

## “Who is Homeless?”

### Summary:

The three main routes through which youth become homeless alone are:

- **They left their families** or were told/permitted to leave their families when the home situation was characterized by parents or caregivers with the following characteristics
  - homophobia
  - sexual abuse
  - physical abuse
  - neglect
  - substance abuse
  - mental illness
- **They became homeless with their families** due to a range of personal, social and economic challenges (including lack of affordable housing, lack of living wage employment, lack of health insurance, insufficient social safety net.) However due to crisis and transitional housing policies or child welfare practices, the youth is separated from the family and is now homeless alone.
- **They were removed from their families** at a younger age and placed in various out of home placements by child protection, juvenile justice and mental health systems. These children arrive at youth shelters once they age out of the child protection system at 18 or earlier if they run away from a placement location.

### Data:

According to a comprehensive homeless study conducted by Wilder Research, there has been a 25% increase overall in people experiencing homelessness in MN in the past three years and a **57% increase in youth** experiencing homelessness (*Source: “Homelessness in MN, Key findings from the 2009 statewide survey.” Wilder Research, May 2010.*) According to The National Center on Family Homelessness, State Report Card on Child Homelessness 2011, MN ranks 1<sup>st</sup> of all 50 states in risk of child homelessness.

Undoubtedly, there have been significant social and economic changes in the Twin Cities leading to increased incidence of homelessness over the past three years including: high percentage of home foreclosures; higher unemployment and fewer jobs; higher incidents of mental health issues; increased substance abuse, and deep cuts to support programs.

Using data from both Wilder’s comprehensive triennial homeless survey and the MN Department of Human Services, youth who are homeless have the following conditions:

- Nearly half (45%) of homeless adults (18+) experienced homelessness before they were 21 and one-quarter (26%) before they were 18-indicating the cyclical nature of homelessness.

- There are significant racial disparities among RHY. Overall, persons of color represent 62% of the homeless in Minnesota, but are only 13% of the general population.
- 46% of homeless youth reported a serious **mental health issue**
- 42% reported having been **physically abused**
- 27% reported having been **sexually abused**
- 64% had been in a **foster home, group home**, treatment center, or correctional facility
- 12% of homeless youth age 18 and younger surveyed identified as **GLBT**
- 74% had been homeless before
- 52% met the State of MN's definition of **long-term homeless**
- 33% have **considered suicide**; 21% have **attempted suicide**
- 34% reported having been **neglected**
- 36% had a **history of delinquency** that resulted in a correctional placement
- 18% had been in **alcohol or drug treatment**
- 49% have been **pregnant** or gotten someone pregnant
- 16% had **traded sex** for shelter, food, clothing, or other essentials
- Unaccompanied youth ages of 12-21 make up 13% of overall homeless population in MN.

**Results on what youth say is the partial or main cause of why youth are homeless:**

- 63% reported fighting frequently with parents or guardians
- 33% noted drug or alcohol use by parent or someone else in the household
- 55% were told to leave or were locked out
- 29% reported that they didn't feel safe because of violence in the home
- 24% reported adults in the household did not attend to the youth's basic needs
- 25% stated there is not enough space for everyone in the home
- 24% left because of dangers of physical or sexual abuse
- 20% report family lost their housing
- 19% reported they left foster care or another placement without a permanent place to live
- 44% of LGBTQ youth reported lack of tolerance of sexual orientation or gender identity led to homeless