

Minutes from West Metro Homeless Youth Task Force January 10, 2006

Present: Geraldine Beckmann, Heidi Behrends, Rachel Callanan, Brenda Clarno, Theresa Ledermann, Deb Ludwig, Joan Myers, Bobbi Pointer, Craig Swedburg, Randy Thomson, LaDonna Hoy, Sue Bangert, Andy Bond, Sandy Hewitt, Kim Vohs, Veta Segal, Greg Ritter, Jen Silverberg, Rob Ward, Lydia Kihm

Lydia Kihm called the meeting to order. The focus of the meeting was to present homeless youth data. Minutes from past meetings and some Wilder Foundation reports can be found at teensalone.org West Metro Homeless Youth Task Force minutes and information is under the General Information button.

Last year Teens Alone (TA) counselors saw 33 throwaway youth (5 is the median); 5 homeless youth (1 is the median). On the first day of school this year, counselors saw 3 homeless youth. Although runaway youth certainly do not become necessarily homeless, are police reported 458 runaways (358 is median).

People in the five school districts TA serves were asked to give a snapshot of how many youth in their school were thought to be homeless.

- Eden Prairie: 16 (included 2 at middle school)
- Hopkins: 15 (did not include junior highs)
- Orono: 5 (both middle and high)
- St. Louis Park (10 transported to high school from shelter; 10-15 at junior high)
- Wayzata: 18 (includes 2 from one middle school)

Rob Ward felt a conservative estimate was that 1% of youth are homeless at any given time. The five school districts above have about 17,500 middle, junior, and high school youth. It is therefore estimated that approximately 175 of those youth are homeless.

How are youth referred to TA identified as homeless?

- Teachers refer to school support services because of behavior, sleeping in class, hygiene, hunger
- Parents who have homeless kids in their home call for help
- Parents have kicked the youth out
- Police may find youth sleeping in cars

Homeless youth referred to:

- Already-stretched services in Minneapolis
- Youth do not want to live home community

It was stressed that family reunification is always the goal. Housing is needed for youth who cannot be reunified, at least for the time being.

Lydia said that Teens Alone has several referral options for most youth. There is a brick wall for homeless youth. There aren't local choices.

Beth Holger (who works with the state) spoke about transitioning youth into their own apartments. Many times there is a 2-3 month waiting period.

The average stay for youth in transitional housing is 3-4 months. The transitional housing model includes adult staffing 24/7. Each youth has a case worker they see twice a week. There are also groups for life skills such as budgeting, cooking, etc. Recreational opportunities (i.e. swimming at the Y, movies) are also offered. Young people give 60% of their paychecks to staff for safe keeping and for use as a deposit for first apartment.

Transportation: Lack of mass transit huge barrier for west suburban homeless youth. McKinley Vento Act provides transportation to school. Does not cover getting to jobs/appointments.

Miscellaneous conversation:

- Discussion regarding the possibility of having youth in recovery and non-using youth in the same housing situation. Some concerns were raised.
- Communication with local government is essential before working with Hennepin County.
- Church volunteers were mentioned as a good source of help w/transportation, etc.
- Wondering if alternating times for Task Force meeting would increase participation, i.e. one month 7:30 am, the next month 3:30 pm. Decided to try.
- The Task Force identified short term and long term goals. Prioritizing will be the focus of the February 14 meeting. (NOTE: this date may be changed due to Valentine's Day)

The Task Force did a short term and long term goal exercise, which will be summarized on a separate report.