Massachusetts Youth Count 2014

Overview and Analysis

SEPTEMBER 11, 2014

SUBMITTED BY THE IDENTIFICATION AND CONNECTION WORKING GROUP
TO THE
MASSACHUSETTS SPECIAL COMMISSION ON
UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH

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Finally, data entry truly was a team effort from Working Group members and other friends of the initiative. Data entry was completed by the following individuals:

Elisa Bresnahan
Carly Burton
Judy Curtis
Marc Dones
Clare Enright
Tina Giarla
Caitlin Golden
Melissa Lee
Kevin Lilly
Daniel Mascoop
Ita Mullarkey
Brad Riew
Liz Rogers
Sarah Rosenkrantz
Sarah Slautterback
Allison Torsiglieri
Linn Torto
Kelly Turley
Tim Yaecker
Isabelle Yang

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Executive Summary

In December 2013 and January 2014, the Massachusetts Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth[1] implemented the first statewide survey of unaccompanied homeless youth (Youth Count). The number of unaccompanied homeless youth has historically been difficult to determine for a variety of reasons, such as limited resources to identify the population, fears among youth related to mandated reporting or being returned to a home they deem unsafe, and a lack of familiarity about the population among mainstream homeless service providers. Thus, the federal government and communities across the country have recently been working to develop methodologies for conducting a more comprehensive count in order to understand the scope of homelessness among unaccompanied youth and connect them to appropriate housing and services.

The Commission defines an unaccompanied homeless youth as:
(1) A person 24 years of age or younger,

(2) A person who is not in the physical custody or care of a parent or legal guardian, and

(3) A person who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

The Commission, through the Identification and Connection Working Group, provided technical assistance to the 18 Continuums of Care (CoC) in Massachusetts that served as the implementing bodies for the Youth Count. There were two components to the Youth Count: (a) a point-in-time (PIT) census count of unaccompanied homeless youth, and (b) a survey of unaccompanied homeless youth that gathered demographic and service history information.

The report provides a process evaluation as well as analysis of survey results. A total of 2,510 surveys were returned, and 795 of those respondents met the Commission's definition of an unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness. Nearly 94% of them were between the ages of 18 and 24. There is racial and ethnic diversity, with 42.1% reporting their race as white, 21.8% reporting their race as African-American or Black, and 35.2% reporting they are Hispanic/Latino/Latina. Over half (55.1%) of respondents were female, though this may have been skewed by outreach strategies. Most respondents indicated they were straight (80%). All responses for lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, questioning, and "other" total 14.1% of the total respondents meeting the state definition, with 1.2% of youth identifying as transgender (this includes some youth who also identified as LGBQ). Thirty-seven percent of respondents meeting the state's definition of unaccompanied homeless youth were enrolled in some type of educational program, and 64.2% reported having some form of income. Rates of history of involvement in foster care and criminal justice systems were significant. Results indicate that 32.1% of respondents had a parent that had previously experienced homelessness. A summary of key planning and implementation activities can be found in Table 1.

[1] The Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth was established by the Legislature through the Fiscal Year 2013 state budget, is chaired by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, and is comprised of four working groups.

Table 1: Summary of Key CoC Planning and Implementation Activities

Continuum of Care	Planning Committee	LGBTQ Outreach	Under 18 Outreach	Length of Survey Period	Youth Ambassadors	Street Count	Service-Based Count
Attleboro/Taunton/ Bristol County	X		X	3 days			X
Balance of State				1 week			X
Boston	X	X		2 weeks		X	X
Brockton/Plymouth	X	X	X	1 week		X	X
Brookline/Newton	X	X		1 week			X
Cambridge	X	X	X	1 week	X	X	X
Cape Cod and Islands	X		X	1 week	X		X
Fall River	X		X	3 days	X	X	X
Hampden County	X	X	X	3 days	X	X	X
Lynn	X		X	3 days	X	X	X
Lowell	X	X	X	4 days		X	X
Malden/Medford			X	2 days	X	X	X
New Bedford	X		X	1 week		X	X
North Shore				1 week		X	X
Quincy/Weymouth	X	X	X	1 week		X	X
Three County Rural	X	X	X	1 week	X		X
Worcester City and County	X	X	X	1 week		X	X

While there are many lessons to draw from the results of this first-in-the-nation statewide count, there are some limitations to the information presented. The count was not intended or designed in such a way as to reach every single unaccompanied homeless youth. The goal was to treat this count as a pilot wherein each CoC could begin exploring effective strategies for conducting a count that could be built upon for the future, while simultaneously giving the CoCs and the Commonwealth a better understanding of the extent and character of youth homelessness in various regions. Given this limitation and others discussed in the report, the Working Group recommends that the Commission consider the results as a sample, providing preliminary information about the scope of unaccompanied youth homelessness and the opportunities and barriers they face.

The report concludes with a set of recommended policy initiatives for the Commission to consider to enhance future Youth Counts.

1. Secure annualized state resources attached to the Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth to support costs associated with counting this population.
2. Utilize the planning process to more fully engage appropriate state agencies that have involvement with youth experiencing homelessness.

3. Proactively provide information about youth homelessness to a variety of stakeholders to improve awareness and understanding of the issue, and to build interest and commitment to partner in future Youth Counts.
4. Revise the statewide survey tool in alignment with partner feedback in order to improve data quality and increase responses.

The survey findings and feedback from the 2014 count will inform the development and implementation of the 2015 Massachusetts Youth Count, which has been funded through the 2015 Massachusetts state budget process.

Introduction

This report serves as an account of the 2014 Massachusetts Youth Count initiative. The Youth Count initiative was a project of the Massachusetts Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (Commission) meant to more fully inform the scope and nature of homelessness among unaccompanied youth in the Commonwealth. The 18 Continuums of Care (CoC) in Massachusetts served as the implementing bodies for the Youth Count, though this report is not intended to detail every aspect of each of their efforts. Rather, this report provides a summary of efforts in each of the key planning and implementation components with examples of notable successes or challenges. Aggregate results from the Youth Count are provided in order to offer a statewide picture of the scope of unaccompanied youth homelessness. Data from the point-in-time (PIT) census count and survey are included to help demonstrate the need for further development of the Youth Count initiative. Thorough analysis of the results from the Youth Count for each geographic region will be left to individual CoCs. This report concludes with a set of policy recommendations for the Commission to consider for improving future counts.

Background:

The number of youth experiencing homelessness is unknown for a variety of reasons, including challenges associated with counting this population who oftentimes are not connected to formal systems of care. For example, youth may avoid identification for fears related to mandated reporting or being returned to a home they deem unsafe. Youth also frequently couch-surf, staying with friends or other family members for short periods of time. Other youth may not have had success in connecting with an appropriate service provider, either because adequate services are not available or the youth has not formed a trusting relationship with a provider for one reason or another. Existing estimates are imperfect, though the National Alliance to End Homelessness estimates that each year there are 550,000 unaccompanied homeless youth nationally who experience at least one episode of homelessness lasting longer than one week.[2]

While the exact scope of youth homelessness remains unclear, the risks associated with it are well documented. Youth often leave home due to some form of significant family conflict (such as abuse, neglect, substance abuse, and lack of acceptance of gender identity or sexual orientation, among others), aging out of the foster care system and declining to accept DCF voluntary services, or because they have been separated from their family due to their own housing instability. Each of those factors are associated with trauma, compounding the challenges faced during homelessness. Depression and other mental health disorders are common, as well as chronic physical health issues, including asthma, diabetes, and hepatitis. Substance abuse is also common among homeless youth. Homeless youth often engage in risky behaviors associated with survival, such as selling drugs, stealing, or sex work. These risks increase as the time spent experiencing homelessness increases.[3]

[2] http://www.endhomelessness.org/pages/youth
[3] United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, *Opening Doors*. pp.15-16. 2010.

Purpose of MA Youth Count:

The Fiscal Year 2013 state budget established the Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth[4] in recognition of the serious consequences and costs associated with homelessness among unaccompanied youth. The authorizing language establishing the Commission required:

- A review of barriers to serving lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning (LGBTQ) youth and those under age 18,
- A set of recommendations regarding best practices in service and housing, and
- A scan of strategies to effectively identify and connect with unaccompanied homeless youth.

The Fiscal Year 2014 state budget included $150,000 at EOHHS to conduct a count in order to better understand the scope of homelessness among unaccompanied youth. The ultimate goal is to use information obtained from the count to effectively match housing and services to youth experiencing homelessness. Ideally, the Youth Count will act as a benchmark for monitoring progress towards ending youth homelessness in Massachusetts over the coming years.

There have been three key organizing bodies supporting the MA Youth Count. First, the Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth has provided oversight of the overall initiative and is responsible for reporting on its progress annually to the Governor's Office, the Legislature, and the Office of the Child Advocate. The Commission is chaired by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services and includes 26 members, representing state government, youth and LGBTQ service providers, advocates, and youth.

Second, the Identification and Connection Working Group (Working Group) of the Special Commission organized and facilitated the MA Youth Count on behalf of the Commission. Its primary responsibilities were to develop a count methodology, a uniform survey tool, and then to implement a count in partnership with community-based organizations.

Members of the Working Group include:

- Lauren Almquist, MassHealth
- Maurie Bergeron, LUK, Inc.
- Carly Burton, MassEquality
- Alice Colegrove, Department of Public Health
- Marc Dones, Executive Office of Health and Human Services
- Tina Giarla, Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless
- Caitlin Golden, Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance
- Exa Méndez, Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless
- Liz Peck, Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy
- Liz Rogers, Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness (Co-chair)
- Sarah Slautterback, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
- Linn Torto, Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness

[4] The Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth was established by the Legislature through the Fiscal Year 2013 state budget, is chaired by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, and is comprised of four working groups.

- Kelly Turley, Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless (Co-chair)
- Yoni Wanderer, Massachusetts Appleseed Center for Law and Justice

Third, Continuums of Care served as the implementing bodies carrying out the Youth Count at the local level. CoCs are established as vehicles for meeting U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) goals related to ending homelessness and serve as the organizing bodies locally across the state for a variety of related initiatives. Specifically, HUD states that the CoC program:

> "promotes community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness; provides funding for efforts by nonprofit providers and State and local governments to quickly re-house homeless individuals and families to minimize trauma and dislocation; promotes access to and effective utilization of mainstream programs; and optimizes self-sufficiency among individuals and families experiencing homelessness."[5]

Each CoC has a unique geographic area to cover, a mix of resources and providers, and high demand for homeless services. The Working Group sought information from the CoCs about any unique factors they believe impacted their Youth Count either positively or negatively, and that information is included in the appropriate sections of this report. A map of the CoC geographies can be found in Appendix A.

The Working Group approached the count from a capacity building perspective, with the hope of successfully engaging at least three CoCs to conduct the count in coordination with their point-in-time count. Each year every CoC is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to conduct and report on a count of sheltered homeless persons on a single night. Typically this takes place during the third week of January. HUD also requires CoCs to conduct a count of unsheltered persons every other year. Given CoCs already conduct a general count of people experiencing homelessness, HUD has recommended they attach a more targeted Youth Count to the existing initiative in order to leverage resources. Exceeding expectations, the Working Group successfully engaged all 18 CoCs by providing financial and technical assistance, thereby achieving a statewide count and a strong estimate of unaccompanied homeless youth in Massachusetts.

Definition of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth:

The MA Youth Count focused on counting those youth who met either the HUD's definition of unaccompanied homeless youth or the slightly broader definition that the Commission adopted.

HUD defines homelessness in four categories:

(1) People who are living in a place not meant for human habitation, in emergency shelter, in transitional housing, or are exiting an institution where they resided for no more than 90 days if they were homeless prior to entering the institution,

[5] United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, Continuum of Care Program, http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/hudprograms/continuumofcare

(2) People who are losing their primary nighttime residence within 14 days,

(3) Families with children or unaccompanied youth who are unstably housed and likely to continue in that state. This includes youth through age 24 who have not had a lease or ownership interest in a housing unit in the last 60 days, have had two or more moves in the last 60 days, and who are likely to continue to be unstably housed due to disability or employment barriers, and

(4) Individuals and families who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening situations related to violence and lack the resources to obtain other permanent housing.[6]

The Commission defines unaccompanied homeless youth as:

(1) A person 24 years of age or younger,

(2) A person who is not in the physical custody or care of a parent or legal guardian, and

(3) A person who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

"Fixed" means a residence that is "stationary, permanent and not subject to change." "Regular" means a dwelling at which a person resides on a regular basis (i.e. nightly). "Adequate" means that the dwelling provides safe shelter. When defining an adequate living situation for youth, the housing structure is only one element. An assessment of adequate housing should factor in whether or not the home environment meets the physical and psychological needs of the youth. The primary difference between the two definitions is that the Commission has explicitly included any youth who is staying temporarily with friends or family, also referred to as "couch-surfing."

Development of the MA Youth Count Methodology:

The Working Group began by reviewing the experiences of communities that had previously counted unaccompanied homeless youth. National examples reviewed included those from Los Angeles, California; Washington, DC; and Southern Nevada. In Massachusetts, this included the cities of Worcester and Boston. Worcester has conducted an annual count of homeless youth over the last several years through the Worcester Teen Housing Task Force. Members of that task force also participate on the Commission, which facilitated a close partnership and exchange of information between the efforts. The City of Boston also had piloted a youth count in 2012 as part of HUD's *Youth Count!* initiative. Fortunately, as the Working Group was reviewing methodologies, the Urban Institute released its findings of the HUD *Youth Count!* pilot in July 2013. The Urban Institute report provided a cross-site analysis of the planning and implementation processes of nine pilot sites as well as detailed site profiles of each.

Following a full review of the youth count experiences of other communities, the Working Group began articulating the count methodology. Some of the key issues for consideration

[6] Federal Register / Vol. 76, No. 233 / Monday, December 5, 2011 / Rules and Regulations https://www.onecpd.info/resources/documents/HEARTH_HomelessDefinition_FinalRule.pdf

included:

- the timing of the count and survey period,
- key partners to engage,
- youth engagement strategies,
- youth outreach methods, and
- administration style of the survey

Draft count methodologies were shared with the full Commission, partners from the cities of Boston and Worcester, and a sample of CoCs that had expressed early interest in participating. With this feedback from stakeholders, the methodology was refined and presented for implementation as follows. The guiding concept was that the Youth Count would be implemented through a capacity-building framework that leveraged the annual HUD Point In Time (PIT) counts conducted by CoCs. Building from that framework, there were two primary components to the methodology: (1) conduct a basic census of unaccompanied homeless youth coordinated with the annual PIT counts and using standard census forms, and (2) administer a uniform survey tool to unaccompanied homeless youth over the course of three to seven days immediately following the census count. For both of these components, CoCs were asked to work with diverse partners to identify connected and disconnected youth and to engage youth volunteers to assist with implementation. CoCs were directed to have 450-380 youth complete the surveys themselves, rather than administering the survey interview-style, though volunteers should be on hand to answer questions about the survey. This was designed to limit potential reluctance associated with answering somewhat sensitive questions aloud.

In addition to the basic methodology, the Commission articulated a set of recommended practices based on the experiences of other communities that had piloted counts. Recommended practices included forming a local planning committee, providing stipends to youth volunteers, conducting focused youth outreach and marketing of the count, providing trainings for all volunteers, engaging diverse partners, and providing day-of coordination and quality control.

Development of the Uniform Survey Tool:

Similar to the development of the MA Youth Count methodology, the development of the uniform survey tool was a lengthy process that included feedback from multiple stakeholders and built off previously tested tools. The Working Group began by reviewing the survey tools used by Boston and Worcester during their previous counts. The Boston tool had been based on the Worcester tool, so there were a lot of similarities between the two. Next, the Working Group reviewed and compared other known tools, including those from Santa Clara, California; Washington, D.C.; Los Angeles, California; Southern Nevada; and a tool recommended by Applied Survey Research (which has worked with several leading communities in developing youth count tools). Specifically, the Working Group assessed the various tools on their approaches to asking questions related to:

- demographics,
- residency,
- current housing status,
- personal history,

- causes of homelessness,
- services,
- health history,
- exploitation/safety/police involvement,
- educational history,
- employment status and income,
- personal development and support systems,
- gender identity/sexual orientation, and
- open-ended questions.

The Working Group decided to use the Boston Youth Count tool piloted in 2012 as the starting point, and made edits to it based on information gained from the research and analysis of other tools. That draft was then provided to nine focus groups organized by youth-serving provider organizations who offered specific feedback on which questions to include and language to use. A few CoCs also provided specific guidance on how to ensure the tool asked questions that would glean information about the number of respondents who met the HUD definition of unaccompanied homeless youth. The final version of the tool in English and Spanish was provided to the City of Boston prior to its count in December 2013.

A slightly revised version was provided to the remaining CoCs that conducted their annual count in January 2014. The differences between the tools used in December for Boston and in January for the rest of the state were minor and designed to provide additional clarity on the community in which the survey was being completed. This was in response to feedback from the Working Group's data analysis partner, Health Imperatives. As Health Imperatives staff designed the online database to capture survey results, it became apparent that there would be a benefit to collecting information about the particular city or town in which the survey was being taken, instead of limiting it to the CoC area. Most CoCs have multiple cities and towns within their footprint and could benefit from understanding differences between them. This was not an issue that arose in preparation for the earlier Boston count as their CoC is limited to the city's geography. The final survey tool can be found in Appendix B.

Continuum of Care Engagement:

Once the methodology and survey tool were complete, the Working Group began outreach to the 18 Continuums of Care in earnest. Outreach included email and telephone conversations providing basic information about what the Working Group was hoping to accomplish, grant information, and an overview PowerPoint presentation that described the Commission and the proposed methodology. Shortly thereafter all CoCs were invited to attend a half-day MA Youth Count Conference at Clark University in Worcester to be held on November 18, 2013. The Commission and Working Group's goal for the conference was to orient everyone to the initiative, provide information about the methodology and survey tool, and facilitate a discussion among CoCs about promising youth count practices.

The half-day conference proved to be successful with 70 people in attendance, including at least one representative from all 18 CoCs. The conference began with welcoming remarks from Assistant Secretary Kathy Betts of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, who

serves as the chair of the Commission. Bob Shumeyko from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and Bob Pulster from the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness both offered information about the national landscape related to youth count initiatives. Members of the Working Group presented detailed information about the methodology, survey tool and recommended practices, and representatives from the cities of Boston and Worcester spoke about their past experiences. Attendees also heard from a formerly homeless youth about her experiences and why she thought it was important for them to participate in the initiative. The session concluded with substantial time for open discussion about planning and implementation of the MA Youth Count. Feedback from the session was very positive and all the CoCs expressed interest in participating.

Following the MA Youth Count Conference, the Working Group co-chairs began providing ongoing technical assistance to each CoC. Additionally, each CoC was awarded a one-time capacity building grant in the amount of $4,750 by the Commission to help with financial costs of conducting the Youth Count. Two CoCs did not accept the grant; the City of Boston declined the award citing bureaucratic challenges associated with administering and procuring a grant of that size. They noted the significant administrative functions that would be required, which they believed would outweigh the value of the grant. The North Shore CoC also declined the grant, citing challenges in engaging partnerships, therefore their expenses were limited.

In addition to the capacity building grants, the Working Group co-chairs provided regular telephone and email information and support. Common technical assistance topics included outreach strategies, school engagement, and policies on providing incentives to survey respondents. The co-chairs also held a conference call on January 6, 2014 for all CoCs where information was provided about data collection and reporting with the remainder of the time allotted for open discussion and questions. Three Working Group members also produced sample materials for CoCs' use. This included a sample outreach flyer, street outreach guidance including a sample script for volunteers, and a one-page MA Youth Count survey overview for use in recruiting partners. The Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness also produced a partner engagement memo at the request of the CoCs. This memo from the ICHH to the CoC lead organizations outlined the MA Youth Count initiative and called on them to engage a variety of stakeholders in the effort, which the CoCs stated would help indicate the significance of the initiative to potential partners. Most of the CoCs adapted some or all of these sample materials for their own use. The samples can be found in Appendix C of this report. Further, a formerly homeless youth and member of the Working Group provided technical assistance to some of the CoCs. In addition to her first-hand testimony and advice to CoCs during the November MA Youth Count Conference, she presented information about the count and youth homelessness at a large outreach event at the New Bedford High School.

The sections that follow summarize the: (1) planning and recruitment, (2) implementation, (3) sampling strategies and coverage, (4) successes and challenges experienced by the CoCs, and (5) youth count results and analysis. The report concludes with a review of limitations of the Youth Count and ideas for moving forward as well as promising practices and policy recommendations.

Planning and Recruitment

This chapter describes the significant planning efforts undertaken by the 18 CoCs. It begins with an overview of participants involved in planning for the Youth Count, their roles, and how the various participants coordinated efforts. It then highlights strategies employed by CoCs to reach the Commission's two target populations--LGBTQ youth and youth under 18--and to recruit volunteers. It wraps up with a discussion on how CoCs marketed the count and involved youth in identifying and surveying unaccompanied homeless youth.

As previously described, all of the CoCs participated in the November MA Youth Count Conference, where they were informed about the Commission's intention to partner with CoCs for a statewide Youth Count. It was at that conference that the Working Group first provided details about the methodology and uniform survey tool, as well as recommended best practices for implementation. Following the conference, each CoC was given significant discretion as to how best to proceed with its count based on its local context and resources.

Participants involved in planning:

Given the discretion each CoC had to implement strategies for conducting the Youth Count, varying CoCs engaged a wide range of partner organizations/agencies to help implement the count. While some CoCs like New Bedford CoC focused on a handful of the core youth-serving providers, others like Brookline/Newton CoC casted a wider net, engaging as many providers as possible. Partner organizations across the Commonwealth ranged from homeless youth service providers, such as youth drop-in centers, recreation and teen centers, and literacy centers, to other more mainstream benefit providers who may provide homeless services but do not specifically target homeless youth, including transitional housing programs, adult homeless shelters, family and domestic violence shelters; public housing authorities; veteran centers, health care providers, Department of Children and Families, Department of Youth Services, criminal justice agencies, community and vocational colleges, job training programs, case management providers, soup kitchens and food pantries, faith-based organizations, and organizations serving specific ethnic communities and the LGBTQ community.

However, despite great success across the state in engaging partners and organizations to participate in the Youth Count, a number of CoCs mentioned challenges engaging certain types of organizations. Specifically, many CoCs noted challenges engaging schools, largely due to confidentiality and "human subjects" issues. Because secondary schools are likely to have youth under 18 years old, all CoCs felt that there were missed opportunities due to the relative low lack of engagement with school systems. Similarly, many CoCs noted having trouble engaging community colleges and universities where CoCs would have been able to capture additional youth between 18 and 24 years old. Additionally, a number of sites reported problems engaging key potential partners, including youth-serving providers/agencies and shopping malls, where they knew they would find more unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness. Worcester had a unique experience with missing partners. As many of its potential partners were involved with its October homeless youth survey, a fair amount did not participate in the state's January youth count.

Planning roles:

Each CoC identified a lead agency in order to streamline services within their CoC. The CoC lead agencies therefore served as the lead organizing body in all 18 CoCs for the Youth Count initiative. However, with varying numbers of partner organizations and providers committing assistance to the Youth Count, many CoCs identified the need for an additional local planning committee to help organize and manage coordination of the Youth Count.

Local planning committees

Fourteen CoCs found it necessary to identify a local planning committee to help manage coordination of multiple partners and planning efforts for the Youth Count. Most of the fourteen CoCs identified existing committees within their CoC to spearhead the Youth Count. However, a few chose to establish new committees specifically charged with organizing the Youth Count.

For example, Boston CoC utilized its existing youth provider group and Three County Rural CoC used its existing sub-regional network. Three CoCs, Attleboro/Taunton/Bristol County CoC, Hampden County CoC, and Lynn CoC, all drew upon their existing unaccompanied homeless youth committee while four CoCs, Brockton/Plymouth CoC, Quincy/Weymouth CoC, Cambridge CoC and Worcester City and County CoC, all used their existing PIT count committees to help coordinate the Youth Count.

New Bedford CoC organized a three-person leadership committee specifically for the Youth Count, consisting of the CoC lead from the City of New Bedford, the chair of the local Homeless Services Provider Network, and a staff member from Catholic Social Services who served as the Unaccompanied Youth Count Coordinator. Brookline/Newton CoC also convened a specific committee made up of key staff from the City of Waltham and the Town of Brookline and Fall River CoC brought together key staff at prominent service provider agencies to form a Youth Count committee. Finally, Cape Cod and Islands CoC convened a small planning group with Barnstable Recreation Department Youth Commission, which took much of the lead with the Cape Cod and Islands CoC lead agency.

Benefits

CoCs noted that initiating a local planning committee brought numerous benefits to the Youth Count and to the overall work of the CoC that will extend beyond the Youth Count. Three County Rural CoC noted that a local planning team provided organization and overall consistency with the survey strategy. Hampden County CoC felt that a core team helped them leverage service providers that already were working with the target population. New Bedford CoC mentioned that bringing together a local committee broadened its perspective of other agencies/organizations serving homeless youth. Brockton/Plymouth, Quincy/Weymouth, and Cape Cod and Islands CoCs all felt that because they lacked a strong youth provider network in their areas, having a core team brought stability and expertise to their Youth Count efforts.

Centralized coordination:

During the planning phase, the Commission covered centralized coordination as one of its training topics and emphasized the use of a centralized coordination plan for an effective count. While it did not mandate a specific approach, it did recommend that CoCs have some way to provide centralized support during the count and survey period. One example of centralized coordination provided by the Commission was establishing a centralized telephone number for volunteers to call in to if they ran into any problems or had questions about how to administer the survey (or particular questions on the survey).

Most CoCs heeded this guidance and arranged some level of centralized coordination, either through their lead organization or through one or two point people who were highly involved in the local planning committee. Centralized coordination efforts typically involved developing a list of partner organizations to reach out to for participation; contacting and organizing partners in preparation for the count; providing ongoing technical support throughout the planning and count period; purchasing and distributing incentives; and distributing and collecting surveys.

For example, in Three County Rural CoC, in addition to sending out letters to all of its service providers regarding the count, they assigned two point people to manage the outreach, partner coordination and survey administration. Attleboro/Taunton/Bristol County, Malden/Medford, and Fall River CoCs set up centralized telephone numbers for partner organizations to call with any questions about the process and for youth to call to complete the survey by phone.

The use of some form of centralized coordination by all 18 CoCs along with the coordination and planning efforts put forth by the CoC lead agencies and local planning committees also helped to ensure there was a key point of contact for the ICHH and Working Group as well as ensuring a smooth and effective Youth Count across the Commonwealth.

Recruiting, training and monitoring volunteers:

At the November MA Youth Count Conference, the Working Group suggested that CoCs recruit youth volunteers (or youth ambassadors) to help administer the survey and identify locations in which volunteers would find homeless youth. The Working Group suggested starting by recruiting service connected youth who were already working with partner agencies and then leveraging their social networks to reach others. It also advised that other culturally-competent adults could serve as volunteers helping with the count and surveys - likely from youth-serving organizations. Finally, it advised CoCs to provide stipends to any youth volunteers they engaged, and encouraged them to set funds aside from the state grant to cover such costs. This section provides a summary of how the CoCs adapted guidance provided by the Working Group and effectively engaged volunteers to help with the Youth Count.

Volunteer recruitment

Each of the CoCs went about staffing the count differently. While most relied on existing agency/organization staff; eight CoCs solicited the support of PIT volunteers and/or youth

ambassadors. One site, Attleboro/Taunton/Bristol County CoC noted that it did not feel comfortable having youth on the streets approaching strangers for safety reasons, so staff from the lead agency and community partners were used instead to administer surveys. Worcester City and County CoC reached out to The Compass Project, which is an initiative of Luk, Inc., a nonprofit serving youth in Worcester. The Compass Project had previously coordinated with the Worcester Teen Housing Task Force to conduct youth counts in Worcester over the last four years.

Most effective recruitment

Most agencies felt that the most effective recruitment strategy was simply letting partner agencies and organizations know about the count and letting each partner determine who was most appropriate to help from their organization. Some CoCs noted that individual calls to partner organizations were more effective than generic emails at soliciting support and participation. Overall, establishing partnerships and buy-in from partner organizations across the CoC proved to be vital to volunteer recruitment efforts.

Training

Since most CoCs relied on existing staff, which are sophisticated and have high levels of experience working with this population, they did not feel they needed to train staff on survey administration, cultural competency and confidentiality protocols. Additionally, most of the staff/volunteers helped (and have helped in the past) with the PIT counts, so they are acquainted with counting and surveying homeless youth. At most, staff were provided guidance on the survey tool and the distinction between the HUD and statewide definitions.

In places where CoCs used youth ambassadors, a full training was provided. For example, Cambridge, Somerville, and Fall River CoCs brought youth ambassadors together to review the survey and discuss how to approach and survey youth. Cambridge and Somerville CoCs had training materials that could be provided for youth ambassadors who were unable to attend the training. Cape Cod and Islands CoC held a formal one-night training for youth ambassadors and their adult sponsors, where they provided food, packets of information describing the state definition and roles of volunteers, held a question and answer session, and discussed where to find youth and how to engage youth in the survey. They also did some role-playing where youth ambassadors took the survey. Hampden County CoC did a training that was video-recorded for both the PIT and Youth Count. There, the CoC provided volunteers with instruction materials, surveys and incentives and also provided training through phone calls with individual agencies. New Bedford CoC did a combined PIT and Youth Count training, which consisted of guidelines for sensitivity and mock interviews. Lynn CoC offered two trainings (one during lunch and another in the evening), which emphasized maintaining confidentiality and patience with youth participants. It also explained the unique identifier code and which questions were most important to answer to determine homelessness and provided survey enumerators with a cheat sheet that included the homeless definitions used by HUD and the ICHH.

Worcester City and County CoC did not feel it was necessary to host a training since all of its volunteers were previously trained for the Worcester youth count held only a few months earlier

in October. These volunteers had well informed of the youth count survey and had a comprehensive understanding of the distinction between the HUD and the state definitions of homeless youth. Three County Rural CoC had hoped to do more trainings, but due to its massive geography and time constraints they were only able to offer a training in one community.

Quality control

Similarly to training, most of the CoCs did not think Youth Count volunteers and staff distributing the survey required any special quality control monitoring since all had previous experience at conducting some type of homeless count. The eight CoCs that used youth ambassadors, however, ensured that each ambassador had a supervisor to monitor and assist them while doing street outreach and distributing the survey. Supervisors checked in with the youth ambassadors regularly and answered any questions that arose.

The attentive organizing that was conducted by CoC lead agencies and local planning groups during the planning stages of the Youth Count along with the efforts to mobilize volunteers and agency staff members that were previously trained to conduct homeless counts helped to ensure the quality of the data gathered from the Youth Count surveys.

Marketing and Special Outreach:

Each of the CoCs took its own approach with marketing, acknowledging its unique local context. Some were more modest in their approach, simply notifying provider agencies about the count via email and relying on word of mouth; while others were more sophisticated and utilized various forms of marketing strategies from paper-based flyers to social media.

Most of the flyers advertising the Youth Count were posted at youth-serving agencies and organizations, fast food restaurants, schools, shelters, shopping malls, and distributed among CoC email lists. A handful of CoCs - Attleboro/Taunton/Bristol County, Cambridge, Malden/Medford, New Bedford and Somerville - used social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter to publicize the count. A few others - Brookline/Newton, Fall River, and Cape Cod and Islands - used local newspapers to raise awareness about the count.

In addition to utilizing social media platforms and distributing flyers, a few CoCs came up with creative and unique marketing strategies to help spread the word about the Youth Count. For example, Malden/Medford CoC publicized the count on the City of Malden's website; Attleboro/Taunton/Bristol County CoC made individual phone calls to each of the partner providers and presented information about the count at various community meetings; New Bedford made an announcement on public access television then utilized their McKinney-Vento liaison and held a high school assembly that included a guest speaker (a youth who previously experienced homelessness; and finally, Somerville CoC partnered with a local bank and used the bank's ticker to spread awareness.

In addition to standard marketing efforts for the Youth Count, the authorizing language establishing the Commission required analysis of the barriers in serving unaccompanied homeless youth who are LGBTQ and those under age 18; this priority was incorporated into the

marketing efforts of the MA Youth Count initiative. Beginning with the November 2013 Youth Count Conference and throughout the planning period, the Working Group encouraged CoCs to engage LGBTQ providers and others with a history and expertise of working with the LGBTQ community and youth under age 18.

LGBTQ youth

Half of the CoCs did special outreach to LGBTQ youth, mostly by engaging partners that work specifically within this community. For example, Boston partnered with the Homeless Youth Providers Network; Worcester City and County CoC engaged The Bridge drop-in center; Lowell CoC worked with Community Health Center's Teen Block; Hampden County CoC engaged Holyoke Equal Rights and OutNow organizations; Cambridge CoC engaged Youth on Fire drop-in center; and Brockton/Plymouth CoC and Quincy/Weymouth CoC engaged the Brockton Alliance of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Youth (BrAGLY) - a program of Health Imperatives. Somerville CoC recruited an LGBTQ liaison who reviewed the survey and did outreach and marketing on Facebook and in person.

However, not all sites had the same success. Some places like North Shore CoC did try to engage LGBTQ-serving providers, but had trouble developing partnerships with them in general and did not get a response when solicited for their participation in the count. Cape Cod and Islands CoC typically has the participation of Cape and Islands Gay Straight Alliance, but due to reduced staffing at this agency, it could not participate in the youth count.

The Lynn CoC reported that the LGBTQ community is not a visible group within their CoC and cultural factors in Lynn make it especially difficult to identify homeless youth that may identify with the LGBTQ community.

Youth under 18

Both HUD and the Commission define homeless youth as those who are homeless and under the age of 24. The legislative authorizing language establishing the Commission however, required additional analysis of the barriers to serving unaccompanied homeless youth under the age of 18. The Working Group encouraged CoCs to take special care to reach this population. Thirteen of the CoCs were able to meaningfully reach out to youth under 18 through their Youth Count. Schools and youth services providers were the most common partners to assist with reaching youth under 18. Detail on approaches to work with these key partners is included in the Sampling Strategies and Coverage section found later in this report.

Youth involvement:

As the Youth Count initiative is focused on identifying homeless youth within the Commonwealth, it was important to the Working Group that the Youth Count also engage youth in the planning process and throughout the count initiative. Therefore, the Working Group provided guidance to all CoCs during the planning period on engaging youth as volunteers or ambassadors to assist with locating homeless youth and administering the survey. At the MA

Youth Count Conference, the Working Group recommended CoCs conduct youth focus groups to review the time of the count, methodology, survey tool, identify youth "hot spots," and identify trusted providers to help with recruitment.

While some CoCs reported limited success in engaging youth, citing difficulties associated with timing and outreach as barriers to engaging more youth to work as ambassadors, many CoCs were successful in engaging youth from the beginning often training them to act as youth ambassadors during the Youth Count. In total, eight CoCs used youth ambassadors in some capacity: Cambridge, Cape Cod and Islands, Fall River, Hampden County, Lynn, Malden/Medford, Somerville, and Three County Rural. Although they had some success, Lynn CoC noted that Youth Ambassadors were more difficult to recruit than adult volunteers who worked at partnering organizations.

The Malden/Medford CoC was very successful in recruiting Youth Ambassadors with 31 participating and assisting with the youth count. The CoC reported that each partner organization recruited some youth, and the Malden/Medford CoC sought their input on where to post flyers and identify youth, giving each youth ambassador a chance to actively participate in the planning process while empowering them to participate. The CoC also made t-shirts and provided youth ambassadors with certificates to signify their respect and appreciation for their input and assistance.

Implementation

This next chapter describes the Youth Count implementation undertaken by the 18 CoCs, including survey design, count/survey period, survey method effectiveness, survey questions, and use of incentives.

Count/survey period:

The Working Group determined early on that the MA Youth Count should coincide with the annual PIT count required by HUD. The rationale was that CoCs had some existing capacity at that time of year to conduct a count and engage necessary partners since they were already engaging with partners to conduct the PIT count. HUD's *Youth Count!* pilot from the previous year had used the same approach and recommended it for future counts, which helped to inform the Working Group's decision. The Working Group initially recommended that CoCs begin the count/survey period on the night of their PIT count (Wednesday, December 16, 2013 in Boston and Wednesday, January 29, 2014 for all other CoCs), and then administer the survey for at least three days immediately following the PIT. Following input from the CoCs, the survey period was extended to up to one week to try and accommodate CoCs that believed they would need more than three days to effectively survey the homeless youth population. In the end, Boston CoC extended its survey period to two weeks in December and one week in January due to site-specific challenges while all other CoCs surveyed youth for up to one week after their PIT count.

Ten CoCs surveyed youth during the full week, January 29, 2014 to February 5, 2014. However, not all CoCs surveyed all seven days. For example, both Brockton/Plymouth CoC and

Quincy/Weymouth CoC noted that while the survey period was open for the full week, the majority of the responses were obtained between Monday and Wednesday (February 3-5, 2014), and that the additional survey days did not increase the number of homeless youth that participated in the count. Somerville CoC administered the survey over six days, January 30, 2014 to February 5, 2014 beginning the day after their PIT street count. Lowell CoC did the count over four days, which they determined would reach all the youth normally served in its programming during the span of a typical week. Four CoCs—Lynn, Hampden County, Fall River and Attleboro/Taunton/Bristol County—administered the count over three days, from January 29-31, 2014. Malden/Medford CoC planned on doing the count over three days, but due to a snowstorm, the count was reduced to two days, the shortest count/survey period of all the CoCs.

Survey design:

Development of the uniform survey tool was undertaken by the Working Group. The final tool built on the Boston *Youth Count!* tool piloted in 2012, which itself drew very heavily from the tool created by the Worcester Teen Housing Task Force. The survey was edited to incorporate feedback from multiple stakeholders and youth focus groups. The final version was provided to the City of Boston prior to its count in December 2013. The tool was later slightly revised to incorporate a question about the city/town that the respondent resided in.

The final tool incorporated questions that would identify homeless youth according to both the HUD definition and the slightly broader ICHH definition. Additionally, the tool included questions that would help the ICHH and CoCs to better understand the needs of the homeless youth population. This information will help the ICHH, legislators, CoCs and state organizations as they determine what social programs are most needed to address youth homelessness in Massachusetts.

Length and mode of survey

The survey consisted of 37 closed-ended[7] questions and one open-ended[8] question, which fit on two single pieces of paper or one piece of paper using both sides, and was estimated to take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Surveys were administered in a variety of locations where youth were found, including but not limited to, on the streets, in restaurants, in shelters, and at youth programs.

Per the Working Group's instructions, CoCs had youth complete the surveys themselves, rather than completing them interview style. All CoCs were also asked to have volunteers on hand to help answer any questions youth had about the survey, many of which utilized youth ambassadors who had already completed the survey themselves. Due to the sensitive nature of the questions, CoCs were discouraged from completing the survey interview style unless significant disabilities prohibited the respondent from completing the survey on their own.

[7] Closed-ended questions are those that require survey respondents to select from among a list of answer options.
[8] Open-ended questions are those that allow survey respondents to write in the answer to the question in their own words in narrative form.

How well the survey approach worked

A majority of CoCs felt this overall survey approach worked well with youth completing the survey willingly and without hesitation to most questions. A number of sites noted that their success was due to the involvement of strong providers with knowledge of the field and experience engaging with homeless youth, which also relates to the marketing and outreach strategies implemented by CoCs. Some CoCs even reported positive outcomes in connecting with new partners not normally engaged in the PIT. For example, Fall River CoC and Hampden County CoC noted that it had lots of surveys completed by homeless youth engaged with partners that do not normally participate in the PIT count. New Bedford CoC mentioned that while it did not get many surveys completed, it set up a good process and established good relationships for future counts.

Conversely, a couple of CoCs did not have concerns regarding the survey approach, but did feel that they could have reached more homeless youth with better coordination. For example, the Balance of State CoC noted that while it reached youth in existing partner programs, they were not able to target youth beyond those organizations. Both Brockton/Plymouth CoC and Quincy/Weymouth CoC felt outreach was the biggest challenge therefore limiting the number of completed surveys returned to them.

Malden/Medford CoC was the only CoC to mention that they would have liked to offer more privacy for youth to complete surveys. Depending on location, privacy and safety concerns likely impacted a youth's willingness to complete surveys in all of the CoC areas. The primary approach to encourage youth to answer the sensitive questions was to ensure they could answer the survey themselves. All CoCs were instructed to have youth complete it themselves, rather than conducting it interview-style. However, inconsistencies existed with this approach across sites, with at least one CoC conducting a portion of their surveys by interview.

Survey questions:

Data groupings

As noted above, the survey consisted of 37 close-ended questions and one open-ended question at the end of the survey to solicit any other information survey participants wanted to share to better serve and help homeless youth. Most of the open-ended questions provided a space to fill in (i.e., date of birth) or a list of boxes to check (i.e., sources of income). All questions with an "other" category provided a space for youth to complete (i.e., reason not living with a parent/guardian/foster parent). At the end of the survey was a space for a unique identifier code, which was determined by listing the first letter for the first and last names, a gender code, birth date, and a CoC code. The questions were grouped in five dimensions: demographics, status and history of homelessness, education and income, subpopulations, and services.

Tool effectiveness

Most CoCs thought the tool worked well overall, reporting that the survey asked appropriate questions and was user-friendly. Most CoCs reported that the survey was self-explanatory and not threatening to youth; however, a few CoCs noted that the survey was too long and dense and not user, or surveyor, friendly. One site, Boston, noted that there was some difficulty getting youth to complete both sides of the survey.

Most CoCs use a standard survey with their typical PIT, so the Youth Survey represented an additional tool. In Fall River CoC, youth did not complete two surveys; rather, the PIT survey was completed interview style and the youth count survey was self-administered. The CoC felt this was important so youth would not feel survey fatigue and they seemed to receive positive feedback from the homeless youth participating in both the PIT count and the Youth Count initiative.

Questions to revise/redesign

Six sites noted that the survey was too long and that, where possible, redundancies should be removed. One CoC suggested collapsing some of the questions or starting the survey with questions that act as a screen. For example, the first questions would determine if a youth completing the survey was homeless. If they are not homeless, then they do not have to complete the rest of the survey. In terms of demographic questions, race and ethnicity is still confusing for some, and one CoC suggested combining questions 33 (What is your race and ethnicity?) and 34 (Are you Hispanic or Latino/a?). Another CoC recommended combining questions 22 (Are you pregnant?) and 23 (Do you have children?).

Additionally, several CoCs reported some confusion among staff and volunteers administering the surveys and the youth completing the surveys.

- There was confusion among volunteers in at least one CoC about whether pregnant youth fit the state's definition of homeless youth.
- In terms of sexual orientation, many youth asked what the term "queer" meant.
- There was confusion about the response categories to the question, "where did you stay the night of…?" and the difference between where the respondent took survey and where the respondent was from
- A couple of sites and CoCs noted that questions 8 (If not, for how long have you stayed/lived here?) and 9 (Please check where you stayed on the night of Wednesday, January 29th) were confusing to youth and youth did not know if they should continue completing the survey.

Questions 31 (Did you get the help you needed?) and 32 (If not, why was that?) were confusing for youth completing the survey, especially if youth could access some but not all of the services they needed. The survey did not provide an option to say you received some of the help you wanted, but not all.

Survey challenges

A number of CoCs—Boston, Cambridge, Hampden County, Lynn, Malden/Medford and Three County Rural—noted that the language in the survey was challenging for youth with limited English and literacy skills. This challenge may have been exacerbated by the fact the tool was only provided in English and Spanish, with speakers of other languages not having the opportunity to complete it in their native language. Other CoCs reported the survey's length and language-level were acceptable.

Brockton/Plymouth CoC and Quincy/Weymouth CoC noted that the challenge was not getting youth to complete the survey; rather, it was getting the survey in youth's hands. Most street counts were conducted on the night of the PIT, which was a very cold night. Some CoCs noted that because of the weather, many youth identified outside were not willing or able to take the time to complete the survey. This suggests that street counts conducted over multiple days could be beneficial.

Providers within the Somerville CoC received feedback from youth that some of the questions were too intrusive (i.e., if youth slept in a hotel or a car)

Recommendations to improve survey design

While overall feedback regarding the survey was positive, there were very useful suggestions made to the ICHH that may help to increase the number of surveys being completed and help to ensure better data for future counts. To make the survey more user, or surveyor, friendly, a few sites suggested re-formatting the entire survey by increasing the font size or making the check boxes bigger and removing the grey shadings. Another CoC recommended the survey be translated in other languages like Mandarin/Cantonese, doing so would potentially lead to an increased number of youth completing the survey. Other suggestions to be taken into consideration included creating some form of an electronic survey to be distributed, rather than paper surveys.

Incentives:

Many sites (12 of the 18) used incentives of some form to reward survey participants, youth ambassadors or both. Most CoCs—Attleboro/Taunton/Bristol County, Brookline/Newton, Lowell, New Bedford provided incentives only to survey participants; on the other hand, Cambridge CoC and Somerville CoC only provided compensation to youth ambassadors.

A number of CoCs--Cape Cod and Islands, Fall River, Hampden County, Lynn, and Three County Rural--provided both compensation to youth ambassadors and incentives to survey participants. Cape Cod and Islands CoC provided the same incentive/compensation to each.

Cape Cod and Islands CoC noted that they provided incentives to youth who were interrupted from an activity or who volunteers otherwise thought could use some assistance. As a result, not all survey participants received an incentive. Lowell CoC stated that students wanted to help regardless of the incentive, though they plan to continue offering incentives in the future.

Malden/Medford CoC provided compensation for youth ambassadors and food for those completing the survey (no monetary incentives). Overall, those that used incentives found them useful, but measuring the impact of these is difficult.

Of the six sites that did not use incentives or provide compensation, North Shore felt that incentives were not important since it did a service-based count, meaning the youth completing surveys were well connected and engaged with the provider distributing the survey. They did not feel that they needed to entice youth to complete the survey. If they CoC had taken a general approach, they would have considered providing incentives.

Types

Most incentives were provided in the form of gift cards to stores like Wal-Mart, Target, Dunkin' Donuts, CVS, Star Market, iTunes, or Subway. Two CoCs provided cash incentives. On average, survey respondents were provided either a $5 or $10 gift card and youth ambassadors were provided $25-$100 cash/gift cards.

Attleboro/Taunton/Bristol County CoC provided $15 iTunes or Subway gift cards and provided backpacks that were filled with toiletries and/or Patriots sweatshirts. New Bedford CoC provided Dunkin' Donuts gift cards and drawstring bags filled with toiletries and snacks stamped with a logo they created to brand the Youth Count.

How funded

All of the sites funded the incentives through the capacity building grant they received from the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). DHCD administered these funds on behalf of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services that had been allocated a legislative appropriation. Additionally, Attleboro/Taunton/Bristol County CoC had received donated backpacks to hand out to PIT respondents, and extras were provided to respondents of the Youth Count.

Sampling Strategies and Coverage

Outreach and engagement is an important strategy for identifying homeless youth and addressing barriers to service. With guidance from the Working Group, each CoC was asked to develop its own strategy for capturing data within its continuum based on its geographic region and planning capacity. This section highlights the various methods utilized by CoCs to identify and survey homeless youth within their continuum and the effectiveness of these strategies.

Street counts:

The 2013 HUD *Youth Count!* pilot demonstrated that street counts can be an effective strategy for capturing homeless youth who might not otherwise be engaged with service providers. Thirteen of the 18 CoCs utilized some form of a street count methodology, either to collect their

PIT census data or to collect survey responses. All CoCs began their youth count initiative on the same night as their point in time count, some continued their street count for several more days, and some CoCs utilized youth ambassadors to help count and survey homeless youth.

The Balance of State, Quincy/Weymouth, and Brockton/Plymouth CoCs all aligned their youth count with their PIT street count, though no additional approaches to identify homeless youth on the street were implemented. The Balance of State CoC, for example, relies heavily on the assistance of local police departments for their annual PIT count. This year, during its PIT street count, police departments were asked to distribute the survey to anyone they encountered that appeared to be in the appropriate age range. In the end, the CoC did not collect any surveys through their street count effort and had better success with their service-based method. The efforts of Quincy/Weymouth and Brockton/Plymouth CoCs were similar. Individuals conducting the street count were asked to distribute the survey to anyone that appeared to be of the appropriate age range.

As an alternative to solely aligning the street count with the existing PIT street count, several CoCs worked with providers in the community to identify locations where homeless youth were known to congregate. Volunteers distributed surveys in those locations over a period of several days. Cape Cod and Islands CoC distributed surveys over a seven-day period at locations such as the Cape Cod Mall, Cape Cod Community College, Panera Bread, coffee shops and other restaurants frequented by teens, and then at a soccer sporting event. Lynn CoC identified Laundromats and libraries and an open field area behind Lynn Vocational Technical High School. This method of identifying specific locations proved to be successful at identifying large groups of youth to participate in the survey, though the broader outreach was not always as successful in targeting those most likely to be experiencing homelessness.

Finally, Brookline/Newton, Cambridge, and Somerville CoCs built upon the above approaches and utilized trained Youth Ambassadors, peer networks and staff to specifically identify homeless youth within targeted locations to complete the survey. Somerville and Cambridge CoCs partnered with Youth on Fire, a drop-in center for homeless youth, to train youth ambassadors and develop a set of practices to help identify youth who might be homeless in their CoCs. The youth ambassadors then went out to targeted locations to conduct surveys. Typically, CoCs surveyed anyone they encountered in their target locations who appeared to be within the appropriate age range. All of these CoCs reported that utilizing youth ambassadors was a success, and it helped them to accurately identify homeless youth and provide additional outreach services.

Service-based counts:

A service-based strategy allowed CoCs to engage with a variety of partners with the goal of ensuring a more comprehensive count of homeless youth. Over a period of 2 days to 2 weeks, all 18 CoCs conducted some type of a service-based count. While this was the most popular method, it raised some privacy concerns across sites. Partnering with schools posed the greatest privacy challenges, which will be discussed in more detail below. Additionally, Brookline CoC works closely with a soup kitchen that supported the efforts of the youth count but declined to participate because they do not typically collect information about their clients and they were

concerned the survey would damage relationships they had built with their guests. Though service-based counts were conducted in a variety of locations including health care centers, shelters, transitional housing programs, drop-in centers, soup kitchens, and schools, the following sections provide a review of the most common locations utilized.

Shelter counts

Shelter counts were a significant part of the service-based strategies employed by CoCs. Continuums with homeless services specific to youth, including Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville, distributed surveys among participants in those programs. Some CoCs that do not have youth shelters within their geographic footprint worked with adult individual shelter providers to try and capture youth utilizing adult services. The Balance of State CoC indicated that the City of Lawrence, within their CoC, has a strong provider network which conducted the count in adult shelters. The staff conducting the point in time count would identify the age of a person and then, if they were under 24, ask them to complete the youth count survey rather than the standard PIT survey. Brockton/Plymouth, Quincy/Weymouth, Lowell, North Shore, Cambridge, and Somerville CoCs all indicated that they employed similar methods within adult shelters.

School counts

Coordination with traditional high schools, technical/vocational or alternative high schools, local community colleges and major universities, proved to be a challenge for most CoCs. Every CoC expressed interest in collaborating with schools in their area, though only eight CoCs reported success in engaging schools in some capacity.

Public schools were considered a significant partner for identifying homeless youth under the age of 18, although there are privacy and other legal constraints schools face that must be accounted for appropriately. New Bedford CoC engaged their public high school. Through a high school assembly, they were able to raise awareness about the survey and encourage youth to complete it. The Lynn CoC reported that the city's school department helped distribute flyers at schools informing teens about the survey and instructing them on when and where to participate. Lowell High School and United Teen Equality Center assisted the Lowell CoC in administering surveys to their students. Cape Cod and Islands CoC was able to engage the Barnstable School System.

In some capacity other CoCs were able to engage schools while working within the privacy rules. In both Brockton/Plymouth CoC and Quincy/Weymouth CoC, McKinney liaisons worked with guidance counselors to refer students to survey administrators. While these school relationships were helpful, the CoCs still felt they needed additional help navigating privacy concerns if they are to enhance the partnership. North Shore CoC also worked with a liaison to document the number of known homeless students but the liaisons did not allow for students to be surveyed, again, because of the confidentiality rules. Fall River CoC distributed flyers at schools, and they targeted youth at nearby fast food restaurants, where teens under 18 are known to congregate.

Brockton/Plymouth, Quincy/Weymouth, and Lowell CoCs were granted permission to administer surveys during the school day, though questions remain about how to ensure this approach adheres to privacy rules. Brookline, Cape Cod and Islands, and New Bedford CoCs received permission to distribute flyers at the high schools indicating off-site locations where youth could complete a survey. In these cases, the McKinney-Vento liaison or guidance counselor was instrumental in providing students with information.

Cape Cod and Islands and Worcester City and County CoCs had some success with local community colleges due to relationships that had been established prior to the youth count initiative. Many CoCs cited the need for improved connection with local community colleges and technical schools for future efforts.

Magnet events:

Magnet events are special social events providers organize to draw in youth who might be experiencing homelessness. Many times they include food and other social activities. Magnet events were identified during the *Youth Count!* pilot in 2013 as an effective means for engaging homeless youth that might not otherwise be identified. The Working Group, therefore, encouraged this type of coordination, and four CoCs hosted magnet events. Coordinating the youth count initiative with an existing event proved to be an effective means to reach additional homeless youth. Within the Boston CoC, Youth on Fire utilized its holiday party as an opportunity to survey youth, and one of the magnet events in the Hampden County CoC leveraged a regularly-scheduled youth meeting. Attleboro/Taunton/Bristol County, Hampden County, and Three County Rural CoCs also organized pizza parties or evening dinner events to engage youth.

Estimate of undercount:

Though it is difficult to estimate the number of uncounted youth, CoCs were asked to reflect on ways in which homeless youth may have gone uncounted. Several CoCs reported that the weather conditions may have greatly impacted the number of youth that they captured in their count. For example, Fall River CoC reported that they encountered several homeless youth that were unwilling to stop and complete the survey presumably because it was late and they needed to secure temporary housing for the night. Additionally, the following CoCs reported challenges associated with identifying homeless youth during the winter months as they are often doubled-up, or unwilling to come out and engage with outreach providers due to the cold temperatures: Three County Rural, Cambridge, Lynn, Fall River, Hampden County, and North Shore CoCs.

Some youth may have gone uncounted due to incomplete surveys. Boston and Lowell CoCs reported that some youth only partially completed the survey and Attleboro/Taunton/Bristol County CoC also believed they may have lost some youth who had already participated in the PIT count and when asked to complete a second survey began the survey but chose not to complete it due to its length. Survey results were included in the analysis as long as the completed portion was sufficient to indicate age and homeless status.

Though CoCs worked diligently to connect with school districts within their region, the inability to conduct significant outreach within high schools and colleges likely contributed to an undercount of homeless youth, particularly those under age 18. Literacy challenges were also a concern for Cambridge and Boston CoCs who believe that a connection to the school districts may have helped. Boston CoC also expressed desire to reach gang-affiliated youth.

Successes and challenges experienced by CoCs

This section describes the successes and challenges CoCs experienced during the MA Youth Count, and focuses on a few common themes across sites. Additionally, this chapter will present information about unique factors some CoCs faced that impacted their results.

Successes:

CoCs noted a host of successes in planning and implementing the count this year and successes that extend to other, future work.

Overall success with the count

Most of the sites noted that completing the statewide youth survey and getting a count of homeless youth was a success in and of itself, given it was the first concerted attempt by nearly all of them. The Brookline/Newton CoC noted that despite competing priorities the significance of the commitment of everyone involved as a key factor in managing the process. Fall River and Lynn CoCs were particularly impressed with how many surveys they were able to collect. The Lynn CoC also found it to be a very positive project for the CoC overall. The Attleboro/Taunton, Lynn, and Malden/Medford CoCs commented on their satisfaction with being able to raise awareness of youth homelessness across their communities.

Leveraging existing partner relationships

Many sites were impressed with the level of participation of existing partner agencies and organizations. A couple noted that partner involvement was largely due to strong collaborations that have been cultivated over time through general CoC work and past point-in-time counts. Most CoCs noted that when they presented the notion of the count to their partnership there was clear consensus it was a good idea and important for them to better understand youth homelessness.

Forming new partnerships

Overall, there was much agreement across CoCs that the MA Youth Count helped to foster new and effective partnerships. The Attleboro/Taunton, Brookline/Newton, Hampden County, Lynn, Malden/Medford, and North Shore CoCs described how the youth count allowed them to engage and work with new partners. Most of those partners plan to continue working together; for

example, the Malden/Medford CoC expects to engage its new partners in a formalized youth coalition. Two CoCs, Brockton/Plymouth and Quincy/Weymouth, completely integrated their youth counts with one another and conducted it in a regional manner. They found that the enhanced collaboration worked well. The Boston CoC described how the youth count improved collaboration between youth and adult-serving agencies. New Bedford CoC was successful in engaging the mayor and other municipal officials.

Youth felt empowered through the process

The Cambridge, Cape Cod and Islands, and Lynn CoCs described how the process was beneficial for youth ambassadors. In addition to successfully tapping into their peer networks, youth felt empowered through the process.

Expand reach to at-risk population

In addition to implementing a count of unaccompanied homeless youth, some CoCs used this opportunity to provide information to youth about available resources. Some CoCs stated the MA Youth Count was an opportunity for partner organizations to learn about the services and resources provided by others, so they could direct youth to them. They found it had already improved service referrals and connections. The Cape Cod and Islands CoC created a "safe zone" flyer, which was distributed to at-risk youth and provided information about where they could receive essential services. The Malden/Medford CoC distributed laminated, emergency cards for youth on how and where to access services. Both of these are examples of how improved understanding of resources across providers can improve the ability of youth to access the most appropriate resources.

Laid the foundation for future work

The Brockton/Plymouth, Quincy/Weymouth, North Shore and Somerville CoCs all noted that this effort provided a strong base upon which they could build in future years. They found it was very useful in getting a more accurate count and holistic understanding of youth homelessness in their area and across the Commonwealth.

Challenges:

There were several common challenges CoCs experienced in planning and implementing the MA Youth Count.

Timing and Duration

Most all of the CoCs noted that the timing was the biggest challenge. It overlapped with other grant proposals deadlines and much of the planning time was over the winter holidays. Also, while attaching the Youth Count to the existing annual PIT was beneficial in leveraging those resources, it also added to the workload during that time. Additionally, the planning time frame

was consistently cited as a major challenge. Nearly all sites mentioned that it was an extremely cold week. The weather resulted in fewer youth out on the streets where they would typically be found and fewer were willing to stay outside to complete a survey. A number of sites mentioned that the survey period was too short and that they could have identified more youth if the survey period was extended another week or more.

Confusion between PIT and Youth Count

A few of the sites described how partner providers were confused about the typical PIT and Youth Count and the distinction between HUD's and the state's definitions of unaccompanied homeless youth. Additionally, one site noted confusion between the "draft" and "final" survey tool to use for the count. The Working Group shared drafts of the tool with CoCs, causing confusion about which version was to be used. This led to the CoC distributing the draft version to youth respondents, though the differences were minimal.

Administrative work

CoCs that had a municipality as the lead agency found the capacity building grants to be administratively burdensome. This affected Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville CoCs as they had lengthy procedures for accepting the grants and setting up accounts, which was challenging to accomplish given the tight timeframe prior to the start of the count. The Boston CoC declined their grant because of this burden.

Service-disconnected youth

As noted above in the "Estimate of the undercount" section of this report, many CoCs noted challenges in identifying service-disconnected youth since most relied heavily on a service-based approach to conducting the count.

Youth Ambassador engagement

Potential Youth Ambassadors had limited time because of school or other responsibilities, causing several CoCs to struggle to engage youth in as robust a manner as they had hoped.

School engagement

Every CoC stated that engaging schools was crucial to reaching unaccompanied homeless youth who are under age 18. Thirteen of the 18 CoCs specifically noted challenges to engaging schools to at least some extent (although a handful had limited success in this area): Attleboro/Taunton, Boston, Brockton/Plymouth, Cambridge, Cape Cod and Islands, Fall River, Hampden County, Lowell, New Bedford, North Shore, Quincy/Weymouth, Somerville, and Three County Rural CoCs.

Unique factors:

There were a few notable factors that CoCs cited as posing unique challenges to implementing the MA Youth Count, though each CoC experienced a variety of challenges particular to their own community.

Geography

The Balance of State, Cape Cod and Islands, North Shore, Three Count Rural, and Worcester CoCs noted that their large geography posed challenges related to being able to achieve full coverage of all communities. Three CoCs described how their regions have many rural areas that were more difficult to cover also because of limited service provider and volunteer coverage in those areas.

Limited youth-serving providers

The Brockton/Plymouth, Quincy/Weymouth and North Shore CoCs have limited youth-serving providers and none that target unaccompanied homeless youth.

Increased policing

In Cambridge, Youth on Fire reported an uptick in police arrests in Harvard Square around the time of the Youth Count, which it believes affected the count.

Cultural differences and attitudes

The Lynn CoC noted that some cultural dynamics in Lynn may have resulted in challenges in identifying LGBTQ youth because of stigmatization of that population. They also have a vibrant immigrant community with various cultural traditions and norms that require additional consideration during a count.

Youth Count Results and Analysis

This section provides an account of the results of the youth count, detailing the data reporting process, results, and challenges with the data. Two sources of data are included in the analysis: (a) point-in-time data and (b) survey data.

Data entry, de-duplication, and reporting:

CoCs provided PIT census data and paper survey responses to the Working Group immediately following the Youth Count. Surveys were entered into a centralized database created by Health

Imperatives. Data entry was successfully completed by 19 staff and volunteers over the course of six weeks. In total 2,510 surveys were completed and entered into the database for analysis.

The survey tool included several questions that allowed the Working Group to de-duplicate responses. The second question on the tool asked if the respondent had already taken the survey that week. The Working Group set aside any surveys that otherwise appeared to be duplicates and also indicated they had already taken the survey. The primary method for de-duplicating responses was through the creation of a unique identifier using responses from some of the survey questions. The unique identifier was composed of the first letter of the respondent's first name, the first letter of the last name, a one-digit code indicating gender, the two-digit birth month, the two-digit birth day, the two-digit birth year, and a two-digit code indicating the CoC in which the survey was completed. Once all surveys had been entered into the database, duplicates were removed based on the unique identifiers. If there was any question about whether the record actually was a duplicate, it was included in the database. It is important to note that a few unique identifiers were very similar to one another, with just the CoC code differing. Many of those cases (13 out of 15), were from respondents who completed the survey during Boston's December (CoC code #1) and January (CoC code #19) counts. In each case, other fields differed so the responses were included and assumed to be from different respondents. However, the Working Group will consider adjusting the unique identifier in an attempt to even more clearly differentiate and ensure duplicates are removed.

1. Point-In-Time Data and Analysis:

As recognized by the Working Group early on, the data captured in the PIT count, though valuable in many ways, provides an incomplete picture of homeless youth in Massachusetts. Homeless youth often avoid identification, are doubled up with other homeless youth, or are not engaged with homeless service providers within their CoC. As a result, many homeless youth are not successfully captured in the annual PIT count.

It is important to note that the Commission does not oversee the PIT count and data. Therefore, the Working Group has limited ability to analyze the data captured. Additionally, since the PIT count is a HUD requirement, each CoC is responsible for only counting individuals, families, and homeless youth that meet the federal definition of homelessness. The youth count data, however, includes homeless youth that meet the slightly broader definition adopted by the Commission (as well as an analysis on risk of homelessness).

Across Massachusetts, 9,773 households, or 18,660 persons, were identified as homeless on the night of the 2014 PIT. This total includes households that are residing in emergency shelter, transitional housing programs, domestic violence safe havens, and places not meant for habitation. These 9,773 homeless households include 8,097 homeless children under the age of 18 and 1,843 homeless youth between the ages of 18 and 24. The PIT data available to the Working Group does not indicate the number of households headed by homeless youth, therefore, the focus of this report is on results garnered from the survey component of the MA

Youth Count. Additional work will be necessary to improve the data captured during the PIT census.

2. MA Youth Count Survey Data and Analysis:

A total of 2,510 surveys were returned from the 18 CoCs. Of those, 2,391 were from youth under the age of 25. Those responses were then analyzed to determine the number that could be categorized as (1) meeting the definition of an unaccompanied homeless youth that was adopted by the Commission, (2) meeting the definition adopted by HUD, or (3) exhibiting some level of risk for becoming an unaccompanied homeless youth. The at-risk category includes responses that did not meet either the state or HUD definitions, and that indicated they did not know if they could stay where they were for the next 14 days. Responses were also included in this category if they were homeless but still with their parent or guardian. The survey tool did not have a specific question regarding risk, but this was used as a proxy. The Working Group will discuss the merits of adjusting the survey to improve this information. Table 1 shows the breakdown.

Table 1: Homeless and At-Risk Survey Responses by CoC

Continuum of Care	# Survey Respondents Meeting State Definition	# Survey Respondents Meeting HUD Definition	# Respondents Potentially Experiencing Risk
Attleboro/Taunton/Bristol County	11	3	8
Balance of State	3	3	0
Boston	198	176	14
Brockton/Plymouth	11	8	3
Brookline/Newton	4	2	0
Cambridge	20	13	4
Cape Cod and Islands	46	21	59
Fall River	27	16	16
Hampden County	196	167	53
Lowell	38	23	48
Lynn	82	35	11
Malden/Medford	12	5	29
New Bedford	8	1	2
North Shore	13	12	0
Quincy/Weymouth	21	4	0
Somerville	24	18	9
Three County Rural	59	45	6
Worcester City and County	22	6	14
TOTAL	**795**	**558**	**276**

This section will present the data from the survey responses that meet the state's definition of unaccompanied homeless youth, as adopted by the Commission.

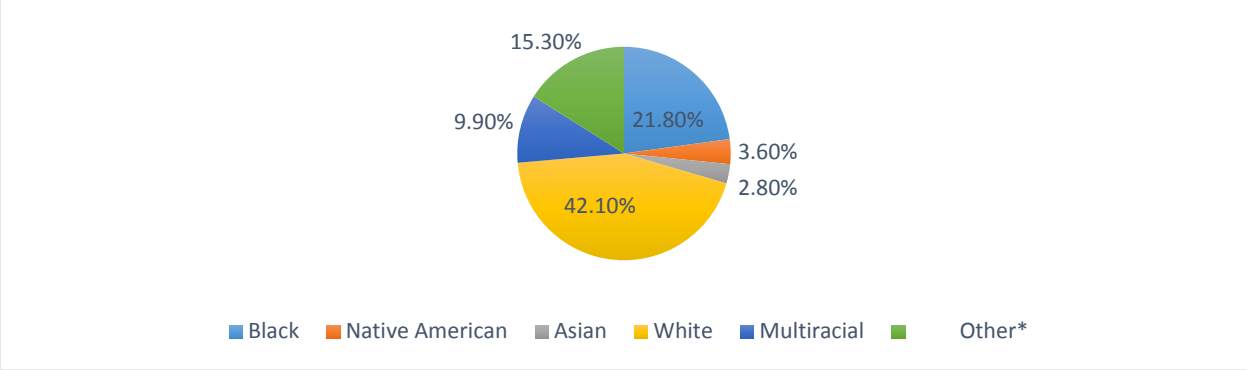
Demographics:

The survey asked several questions to understand demographic characteristics of the respondents. Overwhelmingly, the survey respondents meeting the state's definition of unaccompanied homeless youth were between the ages of 18 and 24. Just 6.3% of responses came from youth under the age of 18. This indicates a need to increase future outreach efforts to identify youth under age 18 who might have been missed. However, we continue to expect that it is more likely unaccompanied homeless youth are over age 18 because of parental control of younger youth and mandated reporting laws that identify and refer youth under age 18 for state services.

The survey tool also contained questions to identify race and ethnicity. Respondents were able to select multiple options for race, and Chart 1 indicates the distribution of those responses. The majority of responses were from white youth, with African-American youth also comprising a significant proportion at 21.8%. Only 2.8% of respondents indicated they are Asian, whereas 6% of the Massachusetts population is Asian, according to the 2010 U.S. Census.[9] Additional outreach and future research is needed to further understand whether this population has been undercounted.

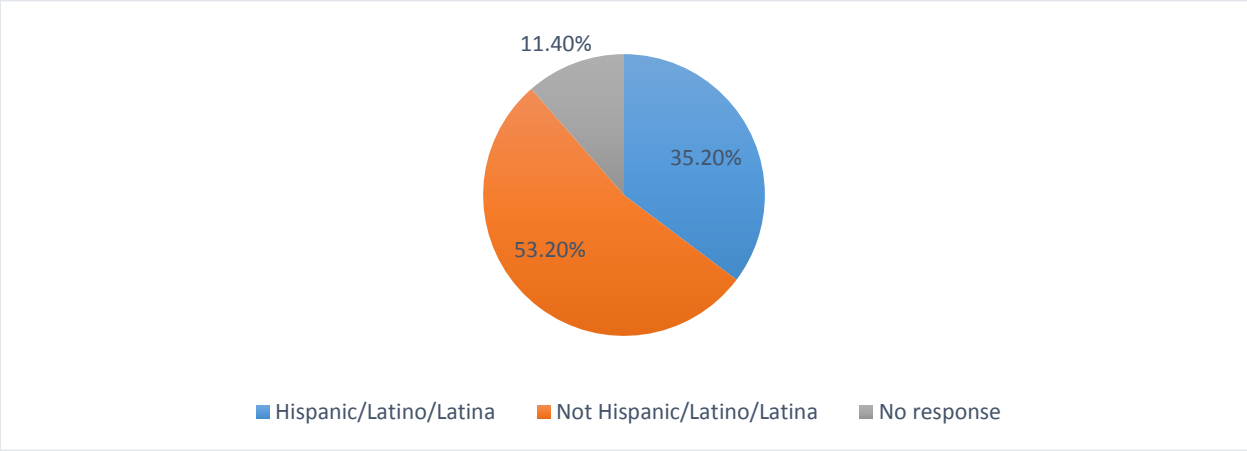
Of particular note, 15.3% of respondents meeting the state definition selected "other" for race. This high percentage is attributed to a challenge with the way the race and ethnicity questions were asked on the survey. The vast majority of respondents who selected "other" for race, indicated they were Hispanic/Latino/Latina in the following question focused on ethnicity. This suggests that there was some confusion about the difference between race and ethnicity and how to answer these questions that would warrant a redesign for future surveys. Chart 2 shows that 35.2% of respondents are Hispanic/Latino/Latina.

Chart 1: Race Distribution of Survey Responses Meeting State Definition



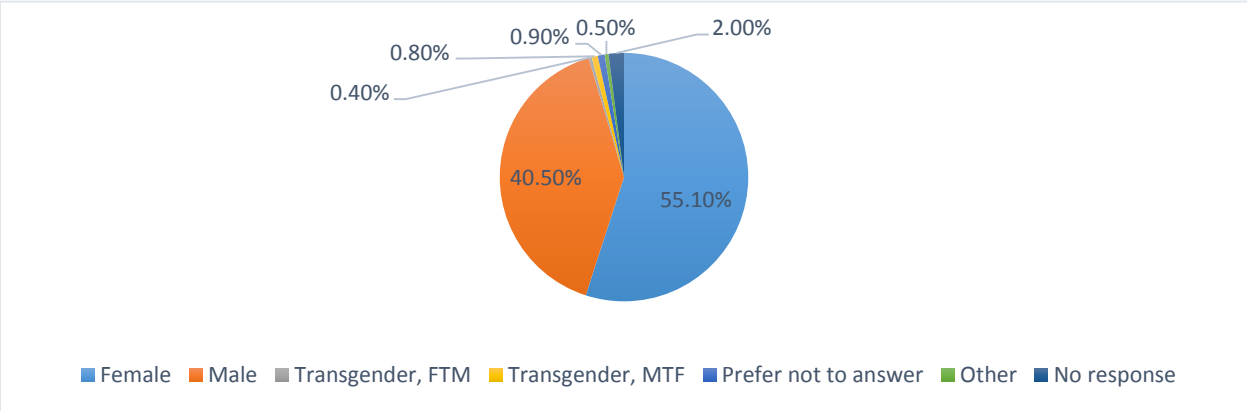
[9] http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-11.pdf

Chart 2: % of Respondents Meeting State Definition Indicating Hispanic/Latino/Latina Ethnicity



Of the 795 respondents meeting the state's definition of homelessness, 438 identified as female. This represents 55.1% of the respondents, which was higher than was anticipated given national estimates that show homelessness among unaccompanied youth is higher among males. The Working Group attributes this high percentage of female respondents to the fact that several CoCs conducted outreach to pregnant and parenting youth who are being served by the state's Emergency Assistance family shelter program. Participants in that program are overwhelmingly female, possibly skewing the results. This data suggests additional outreach may be necessary to more fully understand the population of street-involved youth. A total of 322 responses were from youth identifying as male, representing 40.5%. Those identifying as transgender, male to female (MTF); transgender, female to male (FTM); as well as those who selected "other" or "prefer not to answer" each made up less than one percent of the total responses.

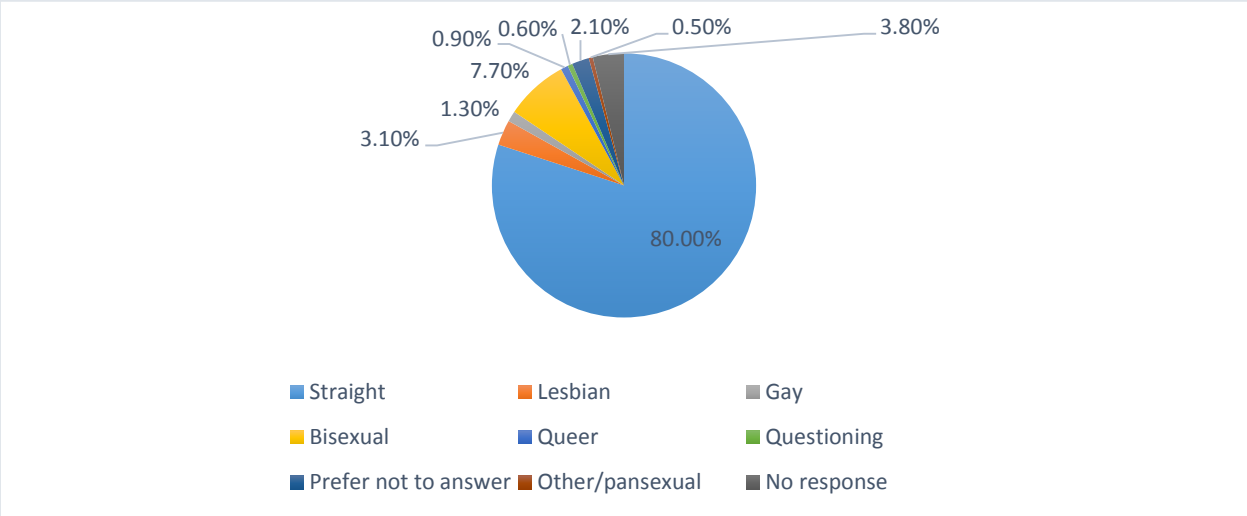
Chart 3: Gender Distribution of Survey Respondents Meeting State Definition



The Commission was charged with identifying the barriers for serving youth who identify as LGBTQ, and the survey tool included a question about sexual orientation in order to better understand the scope of that population and any particular needs they have. The question was phrased in the following way in an attempt to garner accurate responses: "What is your sexual

orientation? Please check the answer that best describes you." Chart 4 shows the breakdown of responses. The most common response was straight, at 80% (or 636 people) of responses. Bisexual was the second most common at 7.7%. All responses for lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, questioning, and "other" total 14.1% of the total respondents meeting the state definition, with 1.2% of youth identifying as transgender (this includes some youth who also identified as LGBQ). National estimates for LGBTQ unaccompanied homeless youth range from 20-40% of that population, suggesting our results may be an underestimate of the true extent of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness here in Massachusetts.

Chart 4: Sexual Orientation Reported by Respondents Meeting State Definition

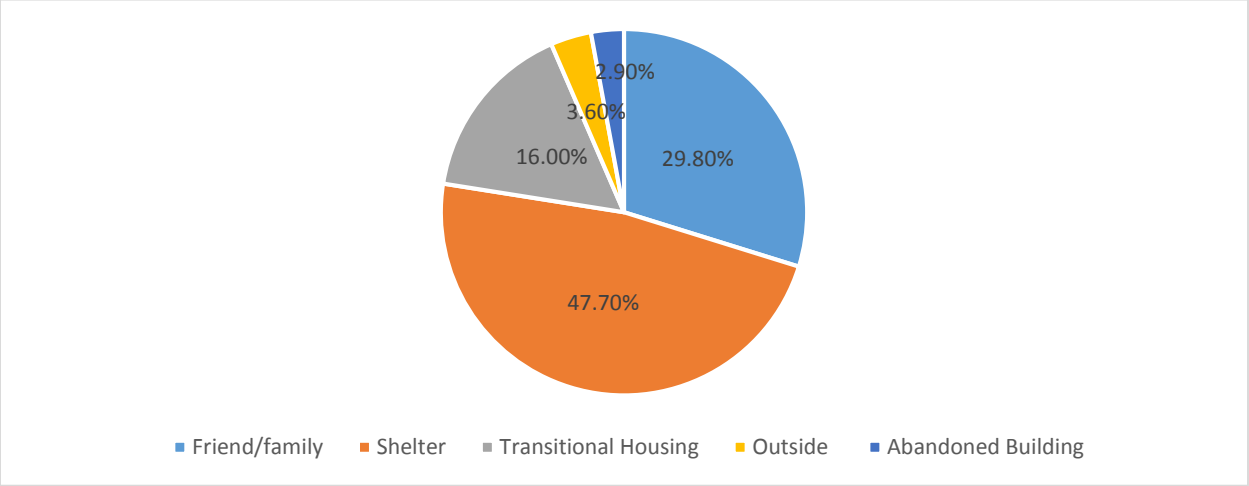


Status and History of Homelessness:

It was important to the Working Group to understand the circumstances surrounding respondents' homelessness, therefore, several questions were included to understand where the respondents were staying at night, why they were no longer with their parent or guardian, and whether there was a history of homelessness in their family or with their friends.

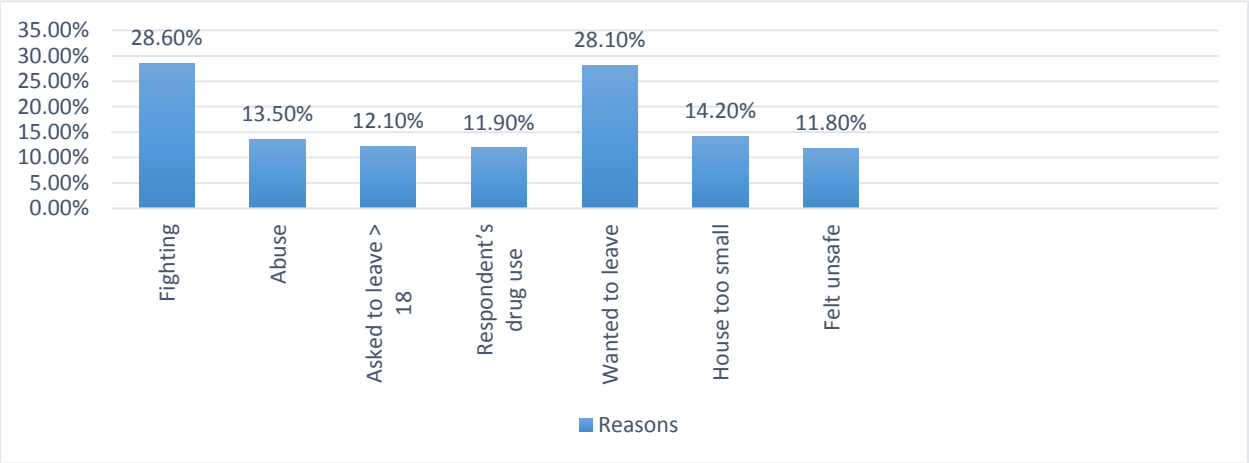
Chart 5 indicates at almost half of all respondents meeting the state definition had stayed at a shelter on the night of the PIT. This includes youth-focused shelters, adult family shelters, and single adult shelters. Another 16% had been in transitional housing. Together shelter and transitional housing settings total 63.7% of responses, suggesting that a significant portion of respondents are accessing some form of emergency services and are potentially being connected to rehousing assistance. The next most common response was that the youth had stayed with a family or friend, with 29.8% of respondents indicating this location. This is in line with national estimates that unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness often couch-surf, particularly given a lack of emergency shelters targeting youth. The majority of CoCs focused their Youth Count outreach through service-based strategies, and the percentage identified on the street mirrors that. Fifty-two respondents, or 6.5%, indicated they stayed outside or another place not meant for human habitation.

Chart 5: Location of Respondents on the Night of the Point-in-Time Count



The survey tool included a question to understand why the youth was no longer with their parent or guardian, in order to understand a little about the path to homelessness. The survey provided 16 options, and respondents could select as many of those as they wanted. The seven most common reasons are depicted in Chart 6 below.

Chart 6: Most Common Reasons Respondent is No Longer with Parent/Guardian



Results indicate that 32.1% of respondents had a parent that had previously experienced homelessness. However, 20.9% indicated they did not know if their parent had ever experienced homelessness, so the number with a parental history of homelessness may be even higher. The majority (64.8%) of respondents meeting the state definition have a friend currently experiencing homelessness. Considering the high number of respondents being served in emergency shelter or transitional housing alongside other people, it makes sense that a similarly high proportion would have a friend also experiencing homelessness.

Education and Income:

Questions regarding school enrollment, educational attainment and income were included to understand how youth experiencing homelessness are connected to education and employment, and also to provide information about some of the challenges these youth may experience in achieving self-sufficiency into the future. Thirty-seven percent of youth meeting the state's definition indicated they were currently enrolled in some type of educational program. The majority of those, 63.2%, were either in high school or a GED program. Another 23.1% were enrolled in college. This clearly signals the benefit of partnering with educational institutions in future efforts to support unaccompanied homeless youth. Further, 45.4% had not yet attained a GED or high school diploma, which points to the need to support unaccompanied homeless youth in completing their education or training.

Chart 7: School Enrollment among Respondents Meeting State Definition

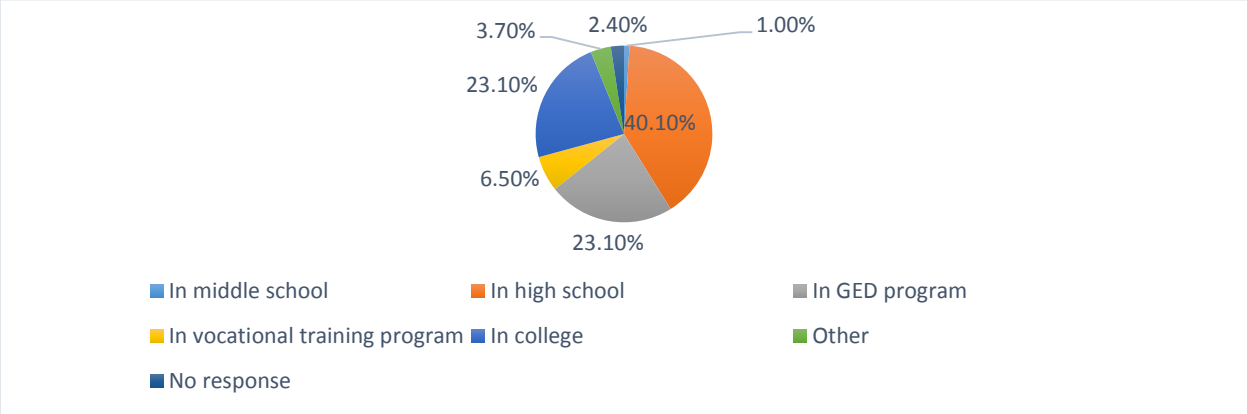
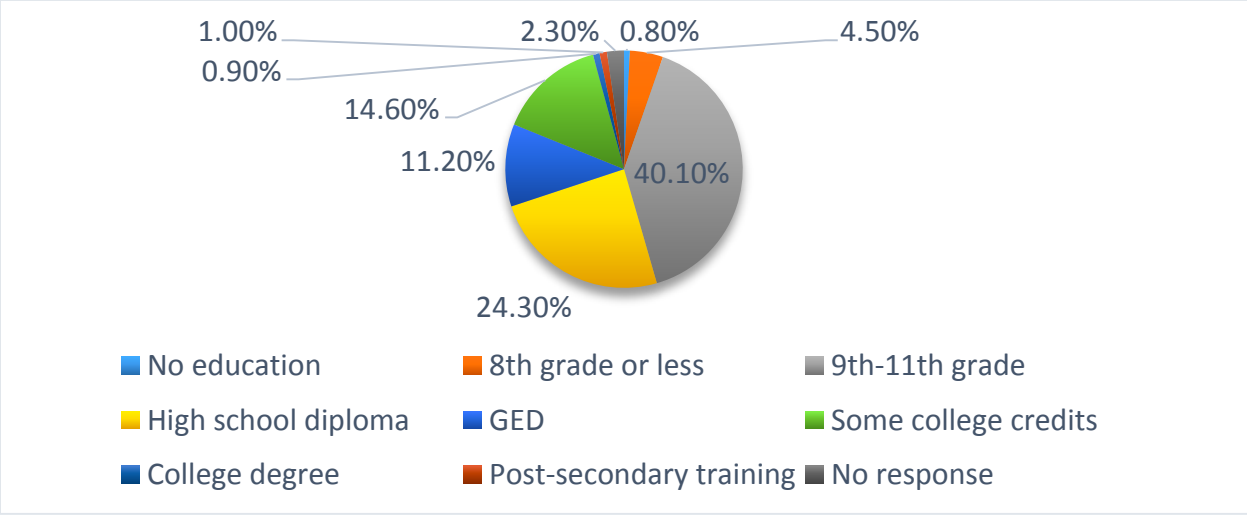


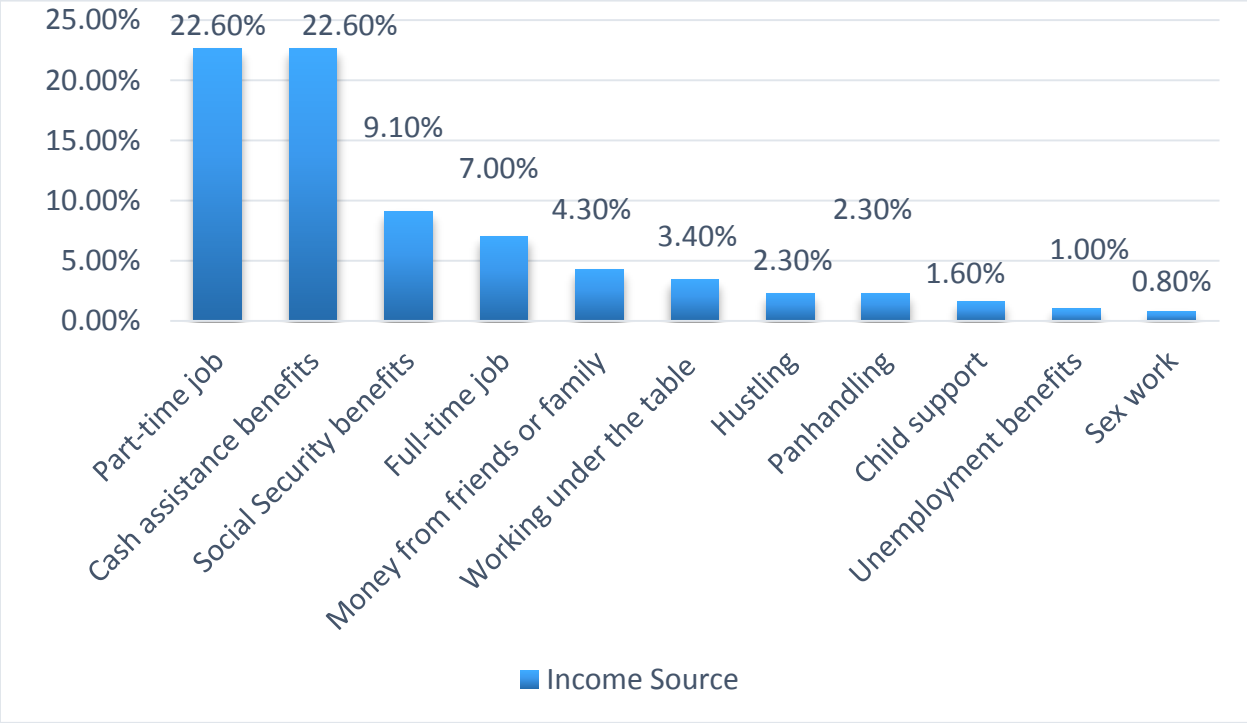
Chart 8: Highest Educational Attainment of Respondents Meeting State Definition



Of the respondents meeting the state's definition for unaccompanied homeless youth, 64.2% reported having some form of income. The survey included 11 options for income source, which can be seen in Chart 9 below. Respondents were asked to select all income sources they had. Most commonly youth are working part-time or are receiving cash assistance benefits. The

Working Group believes that the frequency of income from hustling, panhandling, and sex work may have been underreported. National estimates[10] are higher than what these results show, and youth may have been reluctant to disclose sensitive information if the survey was being administered by someone they did not know or trust.

Chart 9: Income Sources for Respondents Meeting State Definition



Subpopulations:

The survey tool was also designed to garner information about certain subpopulations in order to begin to understand potential additional challenges, opportunities, or vulnerabilities. The tool gathered information about the number of youth who were pregnant or parenting, and who had histories of involvement with foster care, group homes, and detention facilities.

First, the survey tool included a question asking whether the respondent was pregnant. Of the 795 youth who met the state definition, 441 indicated they were female or transgender, FTM (female to male). The Working Group included transgender, FTM youth in the analysis in order to be inclusive of anyone who was pregnant regardless of their gender identity. Of the 441 respondents, 34 (7.7%) indicated they were currently pregnant, 401 (91.0%) reported no/not applicable, and 6 (1.4%) provided no response.

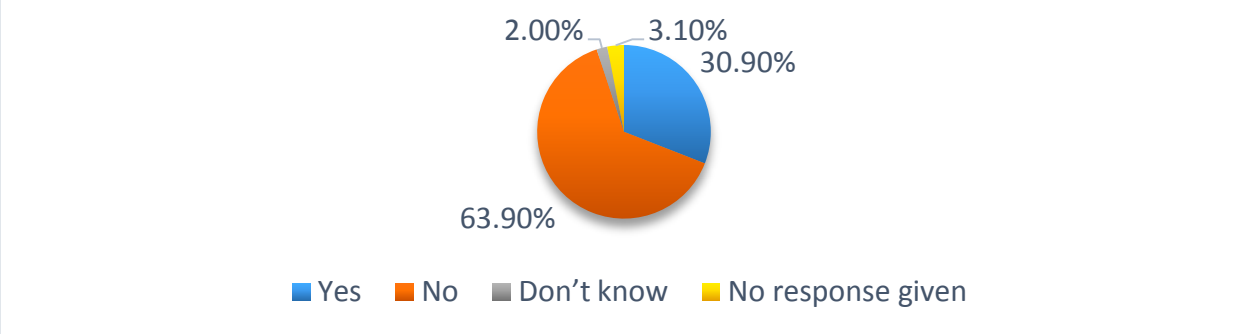
In addition to the question about pregnancy, the survey included questions about whether the respondent has children, and if so, whether those children are living with them. Over a third, 305 respondents (38.4%), have a child or children, and 57% of those have a child or children living

[10] http://usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/BkgrdPap_Youth.pdf

with them. Given the state definition includes young families and some family shelter programs were targeted as partners in the count, the results are not surprising. Though this is likely an underrepresentation of the number of parenting youth who would meet the state's definition. Not all CoCs targeted family shelters in their outreach strategies. Future counts that more fully include young families being sheltered through the state's Emergency Assistance program would likely result in a higher number and percentage of youth who report they are pregnant or parenting.

Previous studies indicate that nationally an estimated one-quarter of former foster care youth experience homelessness within four years of exiting placement.[11] The survey tool asked respondents whether they had ever been in foster care. Of the 795 responses meeting the state definition, 246 youth (30.9%) reported they had foster care experience at some point during their lives. The survey did not ask for any other specific information about their involvement, so some of those respondents may have aged out whereas others may have had a more time-limited foster care placement. Regardless, the results indicate a significant portion of unaccompanied homeless youth have foster care histories, which should be taken into account in the development of housing and service models.

Chart 10: Foster Care History among Respondents Meeting State Definition

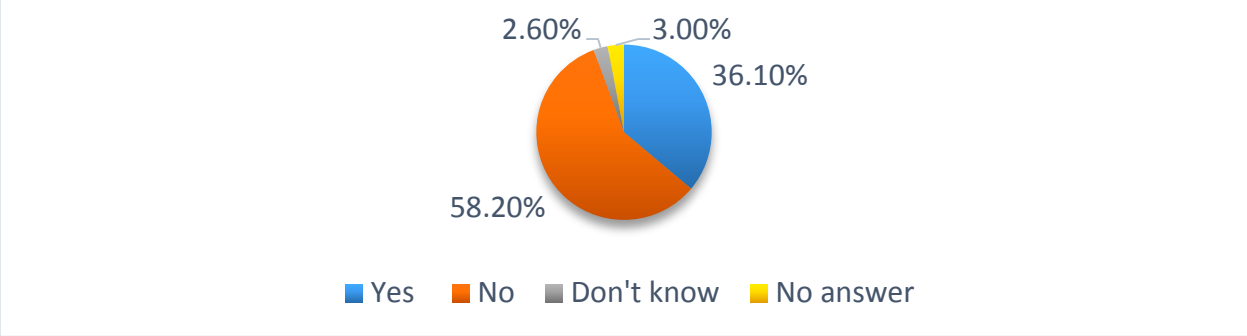


In order to identify a potential veteran subpopulation, the survey included the following question: "Have you ever served in the military?" Thirty (3.8%) respondents indicated they had served in the military. People who are determined to meet the definition of veteran by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs are often able to access additional financial, health care, and housing supports not available to non-veterans. Such resources can be valuable in assisting with rehousing and stabilization. Increased awareness of this subpopulation and potential resources is important.

The survey tool also included a question to identify the number of respondents who had ever lived in a group home or residential program. This could include programs funded through the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Disability Services, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Department of Education, or other private programs. Of the respondents meeting the state definition, 287 (36.1%) had at some point lived in a group home or residential program. Similar to the data on the number of youth with foster care histories, this suggests that a significant segment of unaccompanied homeless youth have engaged with various systems of care in the past.

[11] http://usich.gov/usich_resources/fact_sheets/opening_doors_homelessness_among_youth

Chart 11: Group Home History Among Respondents Meeting State Definition



The survey included two questions to garner information about respondents' histories of incarceration:

> "Have you ever stayed overnight or longer in juvenile detention – a secure facility or residential program for young people – as a result of criminal behavior or police involvement?"
>
> "Have you ever stayed overnight or longer in an adult jail or prison?"

Charts 12 and 13 show that one-quarter (25.7%, 204 youth) of respondents meeting the state definition had an interaction with the juvenile detention system, and just under one quarter (22.5%, 179 youth) had an interaction with the adult correctional system.

Chart 12: Juvenile Detention History Among Respondents Meeting State Definition

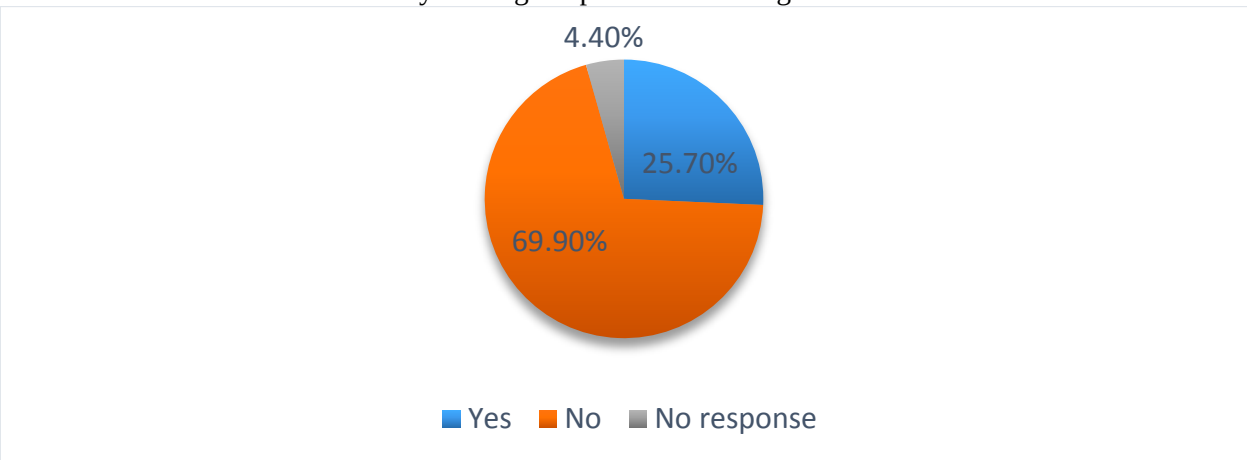
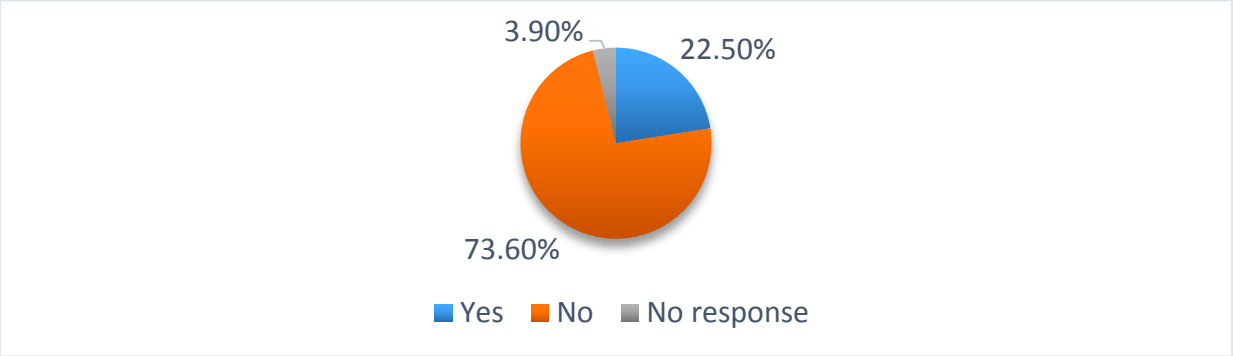


Chart 13: Adult Jail/Prison History Among Respondents Meeting State Definition

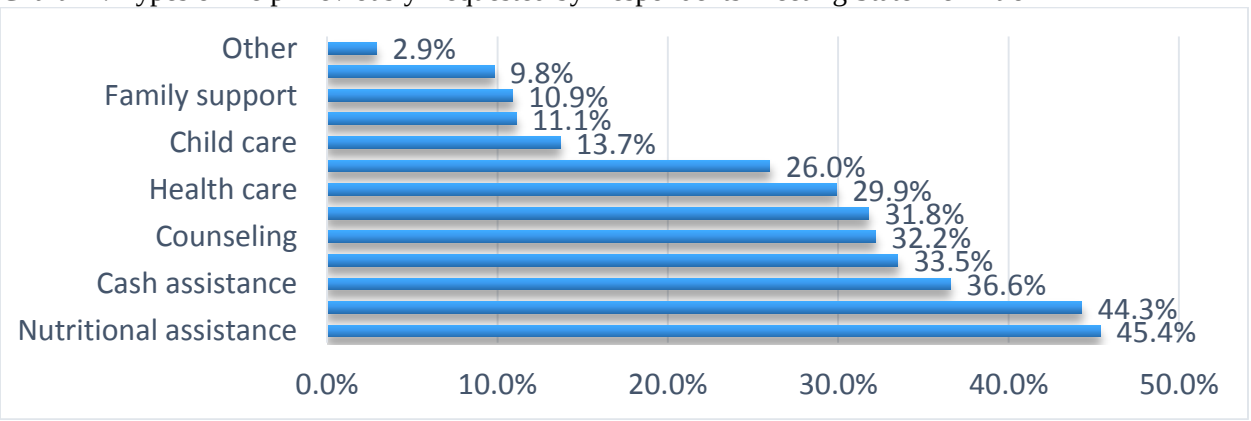


Services:

One of the goals of conducting the MA Youth Count was to gain a better understanding of the kinds of services from which unaccompanied homeless youth could benefit. The survey tool included three questions related to this. First, it provided a list of 11 service types as well as an "other" category, and respondents were directed to indicate which they had previously sought. There also was an option for respondents to indicate they had not tried to access help. Chart 14 shows the distribution of responses. Notably, just 10.9%, or 87 of the 795 respondents meeting the state definition, reported they had sought family support services, though four of the top seven reasons a youth was no longer with their parent related directly to some form of family conflict.

Fifty-four percent of respondents thought they received the help they needed. It also is important to note that 12.3% of respondents did not answer that question, and the Working Group heard from several CoCs that this question would have garnered more accurate information had it permitted respondents to indicate they had received some, but not all, of the help they needed.

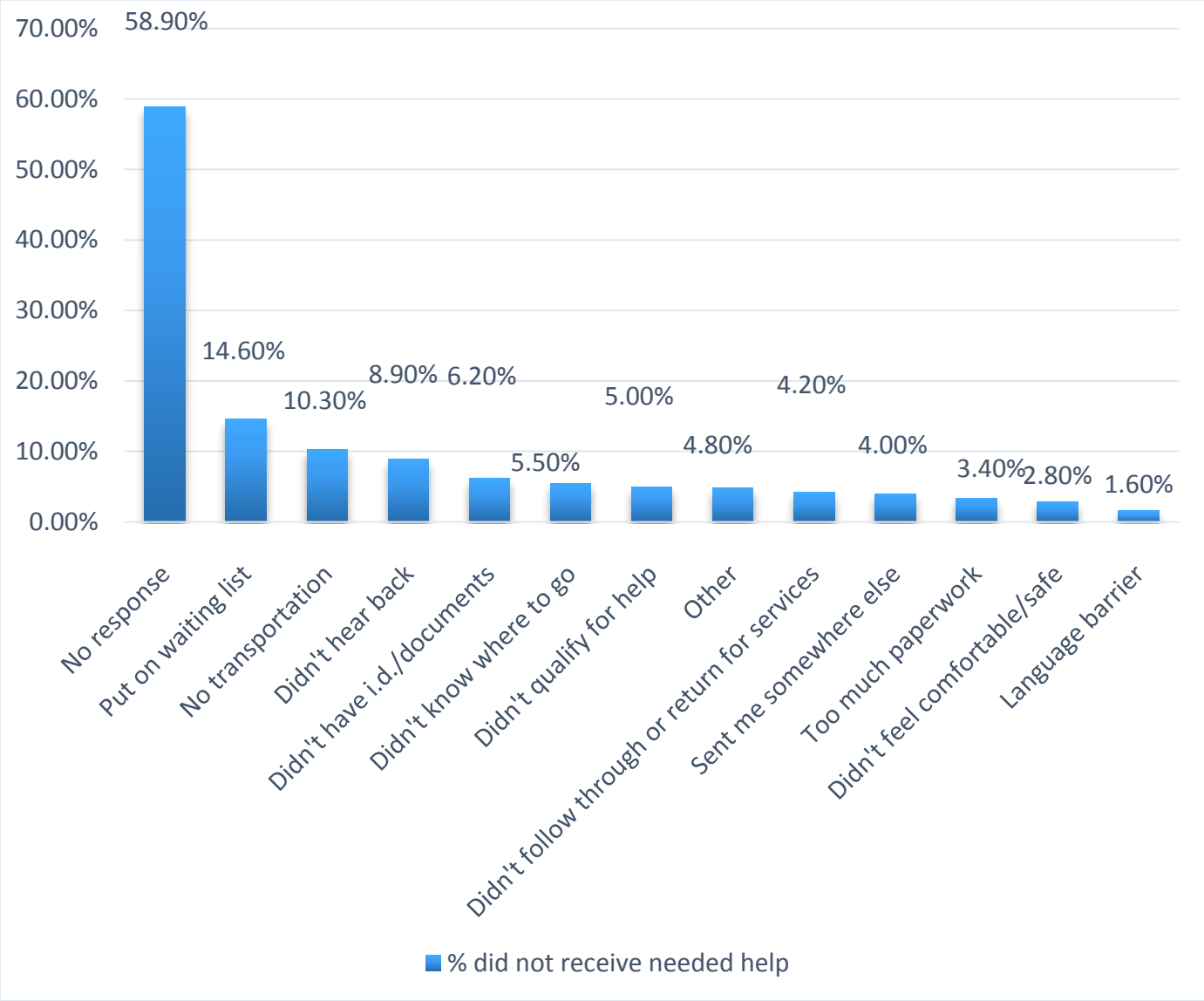
Chart 14: Types of Help Previously Requested by Respondents Meeting State Definition



The third survey question designed to understand service needs asked respondents to select any of 12 options as to why they did not receive the help they needed. Over half of respondents did

not answer this question, leading the Working Group to conclude it may need to be redesigned in order to garner better data. The most common responses were that the youth had been put on a waiting list, did not have adequate transportation, and did not hear back.

Chart 15: Reasons Respondents Did Not Receive Help They Needed



Limitations

There are limitations to the information contained in this report that are important to note, and which inform recommendations for improvement of any future youth counts. First, the MA Youth Count initiative represented the first-ever attempt to more strategically identify and count unaccompanied homeless youth for 16 of the 18 CoCs. There was substantial work necessary to introduce the idea to relevant partners, understand the methodology, and train volunteers adequately. The planning time was also more limited than the Working Group had hoped.

Initially, the Working Group wanted 5-6 months of lead time to work with CoCs and ensure all of their questions were answered and strategies for overcoming barriers were in place. However, some delays in finalizing the methodology, tool, and capacity building grants resulted in planning not beginning in earnest until November 2013 - only one month prior to the Boston count and just over two months prior to the other CoCs' counts.

Another factor that impeded execution was that all CoCs were working simultaneously to submit their 2013-2014 HUD Continuum of Care NOFA responses that were due on February 3, 2014. Each of these challenges related to the planning timeline had a negative impact on execution. Most notably, partner engagement and outreach strategies were limited, and that resulted in the likelihood that unaccompanied homeless youth were missed in both the PIT census count and the survey period. More experience and coverage will be necessary to improve the PIT estimate over time and with consistency across CoCs.

The MA Youth Count was not intended or designed in such a way as to reach every single unaccompanied homeless youth. The goal of the Working Group was to treat this count as a pilot wherein each CoC could begin exploring effective strategies for conducting a youth count that could be built upon in the future, while simultaneously giving the CoCs and the Commonwealth a better understanding of the extent and character of youth homelessness in various regions. Therefore, the Working Group technical assistance and CoC planning focused more on developing initial partner relationships and testing youth outreach strategies than on launching a full scale count that would reach all youth in every anticipated circumstance.

Additionally, the Working Group faced challenges with translating the final survey version into multiple languages. Though it is unclear if any particular youth were unable to participate because of this, the Working Group estimates this likely could have been a barrier. Based on input from CoCs, the Working Group sought to translate the survey tool into Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian-Creole, and Khmer. Justice Resource Institute (JRI), a member of the Commission, provided staff who translated the tool into each of these languages, but additional adjustments to the tool needed to be made afterward immediately prior to the launch of the count, and JRI was not able to make revisions given the significant time constraints. Fortunately, a member of the Working Group was able to make the revisions to the Spanish version in time for use in the count.

It is also important to note that the PIT census numbers and the numbers of completed surveys cannot be combined, but rather should be evaluated as providing context to one another. For example, the youth who were counted during the PIT may or may not have been the same youth who were surveyed.

The analytical capacity for this Youth Count was also limited. The Working Group relied on existing staff/Working Group members to compile results and conduct analysis. The Working Group did not have the support of a trained social scientist to conduct more robust analysis. This limitation meant that the Working Group was unable to conduct analysis of results at the individual CoC level or by region of the state. The data to do such analyses in the future exists, should additional examination be warranted and feasible.

Given each of these contextual limitations, the Working Group recommends that the Commission and any others consider the results as a sample, providing preliminary information about the scope of unaccompanied youth homelessness and the opportunities and barriers they face.

Moving Forward

During the process evaluation, each CoC was asked about the impact of the MA Youth Count on their future work and advice they would offer the Commonwealth for improving future counts. A few themes emerged.

Changes to Future Youth Counts:

Achieve enhanced partner engagement

Nine CoCs discussed their desire to improve the reach of their partnerships to some extent. The Boston CoC thought it would be important to slow down the initial planning to ensure the right partners are engaged from the beginning, and that appropriate, reliable point people at each partner organization are clearly identified. CoCs commonly noted the desire to partner with schools and community colleges, juvenile justice agencies, food pantries and meal programs.

Partner with youth

There was wide agreement about the value of youth engagement and the need to enhance that component. The Brockton/Plymouth and Quincy/Weymouth CoCs cited the desire to use peer outreach, and the Lynn CoC indicated the hope to use social media to reach and engage more youth.

Lengthen planning period

Several CoCs spoke about the challenges associated with a short planning period, but believed that the experience this year provided them with a structure they could build upon. They noted that having more lead-time to plan a future count would allow them to formalize and expand their effort next year.

Advice to the Commonwealth:

Support capacity

CoCs advise that the Commonwealth continue to make capacity support available, including grants and technical assistance. For example, assistance in developing peer outreach strategies to reach service-disconnected youth, the development of sample outreach and administrative

materials, and assistance in obtaining full participation within each CoC by state agencies that may be able to identify homeless youth or provide other resources.

Annualize the statewide effort

Many CoCs advise that the statewide MA Youth Count should be annualized and formalized in some way as to clarify expectations and help CoCs plan appropriately.

Support greater school involvement

All CoCs noted the importance of partnerships with elementary and secondary schools. They asked that the Commission work with DESE to clarify parameters for their participation that adhere to privacy rules.

Reconsider timing

There was much thought offered about the best timing for conducting a Youth Count. Eight CoCs agreed that conducting the count during the winter posed challenges to reaching youth, and found attaching it to the typical PIT count led to hardships for both initiatives. They suggested conducting future Youth Counts in either summer or fall, and believe this might help reach service-disconnected youth in particular as they may be more accessible outside during warmer months. The Somerville and Cambridge CoCs also suggested lengthening the duration of the count beyond one week in order to reach more youth.

Simplify the survey tool

As noted above in the Implementation section of this report, six CoCs thought the survey was too long. This was also noted when asked for their advice about how the Commonwealth could improve future counts. They asked that the tool be both shortened and simplified, while maintaining core components and critical questions.

Promising Practices and Policy Recommendations

The Working Group recommends several policy and practice items to improve future counts and the Commonwealth's understanding of the scope of homelessness among unaccompanied youth.

Recommendations Regarding Promising Practices:

Several strategies employed by multiple CoCs are indicative of promising practices and should be considered and tested further in future counts.

1. Implement a Centralized Leadership Team at the CoC Level:
   A centralized and coordinated leadership team would provide the structure necessary to ensure all appropriate partners are engaged, volunteers are recruited and trained, and outreach and other logistical concerns are organized and thorough. The team should consist of at least two staff from a lead organization(s) and they should be clearly empowered as project managers. The leadership team should be responsible for the following activities: Developing a project timeline and work plan; recruiting partners; and oversight of core work plan activities such as volunteer engagement, training, marketing and outreach, quality control, sampling strategies, and data collection and analysis.

2. Fully Engage Youth:
   CoCs that successfully engaged youth throughout the planning and implementation processes found it helpful in identifying youth to be counted. Utilization of youth focus groups during the planning phase and initiating Youth Ambassador recruitment via youth-serving organizations provides a solid foundation of youth engagement for a youth count. The Working Group recommends professionalizing" youth engagement to reach maximum impact. This should include formal training; stipends; and provision of appropriate materials, t-shirts and certificates of achievement.

3. Coordinate Service-Based and Street Counts:
   All CoCs utilize both service-based and street counts in their typical point-in-time counts, though they relied most heavily on service-based counts to reach youth. The Working Group recommends continued exploration of the opportunities to reach youth who are disconnected from services by testing additional street and other non-service-based count methodologies. Peer outreach and networking methods should be prioritized for this purpose.

4. Enhance Expert Engagement in Outreach Strategies:
   Expand engagement of providers across the state who have historical success in reaching youth from priority populations that may not have been adequately accounted for in the 2014 Youth Count, including providers to LGBTQ youth and youth under the age of 18. The Working Group recommends CoCs work with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to identify and target established partners.

5. Provide Information and Resources to Identified Youth:
   A couple CoCs attempted to provide youth they counted or surveyed with some level of information or resources, leveraging the count as a service-engagement opportunity. The Working Group recommends that future counts include additional testing of such methods. Examples could include providing laminated resource cards, and small incentives in the form of gift cards, backpacks, clothing, or personal care items.

Policy Recommendations:

The Working Group recommends consideration of the following policy initiatives in order to enhance future Youth Counts.

1. Secure annualized legislative appropriations attached to the Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth to support costs associated with counting this population. Resources should be available to support modest capacity grants to CoCs, technical assistance, technology and staffing for data entry and analysis, youth incentives, and reporting capacity.
    a. Technical assistance should include the dissemination of this report or a similar document formatted to serve as a practice manual for conducting a Youth Count that is based on continuous learning from this experience and those nationally.
    b. The Working Group would like to develop a systematized data entry approach that more effectively utilizes technology to reduce this burden. Possible methods could include the use of an online survey tool or mobile application.
    c. Data analysis and reporting capacity at the level conducted this year is a significant investment and will require dedicated staffing outside of the Working Group in future years.
2. Utilize the planning process to outreach to other state agencies that have involvement with youth experiencing homelessness, including the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Transitional Assistance, and the Department of Youth Services. The Working Group also specifically recommends that the Commission:
    a. The Commission should continue to consider ways in which results from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey currently administered in schools can inform the data from the MA Youth Count and vice versa.
    b. Engage the Department of Housing and Community Development in more fully capturing information on pregnant and parenting youth receiving benefits through the Emergency Assistance family shelter program. Future counts should incorporate this data systematically.
3. Provide information about youth homelessness to a variety of stakeholders to improve awareness and understanding of the issue, and to build interest and commitment to partner in future Youth Counts.
4. Revise the statewide survey tool to simplify in alignment with partner feedback. The Working Group should make these revisions prior to the launch of the next Youth Count's planning phase.

Conclusion

The Identification and Connection Working Group of the Massachusetts Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth is grateful to all of the Continuums of Care, youth-serving organizations, youth ambassadors, community partners, and other Commission members who made the 2014 Massachusetts Youth Count possible.

As the initial effort by the Commission to conduct a statewide survey of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness and the first-in-the-nation statewide survey of its kind, the Working Group has examined the 2014 Youth Count in detail, from preparation to execution to analysis.

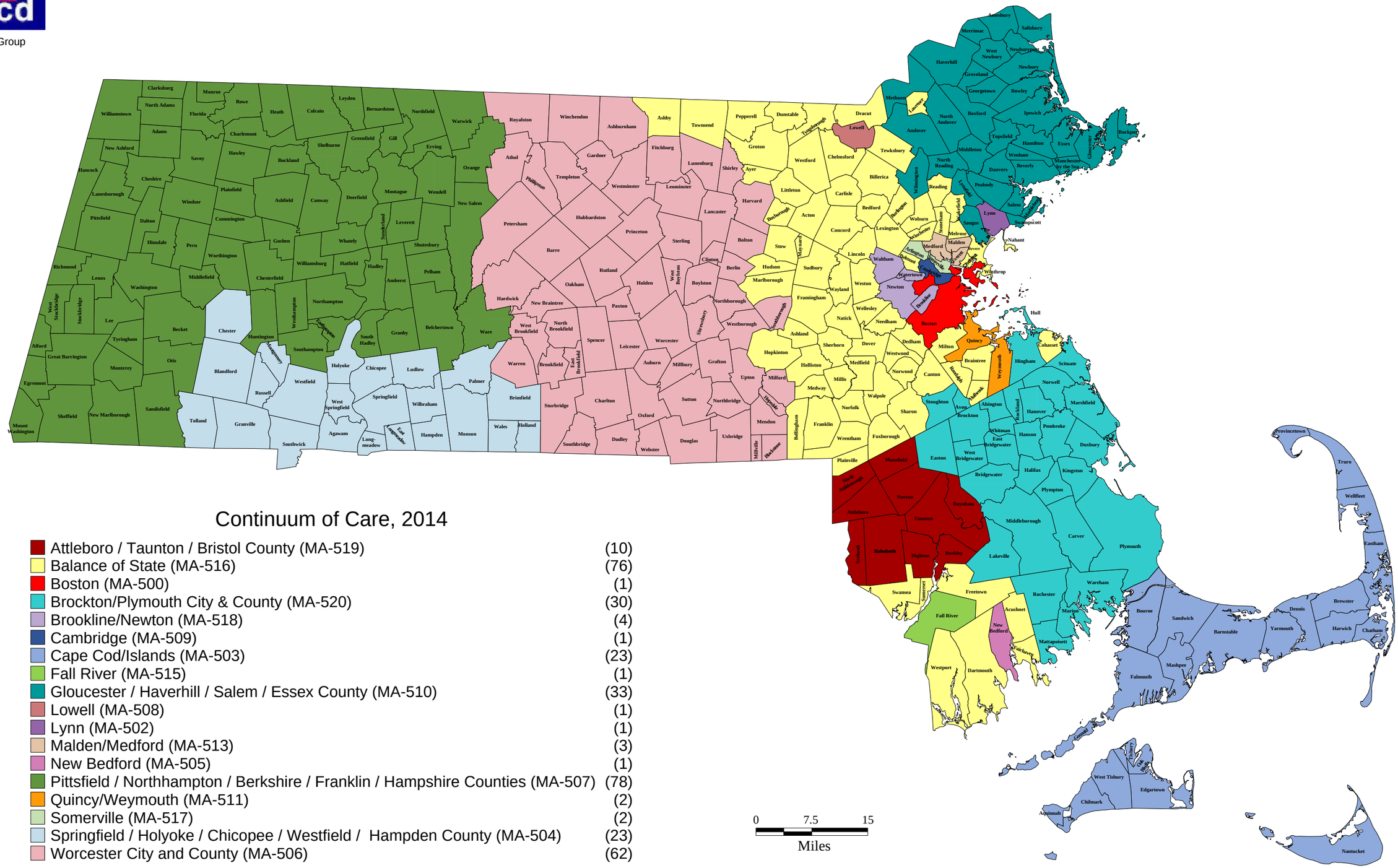
This report documents the process and highlights promising practices and challenges encountered by the Working Group, the Continuums of Care, and other partners. The survey findings and feedback from the 2014 count will inform the development and implementation of the 2015 Massachusetts Youth Count, which has been funded through the 2015 Massachusetts state budget process. In the year ahead, the Working Group recommends greater youth and community engagement to achieve a more accurate representation and count of unaccompanied youth who are experiencing homelessness (as well as additional recommendations outlined in this report).

The Working Group looks forward to engaging the full Commission in further analyzing the 2014 Youth Count process and results. We also are eager to work with the Commission to develop a plan to share the findings and insights from the count with the Legislature, CoCs, community partners, and the broader public to advance the Commission's work to address and end unaccompanied youth homelessness in the Commonwealth.

Appendix A:
CoC Map

dhcd

HED IT Group


Williamstown
Clarksburg
North Adams
Monroe
Florida
Rowe
Heath
Colrain
Leyden
Bernardston
Northfield
Warwick
Royalston
Winchendon
Ashburnham
Ashby
Townsend
Pepperell
Dunstable
Tyngsborough
Dracut
Lowell
Methuen
Lawrence
Haverhill
Amesbury
Merrimac
Salisbury
West Newbury
Newburyport
Newbury
Groveland
Georgetown
Rowley
Boxford
North Andover
Andover
Ipswich
Topsfield
Hamilton
Essex
Rockport
Gloucester
Middleton
North Reading
Wenham
Manchester by the Sea
Danvers
Beverly
Peabody
Reading
Wilmington
Lynnfield
Saugus
Lynn
Swampscott
Salem
Nahant
Winthrop
Hull
Cohasset
Scituate
Hingham
Weymouth
Quincy
Braintree
Milton
Boston
Dedham
Westwood
Norwood
Canton
Randolph
Holbrook
Stoughton
Avon
Abington
Rockland
Norwell
Hanover
Marshfield
Pembroke
Duxbury
Whitman
East Bridgewater
Hanson
Brockton
West Bridgewater
Bridgewater
Halifax
Kingston
Plympton
Middleborough
Carver
Plymouth
Wareham
Rochester
Marion
Mattapoisett
Lakeville
Berkley
Dighton
Rehoboth
Seekonk
Attleboro
Norton
Taunton
Raynham
North Attleborough
Easton
Mansfield
Foxborough
Sharon
Walpole
Norfolk
Franklin
Bellingham
Wrentham
Plainville
Millis
Medfield
Medway
Holliston
Hopkinton
Ashland
Framingham
Natick
Wellesley
Needham
Newton
Waltham
Watertown
Belmont
Arlington
Lexington
Woburn
Burlington
Bedford
Billerica
Chelmsford
Tewksbury
Lowell
Carlisle
Littleton
Groton
Westford
Pepperell
Dunstable
Tyngsborough
Shirley
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Appendix B:

Survey Instrument (English and Spanish)

2013/2014 Massachusetts Youth Housing and Homelessness Survey

This survey is being administered by the Massachusetts Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth and the local Continuum of Care so that the state and local providers can better understand the housing and service needs of youth and young adults under the age of 25. Your answer will remain confidential. We greatly appreciate your participation!

1. Which city/town are you in right now?_____

2. Have you taken this survey already this week? ☐ Yes ☐ No

3. What is your date of birth? (mm/dd/yyyy) ____/___/_____

4. Please select your age category: ☐ 17 and younger ☐ 18-24 ☐ 25 and older

5. Where were you born? ☐ In this city/town ☐ Another place in Massachusetts ☐ Outside of Massachusetts, but within the United States ☐ Outside the U.S.

6. Are you currently staying in the city/town where you are taking this survey? ☐ Yes ☐ No

7. If so, for how long have you stayed/lived here? ☐ Fewer than 6 months ☐ 6-12 months ☐ More than 12 months

8. If not, where are you staying now (city/town)? _____

9. Please check where you stayed on the night of Wednesday, January 29th (1/29).

a. ☐ In a house or apartment with my immediate family (parent or guardian) that we rent or own.
b. ☐ At the house or apartment of another family member, friend, partner/girlfriend/boyfriend
c. ☐ At the house or apartment of my foster parent
d. ☐ At my own apartment or in a room that I rent
e. ☐ At a shelter/motel paid for by a government-funded program (federal/state/local) or by a non-profit organization
f. ☐ In a transitional housing program
g. ☐ In a group home
h. ☐ Outside in the park, on the street, in a tent, transit station, car, etc.
i. ☐ Inside in an abandoned building, squat, porch, basement, hallway, etc.
j. ☐ In a treatment or medical facility (such as a hospital, detox)
k. ☐ Other *(please specify)*

10. How long have you been staying at the place you spent the night of January 29th? ☐ 1-6 days ☐ At least 1 week, but less than 2 weeks ☐ At least 2 weeks, but less than 1 month ☐ 1-6 months ☐ More than 6 months ☐ I am no longer there. Please describe where you are now: _____

11. Do you think you could sleep there for the next 14 days without being asked to leave? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

12. Are you still living with your parent/guardian/foster parent? ☐ Yes ☐ No

13. If not, what are the reasons you are not living with a parent/guardian/foster parent? *Please check all that apply.*

a. ☐ I was fighting with my parent/guardian/foster parent
b. ☐ I left foster care and could not return home
c. ☐ I was released from jail or a detention facility
d. ☐ My parent/guardian/foster parent or another household member was abusive (sexually, physically, or emotionally) or neglected me
e. ☐ My parent/guardian/foster parent told me to leave before I turned 18
f. ☐ My parent/guardian/foster parent told me to leave when/after I turned 18
g. ☐ My parent/guardian/foster parent was experiencing homelessness and/or my family lost its housing
h. ☐ My parent/guardian/foster parent abused drugs or alcohol
i. ☐ I was/am pregnant or got someone pregnant
j. ☐ My sexual orientation and/or gender identity
k. ☐ My use of drugs or alcohol
l. ☐ I wanted to leave
m. ☐ My house was too small for everyone to live there
n. ☐ I did not feel safe because of violence or unsafe activities in my house
o. ☐ My parent/guardian/foster parent died/passed away.
p. ☐ Other:_____

14. How old were you when you first left home and were on your own? ☐ ___ years old ☐ I still am with my parent/guardian/foster parent

15. Have your parents/guardians ever experienced homelessness? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

16. Do you have friends who currently are experiencing homelessness? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

17. Are you currently in school? ☐ Yes ☐ No

18. If yes, are you in: ☐ Middle school ☐ High school ☐ GED program ☐ Vocational training program ☐ College ☐ Other → **Please continue the survey on back!**

19. What is the highest grade or year of school that you have completed? *Please check one.*

a. ☐ No education
b. ☐ 8th grade or less
c. ☐ 9-11th grade
d. ☐ High school diploma
e. ☐ GED certificate
f. ☐ Some college credits
g. ☐ College degree
h. ☐ Post-secondary training

20. Do you have a personal source of income? ☐ Yes ☐ No

21. If yes, what are your sources of income? *Please check all that apply.*

a. ☐ Full-time job
b. ☐ Part-time job and/or temporary job
c. ☐ Money from "under the table" work
d. ☐ Cash assistance from DTA/Welfare or DCF
e. ☐ Social Security/disability payments
f. ☐ Unemployment benefits
g. ☐ Hustling/selling drugs
h. ☐ Sex work/turning tricks
i. ☐ Panhandling/spanging
j. ☐ Child support
k. ☐ Money from family members or friends
l. ☐ Other

22. Are you pregnant? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not applicable/don't know

23. Do you have children? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know **24. If yes, do they live with you?** ☐ Yes ☐ No

25. Have you ever served in the military? ☐ Yes ☐ No

26. Have you ever been in foster care? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

27. Have you ever lived in a group home or residential program? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

28. Have you ever stayed overnight or longer in juvenile detention— a secure facility or residential program for young people— as a result of criminal behavior or police involvement? ☐ Yes ☐ No

29. Have you ever stayed overnight or longer in an adult jail or prison? ☐ Yes ☐ No

30. In the last year, have you tried to get help from any of the following services/programs? *Please check all that apply.*

a. ☐ Short-term housing (such as shelter or transitional living program)
b. ☐ Long-term housing (such as Section 8 or public housing)
c. ☐ Educational support (such as enrolling in school or GED)
d. ☐ Job training, life skills training, and/or career placement
e. ☐ Health care services, including emergency room services and care to help with health conditions/disabilities
f. ☐ Family support (such as conflict mediation or parenting support)
g. ☐ Child care
h. ☐ Nutritional assistance (such as Food Stamps/SNAP or free meals)
i. ☐ Cash assistance (such as DTA/Welfare benefits or Social Security Disability benefits)
j. ☐ Counseling or other mental health care services
k. ☐ Substance abuse/alcohol treatment program
l. ☐ Other _____
m. ☐ No, I haven't tried to access help

31. Did you get the help you needed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

32. If not, why was that? *Please check all that apply.*

a. ☐ No transportation
b. ☐ Sent me somewhere else
c. ☐ Language barrier
d. ☐ Put on waiting list
e. ☐ Too much paperwork
f. ☐ Didn't have I.D./documents
g. ☐ Didn't hear back
h. ☐ Didn't know where to go
i. ☐ Didn't qualify for help
j. ☐ Didn't feel comfortable/safe
k. ☐ Didn't follow through or return for services
l. ☐ Other _____

33. What is your race/ethnicity? *Please check all that apply.*

☐ Black/African American ☐ Native American ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander ☐ White ☐ Multiracial ☐ Other *(please specify)*: _____

34. Are you Hispanic or Latino/a? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

35. What is your gender identity? ☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Transgender, FTM ☐ Transgender, MTF ☐ Other _____ ☐ Prefer not to answer

36. What is your sexual orientation? *Please check the answer that best describes you.*

☐ Straight ☐ Lesbian ☐ Gay ☐ Bisexual ☐ Queer ☐ Questioning/don't know ☐ Other _____ ☐ Prefer not to answer

37. What is the first letter of your first name? _____ **38. What is the first letter of your last name?** _____

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey! Is there anything you would like to share to help us better serve you and other young people like you? _____
_____

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY—UNIQUE IDENTIFIER: ☐/☐/☐/☐☐-☐☐-☐☐/☐☐ Code: First Letter of First Name/ First Letter of Last Name/ Gender Code [0=Female; 1=Male; 2=Transgender Female to Male; 3=Transgender Male to Female; 4=Other; 5=Prefer Not to Answer]/ Birthday Month-Month/Day-Day/ Last 2 Digits of Year of Birth/ CoC code.

2013/2014 Encuesta de Jovenes sobre la Vivienda y la Vida sin Hogar en Massachusetts

Esta encuesta está siendo administrado por la "Comisión Especial de Massachusetts de Jovenes no Acompañado y Sin Hogar" en combinacion con sus proveedores locales, a fin de que los proveedores del estado y los proveedores locales pueden comprender mejor las necesidades de vivienda y de servicios de los jóvenes y adultos jóvenes menores de 25 años. Su respuesta será confidencial. Estamos muy agradecidos por su participación!

1. **¿Cuál es el nombre de la ciudad/pueblo donde esta en este momento?** _____
2. **¿Ya se ha tomado esta encuesta esta semana?** ☐ Sí ☐ No
3. **¿Cuál es su fecha de nacimiento?** (mes / día / año) ____ / ___ / _____
4. **Seleccione su categoría de edad:** ☐ 17 años o menos ☐ entre 18-24 años ☐ 25 años y más
5. **¿Dónde nació usted?** ☐ En esta ciudad/pueblo ☐ En otro lugar en Massachusetts ☐ Fuera de Massachusetts, pero dentro de los Estados Unidos ☐ Fuera de los EE.UU.
6. **¿Está usted quedándose en la ciudad / pueblo donde estás ahora?** ☐ Sí ☐ No
7. **Si es así, ¿por cuánto tiempo tiene viviendo/quedando aquí?** ☐ Menos de 6 meses ☐ 6-12 meses ☐ Más de 12 meses
8. **Si no es así, ¿dónde vives ahora (ciudad / pueblo)?** _____
9. **A favor verifique en donde se quedó la noche de miercoles, el 29 de enero (29/1).**
   a. ☐ En una casa o un apartamento con mi familia inmediata (padre o guardián) que alquilamos o somos propietarios.
   b. ☐ En la casa o apartamento de otro miembro de mi familia, amigo, pareja / novia / novio
   c. ☐ En la casa o apartamento de mi padres de crianza/acogida
   d. ☐ En mi propio apartamento o en una habitación que alquilo
   e. ☐ En un refugio / motel pagado por un programa financiado por el gobierno (federal / estatal / local) o por una organización sin fines de lucro
   f. ☐ En un programa de vivienda de transición
   g. ☐ En un hogar de groupo
   h. ☐ Afuera, en un parque, en la calle, en una tienda, en la estación de tránsito, en una coche, etc
   i. ☐ Adendro de una edificio abandonado, una cuclillas, un porche, un sótano, un pasillo, etc
   j. ☐ En un centro de tratamiento oa una facilidad médica (como un hospital, desintoxicación)
   k. ☐ Otro *(especificar)* _____
10. **¿Cuánto tiempo tiene en el lugar donde se pasó anoche?** ☐ 1-6 días ☐ Por lo menos 1 semana, pero menos de 2 semanas ☐ Por lo menos 2 semanas, pero menos de 1 mes ☐ 1-6 meses ☐ Más de 6 meses
11. **¿Crees que podrías dormir allí por los próximos 14 días sin haber sido pedido de dejar?** ☐ Sí ☐ No ☐ No lo sé
12. **¿Esta viviendo todavia con su padres / guardián / padres de crianza/acogida?** ☐ Sí ☐ No

13 Si no, ¿cuáles son las razones por las que no está viviendo con sus padres / guardián / padres de crianza/acogida?

Por favor, marque <u>todas</u> las que apliquen.

a. ☐ Yo estaba luchando con mis padres / guardián / padres de crianza/acogida
b. ☐ Yo dejé de la casa de mi familia de crianza/acogido, y no podía volver a mi casa
c. ☐ Yo fui liberado de la cárcel o un centro de detención
d. ☐ Mis padres / guardián / padres de crianza/acogida u otro miembro del hogar era abusivo (sexual, físical o emocionalmente) o me descuidan
e. ☐ Mis padres / guardián / padres de crianza/acogida me dijeron que me ha que salir antes de cumplí los 18
f. ☐ Mis padres / guardián / padres de crianza/acogida me dijeron que me ha que salir una vez que / después de cumplí los 18
g. ☐ Mis padres / guardián / padres de crianza/acogida estaba experimentando la falta de vivienda y / o mi familia perdió su vivienda
h. ☐ Mis padres / guardián / padres de crianza/acogida estaban abusando las drogas o alcohol
i. ☐ Yo estaba / estoy embarazada o hice a alguien embarazada
j. ☐ Mi orientación sexual y / o identidad de género
k. ☐ Mi uso de drogas o alcohol
l. ☐ Quería salir
m. ☐ Mi casa era demasiado pequeña para que todos vivan allí
n. ☐ No me sentía segura debido a la violencia o actividades peligrosas en mi casa
o. ☐ Mis padres / guardián / padres de crianza/acogida se murió / fallecido
p ☐ Otros:. _____

14. **¿Cuantos años tenía la primera vez que salió de su casa y estaba por tu cuenta?**

    ☐ ___ años ☐ Yo todavía estoy con mis padres / guardián / padres de crianza/acogida

15. **¿Haga que sus padres / guardián experimentado alguna vez la falta de vivienda?** ☐ Sí ☐ No ☐ No lo sé
16. **¿Tiene amigos usted que ahorita estan experimentado la falta de vivienda?** ☐ Sí ☐ No ☐ No lo sé
17. **¿Está usted estudiando?** ☐ Sí ☐ No
18. **En caso afirmativo, ¿estás en:** ☐ La escuela media ☐ Escuela secundaria ☐ Programa de GED ☐ Programa de Cualificación Profesional ☐ Universidad ☐ Otro
19. **¿Cuál es el ultimo grado o año de estudios que usted ha completado?** *Marque uno.*
    a. ☐ Sin educación
    b. ☐ Grado 8 o menos
    c. ☐ Grado 9-11
    d. ☐ Diploma de escuela secundaria
    e. ☐ Certificado de GED
    f. ☐ Algunos créditos de la universidad
    g. ☐ Título de la universidad
    h. ☐ Formación post-secundaria
20. **¿Tiene una fuente de ingresos personal?** ☐ Sí ☐ No

→ *Por favor, continúe en la página atrás*

21. En caso afirmativo, ¿cuáles son sus fuentes de ingresos? *Por favor, marque todas las que apliquen.*

a. ☐ Trabajo a tiempo completo
b. ☐ Trabajo a tiempo parcial y / o trabajo temporal
c. ☐ Dinero de un trabajo "bajo la mesa"
d. ☐ Asistencia en efectivo de DTA / Bienestar o DCF
e. ☐ Los pagos de la Seguridad Social / Discapacidad
f. ☐ Beneficios de desempleo
g. ☐ Presionante / venta de drogas
h. ☐ El trabajo sexual / trucos de giro
i. ☐ Panhandling / spanging
j. ☐ La Manutención de Menores
k. ☐ Dinero de familiares o amigos
l. ☐ Otro

22. ¿Está embarazada? ☐ Sí ☐ No ☐ No aplicable/no lo sé

23. ¿Tiene hijos? ☐ Sí ☐ No ☐ No lo sé

24. En caso afirmativo, ¿viven sus hijos con usted? ☐ Sí ☐ No

25. ¿Alguna vez ha servido en el ejército? ☐ Sí ☐ No

26. ¿Alguna vez ha estado en cuidado de crianza/ acogida? ☐ Sí ☐ No ☐ No lo sé

27. ¿Alguna vez ha vivido en un hogar de grupo o programa residencial? ☐ Sí ☐ No ☐ No lo sé

28. ¿Alguna vez ha estado una noche o más tiempo en detención jevenil ---una facilidad seguro or una programa residential para jovenes---- como consecuencia de la conducta delictiva o participación de la policía? ☐ Sí ☐ No

29. ¿Alguna vez ha estado una noche o más en una cárcel o prisión? ☐ Sí ☐ No

30. En el último año, ¿ha tratado de obtener ayuda de cualquiera de los siguientes servicios / programas? *Por favor, marque todas las que apliquen.*

a. ☐ Vivienda de corto plazo (como refugio o programa de vivienda transitoria)
b. ☐ Vivienda de largo plazo (como la Sección 8 o vivienda pública)
c. ☐ Apoyo educativo (como la inscripción en la escuela secundaria o GED)
d. ☐ La capacitación laboral, capacitación para la vida y / o la colocación de la carrera
e. ☐ Los servicios de salud, incluidos los servicios de urgencias y cuidados para ayudar con las condiciones de salud / discapacidad
f. ☐ Apoyo a la familia (como la mediación de conflictos o de apoyo a los padres)
g. ☐ Cuidado de niños
h. ☐ Asistencia Nutricional (como Cupones para Alimentos / SNAP o comidas gratuitas)
i. ☐ Asistencia en efectivo (como DTA / Los Bienestar o beneficios de Seguridad Social / Discapacidad)
j. ☐ Consejería u otros servicios de atención de la salud mental
k. ☐ Programa de tratamiento de abuso de sustancias / alcohol
l. ☐ Otro _____
m. ☐ No, no he tratado de acceder a la ayuda

31. ¿Recibió la ayuda que necesitaba? ☐ Sí ☐ No

32. Si no, ¿por qué ha sido eso? *Por favor, marque todas las que apliquen.*

a. ☐ No transporte
b ☐. Me envió a otro lugar
c ☐. Barrera del idioma
d. ☐ Me pusieron en lista de espera
e ☐. Demasiado papeleo
f ☐. No tenía ID / documentos
g. ☐ no oyó de nuevo
h ☐. No sabía a dónde ir
i ☐. No se clasificó para la ayuda
j ☐. No me sentía cómodo / seguro
k ☐ No seguí a través de o vuelva de nuevo para los servicios
l. ☐ Otro _____

33. ¿Cuál es su raza / etnicidad? *Por favor, marque todas las que apliquen.*

☐ Negro o Americano-Afro ☐ Americano-Nativo ☐ Asiático / de las Islas del Pacífico ☐ Blanco ☐ ☐ Multirracial
☐ Otro *(especificar):* _____

34. ¿Es usted hispano o latino / a? ☐ Sí ☐ No ☐ No lo sé

35. ¿Cuál es su identidad de género? ☐ Mujer ☐ Hombre ☐ Transgénero, feminino a masculino ☐ Transgénero, maculino a feminino

☐ Otro _____ ☐ Prefiero no contestar

36. ¿Cuál es su orientación sexual? *Por favor marque la respuesta que se describe major*.

☐ Recto/heterosexual ☐ Lesbiana ☐ Gay ☐ Bisexual ☐ Queer ☐ Preguntando/ No lo se ☐ Otro ☐ Prefiero no responder

37. ¿Cuál es la primera letra de su nombre? ____ **38. ¿Cuál es la primera letra de su apellido?** _____

Gracias por tomarse el tiempo para participar en esta encuesta! ¿Hay algo que le gustaría compartir para ayudarnos a servir mejor a usted y otros jóvenes como usted?

_____
_____
_____

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY—UNIQUE IDENTIFIER: ☐/☐/☐/☐☐-☐☐-☐☐/18 Code: First Letter of First Name/ First Letter of Last Name/ Gender Code [0=Female; 1=Male; 2=Transgender Female to Male; 3=Transgender Male to Female; 4=Other; 5=Prefer Not to Answer]/ Birthday Month-Month/Day-Day/ Last 2 Digits of Year of Birth/ CoC code.

Appendix C:

Sample Planning Documents

MA Youth Count Partnership Memo,

Boston Youth Count Survey Overview,

MA Youth Count Outreach Document,

Boston Youth Count 2013 Flyer

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Deval L. Patrick, Governor ◆ Aaron Gornstein, Undersecretary

MEMORANDUM

TO: Continuum of Care Leadership
FROM: Liz Rogers, Executive Director, Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness
DATE: December 10, 2013
RE: Engaging Partners in the 2014 MA Youth Count Initiative

Nationally and in Massachusetts there is a growing awareness of homelessness among unaccompanied youth, which has presented an opportunity to improve our ability as a Commonwealth to assist these young people in achieving stability and success. As you are aware, the Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Commission was established in 2012 and has been working since to outline a strategy for better understanding the scope and needs of unaccompanied homeless youth. Fortunately this year the state's budget includes resources to enhance the work of the Commission. The Commission defines unaccompanied homeless youth as a person 24 years of age or younger who is not in the physical custody or care of a parent or legal guardian, and who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

In support of this, the Department of Housing and Community Development and the Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness have made one-time capacity building grants to each of the 18 Continua of Care (CoC) in Massachusetts. With these grants each CoC will conduct a count and survey of unaccompanied homeless youth during this year's Point In Time count in December 2013-January 2014.

Participation by a diverse group of partners will be critical to realizing our goal of becoming the first state in the nation to conduct a statewide count of unaccompanied homeless youth and obtain a statewide data set that will inform policy and program design. With a clearer understanding of this vulnerable population we will all be better positioned to allocate resources in a more effective and efficient manner, with the ultimate goal of ending homelessness among youth. I encourage you to seek the partnership, leadership, and expertise of key stakeholders throughout your community, including homeless shelters, drop-in centers, schools and educational programs, law enforcement, fire departments, child welfare agencies, juvenile courts, municipal agencies serving youth, faith-based organizations, health care facilities, youth employment programs, food banks, libraries, LGBTQ services, recreation centers, United Ways, children's mental health centers, universities, and others.

As you engage additional partners in this work, please share my expression of appreciation - and that of the Department - for their assistance. Thank you for your commitment to homeless youth and the MA Youth Count effort.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Rogers
Executive Director
Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness

Boston Youth Count Survey

This document provides survey information and best practices for participants, service providers, and volunteers involved in Boston Youth Count. Boston Youth Count is a point in time count for youth and young adults, 24 years old or younger, who are unstably housed or homeless.

On January 29, 2014 through February 5, 2014, service providers across Boston in coordination will host a point in time count. Boston providers will survey young people known to be unstably housed or homeless in public areas where youth congregate, drop in centers and meal programs for homeless youth.

The goal of this effort is to gain a clearer understanding of the number of young people without a stable place to live on any given night in Boston. By enhancing the Boston community's knowledge of this issue, we can further our efforts to create a community where no youth is left without a place to call home.

What is the purpose of this survey?
Nationally and locally there is a lack of accurate and up-to-date information about homeless and unstably housed youth. The Boston Youth Count seeks to gain a clearer understanding of the number of young people, their demographics and housing status, without a stable place to live on any given night in Boston.

How will this data be used?
Survey data will provide a more accurate picture of the number of youth who are currently unstably housed or homeless. This information will provide a foundation to support policy reform and new program designs and models. Annual survey data will also help Boston providers offer better services and respond to changes in the needs and characteristics of unstably housed and homeless youth and young adults.

How will we collect this data?
The City of Boston, in collaboration with youth providers, will collect surveys from the unstably housed youth and young adult population between January 29 and February 5. During the week of the event, each agency will determine the best way to reach the young people they serve, through regular programming, events, tabling, phone calls, and/or limited street outreach.

Does the collection of the information have to come from the surveys?
All agencies participating in this count will use the same approved and standardized surveys. Collection of consistent data will help provide precise and factual information about the current unstably housed and homeless youth population. It is important that surveys are given in a uniform manner, and completed correctly by all participants in order to ensure clear data. It is also important to note how information about the population varies by location, demographics, and services provided/used. Thus widespread and consistent/uniform data collection will help us to discern these differences and witness over time trends or changes in the population.

Are the client surveys confidential?
All information collected from the survey will be confidential. Please discourage participants from writing their name on the forms.

Will we have access to the survey data?
The initial data will be given to the Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Commission and City of Boston to process and analyze. Following analysis, the Commission and City will share results with all participating agencies.

MA Youth Count

Street outreach volunteers are needed to help distribute the 2014 Annual Point in Time Survey of Homeless Youth in Boston. This survey will be instrumental in improving services for young people experiencing housing instability and in working toward policy change that will hopefully prevent young people from becoming homeless. Outreach is a critical component in the distribution of the survey, and we need as much assistance as possible.

What: Ask target age-range youth and young adults you work with or have identified in your area to fill out a brief questionnaire regarding their current housing status.

When: Throughout the week of January 29 – February 5, 2014. There is no minimum quota of volunteer time, and any amount of time that one can contribute is appreciated and very important.

Where: This survey is intended to reach youth in all neighborhoods of Boston. Surveys should be administered at local provider organizations and through street and peer outreach teams.

How: Surveys are intended to be completed by youth, rather than administered in an interview fashion. The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete, and volunteers should begin by introducing themselves and asking youth if they would be willing to complete a survey.

Sample Introductory Script: "Hello, do you have a free moment to help me? My name is_____ and I am working with a community project here in the city. We are trying to learn more about young people's needs in order to better plan youth programs in the city. By filling out this survey you could really help the situation of other young people. All of the information you provide us will be kept confidential. We won't ask for your name anywhere on this survey. Would you be willing to take 10 minutes of your time to answer a few questions?"

Pointers in Street Outreach:

- Body language is key. Keep your hands visible, arms unfolded, and approach with a smile. Dress casually. Hold the clipboard by your side while you approach the youth or have it in a tote bag to retrieve if they consent.
- Answering questions: If they seem unsure about taking part of ask many questions, you can encourage them by confirming that their participation matters. If they say they are in a hurry or waiting for the bus, tell them that it is a quick survey, and that it is ok if they don't fill out every single question. If they ask where it is going or what it is about, tell them it is for a community project seeking information about young people's living situation (avoid explicitly using the word "homeless").
- Give clear instructions: The youth should fill out as much as they can but are not required to complete every question. We have surveys in other languages if they are more comfortable answering in another language.
- Be upfront: If the youth is suspicious, assure them that you are just a volunteer with a community project and NOT from the government, law enforcement, or DCF.
- Encourage their impact: Assure the young person that providing their information will go on to help improve services for youth. We want to hear the voice of young people. Is there more that you think the city needs to do for young people? This is how we show we care about their opinion.
- Don't push the envelope: Young people will make it clear if they want nothing to do with your soliciting. If this is the case, move on. If they are standing with a group of friends, ask if they each would like to fill it out together. Remember that the youth you encounter may come from very diverse backgrounds, so there is no room for judgment or categorizing. Be friendly and outgoing. Many of them will be happy and excited to contribute.

COUNT US IN!
MA YOUTH COUNT!

BOSTON-
DECEMBER 16-23, 2013

FOR MORE INFO:



ARE YOU...

24 years or younger?

Unsure of where you'll sleep tonight?

Couch surfing?

Homeless?

Be Counted and Be Heard!