricked into an employment situation where employment expectations or pay were different than originally promised. While it is uncertain in this particular survey the circumstances surrounding these events, on average, research suggests that homeless or run away youth of color are at higher likelihood to be exploited sexually or through informal labor means (such as trafficking) while homeless (Page, 2017).

Sexual orientation: Twenty eight youth (57%) identified as heterosexual, 5 individuals (6%) identified as gay or lesbian, four individuals (8%) identified as bisexual, and three individuals reported as “pansexual” (6%). Four individuals (8%) were questioning their sexual orientation, and two individuals (4%) identified as ‘queer.’ The remaining youth did not know or did not wish to answer. As in the 2021 report, LGBTQ+ youth were more likely to report that they were asked to leave home or having arguments at home as contributing factors to homelessness and were more likely to report sexual and labor related exploitation than heterosexual homeless youth (See Section VIII).

Education status: Nearly forty three percent of the sample were currently enrolled in middle school or high school, 23% of respondents at the time of the survey had earned a high school diploma or GED, and approximately 47% were enrolled in some form of education. Of the 47%, college enrollment accounted for 12% of those enrolled in some form of education and 35% of respondents were enrolled in a high school equivalent program and/or trade program. Approximately 10% reported that they were not currently enrolled in any type of education program at the time of the survey.

Hometown: Forty two of respondents reported as either being from Springfield, Missouri or the greater metropolitan area of Springfield (Nixa, Republic, Ozark, Ash Grove). Approximately 80% identified as being from the state of Missouri. Among those not from Springfield and the larger Springfield metropolitan community but who were from the state of Missouri, nearly an identical percentage reported being from rural communities in Missouri as urban communities (namely Columbia, Joplin, and Jefferson City).

Ward of the state/Age of Release/How Released: Twenty seven youth (55%) had been a ward of the state in foster care, Division of Youth Services, Division of Family Services Children’s Division, or the juvenile justice system at some point in their lives. Of the youth who had been under state care, thirteen were released from state care at some point in their lives. Of these individuals, the mean age of exiting the care system was between 12-14 years. Many of these youth upon release were either reunified with family (12%), aged out of care (6%), were adopted (4%), or were under the care of another type of legal guardian (6%). Approximately 27% (N=13) were still in the care of the State at the time of the survey. Youth that reported that they were currently homeless were more likely to report that they had been a ward of the state or in foster care at some point in their lives.

Adequate support after State Care: Of the 13 individuals who were released from care, ten youth (77%) reported that they did not receive the support needed to transition out of foster care and live independently.

Currently a parent/expecting: Twelve percent of youth (N=6) were expecting a child and had 10% reporting having children. Of those who currently had children, more than half had children in their care at the time of the survey. Approximately 40% of youth with children reported that their child(ren) were living with a relative (namely grandparents or extended family), in foster care, or with another designated/chosen legal guardian. Of those with children in their care, all but one respondent indicated that they were already receiving parenting or child related services or knew where to obtain child related resources.

II. EMPLOYMENT

Job status: Of the respondents who answered this question (N=47), 67.3% were not employed at the time of the survey and 28.6% reported being employed between 15-40 hours per week.

Weekly hours of work: Of those working (28.6% of the total sample), eight youth reported working from 15-30 hrs per week (61.5% of those employed) and five reported working 30+ hours per week (38.5% of those employed at the time of the survey).

Knowledge of Employment Related Resources: Of those that were not currently employed at the time of the survey, 45% indicated that they were aware of local resources related to finding employment and/or connected to local resources that could assist in obtaining employment.

Knowledge of Resources and Use of Aid Programs: Forty four respondents reported other sources of incomes and resources they use to meet daily needs. Eighty percent of those respondents reported receiving food stamps (40%), Medicaid (approximately 35%), WIC (approximately 10%) and/or social security income (2%). A significant number of youth (15-40% of the total sample population) consistently noted throughout the survey that they were not aware or did not know how to access basic need services, such as medical care, medication, food, substance abuse counseling, and housing services at the time of the survey.

III. FAMILY TROUBLES AND RUNNING AWAY FROM HOME

Victim of or witness to traumatic events: Seventy three percent had been the victim or witness to traumatic events at some point in their lives. Members of the LGBTQ+ population and youth of color were disproportionately likely to report witnessing or being a victim of a traumatic event. Of those that witnessed or been victim of violent acts, all reported witnessing or being the victim of at least one physical assault, 26% percent of the total sample reported witnessing or being a victim of emotionally violent acts, and 29% of the total sample witnessed or were a victim of a combination of physical and sexual violence.

Parents' alcohol or drug abuse: Fifty nine percent of the total sample reported that one or both of their parents had an alcohol or drug problem. This was also noted among respondents as a primary reason for running away or leaving home.

Abuse experienced by a relative or other person stayed with: Sixty seven percent of respondents reported being abused by someone that they had stayed with. Thirty six percent reported being physically abused, 4% reported emotional abuse, 2% sexual abuse, and one was sexually abused (1.7%), and 24.5% reported having been abused in some combination of the three (15.3%). Female identified youth were significantly and disproportionately more likely to report sexual abuse than male identifying youth.

Running away from home: Twenty-three respondents (47%) reported running away from home. Thirteen had run away once or twice, 9 had run away three to five times, and one reported to having ran away 12 times.

IV. ALCOHOL/DRUG USE AND MENTAL HEALTH

Youth alcohol or drug problem: Over two-thirds of participants, 75%, said that they had not used drugs in the week prior to the survey and approximately 82% reported that they had not used alcohol in the week prior to the survey. Half of survey participants reported that they themselves do not believe that they have a drug or alcohol problem. At the time of the survey, approximately 71% had not received services or treatment for a drug or alcohol addiction.

Days use alcohol or drugs last week: Among the entire sample, eight people (13.6%) reported using alcohol and seven people (11.9%) had used drugs in the week prior to the survey.

Mental Health/Disability: At the time of the survey, approximately 69% of all respondents reported having been diagnosed with a mental health or physical disability at some point in their lives. Approximately 27% of the total sample reported that mental/behavioral health and/or physical disabilities had prevented them from obtaining employment or remaining in housing.

Mental illness prescription drugs: Thirty four (69%) have been prescribed medication to treat mental or behavioral health concerns and 43% reported having access to their medication at the time of the survey.

Ever receive counseling: Approximately 82% reported having received counseling services at some point in their lives.

Self-harm: Sixty two percent reported that they had self-mutilated, such as cutting or burning themselves, at some point in their lives.

Suicidal ideation: At the time of the survey, 67.3% of the sample population reported having considered completing suicide at least once in their life.

V. HOMELESSNESS

One question measured whether respondents were currently unsafely housed at the time of the survey. Of 49 total respondents, approximately 26% reported being currently unsafely housed. For this survey, “Homeless” means staying in temporary housing, like staying with a friend/adult, in a shelter, in a hotel/motel, sleeping in a place not meant to be slept in (shed, porch, park, car, tunnel, vacant building, etc.), or not having a fixed, adequate nighttime residence.

Homeless with parent/caregiver: Of 49 survey respondents, approximately 35% percent had been homeless with a parent or caregiver at some point in their lives. The median (average age) when first homeless with a caregiver was 12-16 years of age. Age 5 was the youngest a respondent indicated that they had become homeless with a caregiver and age 16 was the oldest a participant had reported being homeless with a caregiver. Two respondents who were homeless with their parent/caregiver reported they were currently homeless with a parent/caregiver. 66% of respondents who had been homeless with parent/caregiver reported living temporarily living with family and friends and 77% of those that had been homeless with a parent or caregiver reported that they had slept outside, camped, slept in a car, or slept in an abandoned building with that parent or caregiver.

Chronically homeless with family: 24.5% of all survey respondents (N=12) reported being homeless with a caregiver and staying on the street or in shelters for one year or more.

Homeless without family: Half of survey respondents reported being homeless at least once on their own without a parent or caregiver. Of those that reported being homeless at least once, half of those respondents reported being currently homeless at the time of the survey. Those that were homeless with a caregiver at some point in their lives were not more likely to report being homeless later on their own.

Age when first homeless on their own: Of those who had been homeless on their own at least once, the mean and median age at which young people first experienced homelessness on their own was 16-17 years old. One respondent indicated that they were 11 when first homeless on their own.

Currently Unhoused: 26.5% of all survey respondents reported being currently homelessness at the time of the survey. Of those that have been homeless on their own at least once, the average number of times that individuals have experienced homelessness is between 1-4 times. Six respondents (12.2% of the total sample and approximately half of those that had experienced homelessness on their own) reported being homeless 7 or more times.

Staying temporarily with family or friends: Thirty eight percent of all respondents (and approximately 70% of those who experienced homelessness on their own) noted that they had “couch surfed” while homeless on their own.

Slept in a place not meant to be slept in: 69% of those who had experienced homelessness on their own had slept in a place not meant to be slept in, such as a shed, park, porch, tunnel, or vacant at some point in their lives while homeless on their own. This accounted for 40% of total survey respondents..

Chronically homeless on their own: Half of those who reported having experienced homelessness at least once reported staying on the streets or in shelters for one year or more. This accounted for 22.4% of the entire sample population. 35.7% of the total sample population reported staying on the streets or in shelters four or more times in the past three years.

Hunger: A separate question asked youth about hunger. Half reported that they were unsure of where they would get food on the day of the survey.

VI. SELF-REPORTED REASONS FOR BEING HOMELESS

Respondents were asked about factors that could have caused them to become homeless on their own. Among the 23 individuals who answered this question, four factors were most often identified by youth as having contributed to their experiencing homelessness on their own. All noted verbal, physical, or sexual abuse; an unsafe living environment; and/or disagreements at home as being primary reasons for being homeless on their own. Parental drug and alcohol abuse, being kicked out due to gender identity/sexual orientation, and parental unemployment/underemployment were also noted by survey respondents. When asked what prevented respondents from being able to obtain housing on their own, a lack of rental history, unemployment or underemployment, and addiction were noted as primary barriers once homeless and/or on their own.

VII. CRIMINAL JUSTICE INTERACTION

Approximately 60% of respondents reported having at least 1-7 interactions with the criminal justice system in the past year, with the majority indicating 1-2 interactions. It is unclear the nature of these interactions, however local advocates and service providers have reported increased policing of the homeless in the region in the last several years. For example, the lack of affordable and accessible housing (particularly for those with disabilities), and the lack of low barrier access/emergency crisis shelter in Springfield has resulted in several large homeless encampments throughout the City. The City of Springfield Police Department and Greene County Sheriff’s Department have made national headlines for its clearing and burning of these homeless encampments, including one during Christmas week in 2022 (Lingo, 2021). New 2023 legislation in the State of Missouri also makes it illegal to camp on state owned roadways and land. Cities who do not comply with the new legislation can be sued by the State Attorney General (Bates, 2023). According to advocates and service providers, such legislation has further criminalized homelessness, further empowered law enforcement towards acts of violence, and has increased police and homeless persons interactions overall.

VIII. DANGERS OF BEING A HOMELESS YOUTH

Of 37 respondents, approximately 35% specified what they had witnessed/experienced acts of violence or traumatic events while homeless. Of these 35%, all noted that they had witnessed acts of physical violence and many reported witnessing emotional (26% of those that witnessed violence overall) and sexually violent acts (also 26% of those that had witnessed violence overall).

Nineteen respondents (38.7% of the total sample) reported doing something they would not normally do in order to stay in a housing situation. 18 of 19 respondents (approximately 95%) stayed somewhere they did not feel safe in order to have shelter and 10 reported staying with someone that they didn’t know or

trust (52.6%). Eight of the 19 respondents (42%) said they paid something other than money (food stamps, sex, labor/work) to stay in a housing situation, and 2 individuals (4%) reported that they stayed with a sexual partner that they otherwise would not have stayed with in order to remain in a housing situation.

Youth living on the streets also have to worry about sexual coercion. Six of the 45 who responded (12.2% of the total sample) said that they received something (money, food, shelter, drugs, etc.) in exchange for sex or a sexual activity. In a related question, respondents reported on whether they had been made, persuaded, or forced to have sex in exchange for things. Of the 7 who responded (14% of the total sample), 28% said that they have been made/persuaded/forced to have sex in exchange for something (money, food, shelter, drugs, etc.).

Youth also face concerns about harm or exploitation within employment. Six of 46 respondents (6%) reported that they had been afraid to quit/leave work due to threats of violence against themselves, their family, or their friends. Ten of 47 who responded (20%) also reported that they were promised work where the work or payment was different than they expected. Eight respondents (16.3% of the total sample) also reported that they felt forced, coerced, pressured, or tricked into continuing to work in a place they no longer wanted to work due to either the workplace violence or difference in expectations. LGBTQ+ and youth of color were more likely to report work related deception than their heterosexual and white counterparts.

In general, research suggests that LGBTQ+ youth have a 120 percent higher risk of reporting homelessness and become homeless at earlier ages (for example, due to family rejection of their orientation). LGBTQ+ youth also often face increased instances of sexual assault and exploitation compared to youth who identified as heterosexual and cisgender (Human Rights Campaign, 2017). It is significant to note that not only were homeless youth that identified as LGBTQ and gender nonconforming in this survey more likely to be homeless on their own, but homeless youth that identified as LGBTQ+ were also at a higher risk in this survey for reporting labor and sexual exploitation while homeless.

IX. SUBGROUPS AND RATES OF HOMELESSNESS ON THEIR OWN

The vast majority of survey respondents reported being neither being currently homeless or unsafely housed. This is possibly a reflection of survey collection methodology in 2021-2013 that was more representative of youth in supportive services (see methodology description above) compared to other years where collection efforts were conducted during homeless service events that tended to also capture youth otherwise not engaged with services. There was no statistically significant difference in the rates of currently homeless or having experienced homelessness without family between those identifying as male or female. Rates of homelessness also did not vary across racial groups. If someone had ever experienced homelessness did however vary based on respondent's sexual orientation and gender identity. Of all those that reported having experienced homelessness, 42% of heterosexual/straight youth reported being currently homeless, and 55% of LGBTQ+ respondents reported being homeless. All but one of those that identified as being gender-conforming/non-binary had experienced homelessness.

X. PRIMARY FACTORS ASSOCIATED YOUTH HOMELESSNESS ON THEIR OWN

When asked what contributed to youth being homeless on their own, most cited parental drug and alcohol abuse, verbal, sexual or physical abuse by a caregiver, an unsafe living situation, and arguments at home.

As with prior reports, 3 family background variables were statistically significant among those youth surveyed who had experienced homelessness at least once. 59% of respondents who had at least one parent with a drug or alcohol problem, 57% reported abuse by someone they had stayed/lived with, and 58% reported witnessing traumatic events (these included physical, emotional, and sexually traumatic events).

It is significant to note that approximately 38% of young people were homeless with a caregiver and approximately 55% reported being a ward of the state at some point in their lives. The analysis and discussion above suggests that for many (but not all) youth in the sample as in 2019 and 2021, difficult early life family experiences significantly increased the likelihood that they have been homeless on their own. Difficult family lives were associated with high rates of mental health diagnosis and with having run away from home, which in turn also was correlated to having been homeless at least once in their lives.

XI. SECONDARY FACTORS ASSOCIATED YOUTH HOMELESSNESS ON THEIR OWN

Lack of a rental history, income, resources, as well as unemployment were noted as the primary factors contributing to youth homelessness, or risk for homelessness, once homeless on their own. Given the frequency that trauma and abuse were noted as reasons for leaving home as well as witnessed, as well as experienced while homeless, it is likely that the impact of trauma may not only be a contributing factor to youth homelessness but also may also pose significant dangers to, and challenges for, at-risk and homeless youth while homeless.

XII. REPORTED NEEDED SERVICES FOR HOMELESS YOUTH IN SPRINGFIELD

Need for more short term/crisis shelter/housing: 59% of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that Springfield needs more short term shelter for youth. 28.6% of respondents neither agreed or disagreed.

Need for more long term shelter/housing: 71% agreed or strongly agreed that Springfield needs more long term shelter and housing for youth that are homeless or at risk for homelessness. Sixteen percent of respondents neither agreed or disagreed.

Need more transitional living programs for pregnant or parenting teens: 75.5% felt that Springfield needs a transitional living program for pregnant or parenting teens. Fourteen percent neither agreed or disagreed.

Need for a “one stop shop”: 73.5% agreed or strongly agreed that Springfield needs a “one stop shop” where youth can get the services that they need in one place such as (shelter resources, job training, GED, counseling, food, and mentoring). Approximately 14% of youth neither agreed or disagreed.

Table 1: Youth views of local services

Need more short term shelter	59%
Need more long term shelter	71%
Need more transitional living programs	75.5%
Need a “one stop shop”	73.5%

In addition to these services, substance abuse services, NARCAN, affordable rental housing, day shelters, transportation services, accessible resources for autistic youth, financial literacy programs, additional food resource options, mentorship, and STD resources were noted as also needed for youth experiencing homelessness or at risk for homelessness.

XIII. POLICIES AND PROGRAMS TO REDUCE YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

As in reports prior, researchers and 2023 updates confirm that limiting the negative effects that disruptive family conditions and household traumas, shelter, and employment options have on high-risk youth remain significant primary prevention strategies. Secondary prevention strategies include additional

resources for those youth with mental health concerns, additional housing options for youth and families, and additional long term housing and support strategies for youth exiting the foster care system. Many local agencies and efforts in the last several years of survey implementation are, and continue to address, these existing and ongoing vital concerns.

Many of the current concerns being reported by youth are similar to those reported by those adults over 25 who are also homeless or at risk. In particular, concerns related to unemployment or underemployment and limited housing that many youth expressed as the major cause of homelessness or risk for homelessness in 2021 are concerns that are also significant for those at risk for homelessness or who have experienced homelessness over the age of 25. According to American Community Survey (2013-2022) estimates, nearly 26% of all residents live in poverty in Springfield, Missouri. At the same time, the area also boasts very low (under 5% unemployment) rates (US Department of Labor, 2018). Many have noted that these figures often point to employment or employment opportunities that do not provide enough income for individuals and families to meet basic needs. Of course, for those with mental health challenges or disabilities, the ability to find and retain adequate employment (including the employment options that may be feasible or available due to physical or mental health limitations) may be even more limited. The age of respondents and some limitations on the ability to work may also be present. Of course, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on area employment has been felt across populations and industries, and has had a significant negative impact on vulnerable and entry level workers.

Housing (and in particular affordable housing options), in general, also remains a significant concern in the area. Affordable residential housing in particular, has been noted in several community assessments (including the American Rescue Plan Needs Assessment and the 2040 Forward SGF - the City's Comprehensive Plan), as a significant and urgent need for all community members. As housing costs have risen, many in the area at the same time have seen wages remain stagnant (Maciag, December 13th, 2013). This is particularly true for younger and entry level workers (some of whom have seen wages decline), both in Springfield, and across the nation (Economic Policy Institute, 2015).

XIV. SUMMARY

Homelessness in general, including youth homelessness, remains a significant problem nationally and in Springfield. The costs of homelessness are high both for individual youth themselves and for communities. While it is not possible to measure the precise cost to communities of youth homelessness, that cost likely is very high. As the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (2015, p. 1) noted, "more needs to be known about the costs associated with youth homelessness but we know that high rates of medical and behavioral health care and incarceration are costly. These costs compound over a lifetime as today's homeless youth become tomorrow's homeless adults."

Cost-benefit analyses have been conducted on only a few homeless youth programs; however, those programs do appear to be cost effective. For example, Cincinnati's Lighthouse Youth Services housing programs cost about \$85 per day, compared with \$216 per day to house a youth in a juvenile justice facility (Root Causes, 2012, p. 5). A study conducted by Portland State University researchers of Oregon programs for runaway and homeless youth estimated that every \$1 that the state spends on services for those youth provides over \$4 in savings (Cahn, Jamieson, Schweitzer, and Slevin, 2009). And, Thompson (2010) noted that programs to prevent long-term youth homelessness in northwest Minnesota cost taxpayers less than high jobless and incarceration rates, frequent emergency room visits, and increased use of mental health and social services do. As with prior reports, more outcome assessment studies are needed nationally to identify best practices, and more cost-benefit analyses of teen homelessness prevention programs are also needed. Nonetheless, a convincing argument is emerging that providing adequate funding for programs to prevent youth homelessness (such as investments in housing and employment resources or options where possible) is a good social investment that saves communities money in services and policing both now and in the future.

This research as well as other studies among various populations continually demonstrate the negative impact of family violence and trauma on quality of life and life outcomes. The realities of abuse (child abuse, rape, family violence) as well as discrimination and exploitation - although multi-dimensional and often times difficult and time intensive for society's and communities - has ripple effects and both short and long term consequences for all those that reside in that community or society. These realities continue to impact social service programs, can impact the workforce and therefore local economies, long term individual productivity and health, and have consequences that destroy life potential, families, and quality of life. Investing in family violence prevention strategies, trauma and harm reduction strategies, as well as anti-discrimination and anti-exploitation strategies, also has the possibility of positive financial returns for the community and of course, significant quality of life returns for all community residents.

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