

A young person with a serious expression, wearing a dark knit beanie, a blue quilted jacket, and a grey scarf, stands in front of blue horizontal blinds. They are holding a large, rectangular sign made of crumpled, light-colored paper. The sign has the words 'HOMELESS & HUNGRY' written in blue marker on the top line and 'PLEASE HELP' on the bottom line. The overall lighting is a cool, blueish tone.

**COMPREHENSIVE
YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT
RESOURCE
CENTER**

*POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT
FOR HOMELESS YOUTH
IN BALTIMORE*

HOMELESS & HUNGRY

PLEASE HELP

COMPREHENSIVE YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT RESOURCE CENTER
Positive Development For Homeless Youth In Baltimore

Prepared by: The Sar Levitan Center, June 16, 2003
Edits by: BWIB Youth Council Transitional Housing Workgroup

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In response to the mandates of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Baltimore City convened its Workforce Investment Board (WIB) Youth Council in February 2000. The mission of the Youth Council is to build upon the many progressive initiatives already in place in Baltimore and to facilitate the development of a comprehensive, year-round service strategy for youth. The Youth Council provides expertise in youth workforce development policy and assists the local WIB in developing and recommending local youth employment training policies and practices. Additionally, the Youth Council works to promote the inclusion of “youth development” in all aspects of the City’s youth services, to establish linkages with other organizations serving youth and to evaluate issues that impact youth’s success in the labor market.

A number of youth serving organizations brought the serious issue of youth homelessness to the attention of the Baltimore Workforce Investment Board’s Youth Council. A Transitional Housing workgroup was formed to investigate the extent of the problem and generate possible solutions. Working with the organizations listed below, a white paper entitled *A Comprehensive Youth and Young Adult Resource Center Positive Development For Homeless Youth In Baltimore*, was developed which describes homeless issues, its impact on youth and possible solutions.

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COMPREHENSIVE YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT RESOURCE CENTER

Positive Development For Homeless Youth In Baltimore

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Throughout the country human services agencies are seeing an influx of youth and young adults who have fallen victim to unstable housing predicaments. The July 21, 2002 edition of the Washington Post reported that there are 900,000 homeless youth in this country. In Baltimore the number is close to 1,000. Local investigation shows that there are only two organizations that provide housing for youth twelve to seventeen, the Department of Social Services and Fellowship of Lights. There are no facilities that will respond to the needs of youth and youth adults between 18 and 24 years of age. Fellowship of Lights has a total of four community beds and the Department of Social Services struggles to find suitable placements for every youth that comes through the door. One strategy proposed for addressing this need is to create a Comprehensive Youth and Young Adult Resource Center, which will incorporate a coordinated comprehensive approach to address the diverse needs of homeless youth and young adults.

For millions of the nation's youth, particularly in urban areas, the transition from childhood and adulthood is socially and economically difficult and discouraging. Conditions in the City of Baltimore exacerbate this difficult transition. According to the 2003 "Portrait of Poverty" issued by the Maryland Department of Legislative Services, there is a high poverty rate in Baltimore, particularly for children. In addition, Baltimore has not escaped the nationwide affordable housing crisis. Twenty five thousand households in Baltimore live in substandard housing or pay over half of their incomes for rent.¹ Baltimore has also been disproportionately impacted by a relentless HIV/AIDS epidemic. Baltimore has the third highest incident AIDS case report rate of any major US city.² Youth hold the fastest growing HIV infection rates in the country; 20,000 youth are infected annually. And African-Americans are disproportionately represented among the HIV positive population.³ Baltimore City's population is 68 percent African American.

There is a strong effort and deep commitment to youth demonstrated by the Mayor, practitioners, and programs that target vulnerable youth utilizing effective youth development practices. Youth development focuses on a young person's assets, communicates high expectations, provides opportunities for leadership, encourages a sense of personal identity, broadens a young person's perspective, provides safe

¹ Baltimore City Task Force on Homelessness, *Summary Report*, March 2000.

² Maryland Department of Health & Mental Hygiene.

³ Center for Disease Control, *Young People at Risk: HIV/AIDS Among America's Youth*, Fact Sheet, March 2002.

surroundings and connects youth with caring adults. Research and experience among youth practitioners validate that too many youth in the city of Baltimore face overwhelming physical, social, and economic challenges in a city that as a whole disproportionately suffers from high rates of poverty, low educational attainment, and high rates of HIV and AIDS. The ultimate goal of an effective youth development system is for individuals to achieve self-sufficiency in adulthood and engage in positive and responsible family and social relationships. These goals are achieved by fostering a sense of competency, a sense of connectedness to others and to society, a sense of self-control over one's future and, a stable-identity.⁴

Homeless youth face a great many needs and lack adequate services. Poor family situations are the most common reason youth leave home. Youth are likely to move in and out of homelessness, making any estimate of an average number of homeless youth at a given time significantly lower than the total number of youth who experience homelessness over time.

Health care has been identified as a critical need of the homeless. The homeless are more likely to lack medical insurance, suffer from poor health, and not seek proper treatment for health problems. The lack of adequate living conditions only exacerbates health problems.

Additionally, workforce training, education, and development needs all must be addressed. An entry-level job will not bring youth out of poverty. Youth without educational competencies or credentials are especially vulnerable to limited access and success in the labor market, hence are often relegated to life on the margins of society. Any program aimed at achieving self sufficiency for youth must provide educational services and adequate skill training to provide access to jobs that pay a livable wage.

Baltimore City has many valuable resources for the homeless population, which include health services, outreach, legal services, emergency and drop-in services, and transitional housing. However, there are some significant gaps especially for older youth, primarily:

- 1) None of the homeless services in Baltimore are designed specifically for male and female youth and young adults ages 16-24,
- 2) About two-thirds of the transitional housing facilities do not provide significant supplementary services,
- 3) The majority of emergency and drop-in centers in Baltimore are open only during normal working hours,
- 4) There is little coordinated linkage among services, or service providers or a well-coordinated network for advocacy.

⁴ US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, *Understanding Youth Development: Promoting Positive Pathways of Growth*, January 1997.

The ultimate goal of the Comprehensive Youth and Young Adult Resource Center is to provide housing and services to youth so they can become self-sufficient, self-confident young adults. The Resource Center will be located in the City of Baltimore, because of the high percentage of youth and young adults with unstable housing living in the area. The Resource Center will include a drop-in center and transitional housing facility. Services offered through the project will include: street outreach, institutional outreach, crisis counseling, alcohol and drug counseling, GED preparation, social skills training, life skills training, job readiness and interview training, job placement assistance, and vocational or post secondary training.

The Comprehensive Youth and Young Adult Resource Center intends to address the four primary gaps in homeless services in Baltimore: 1) it is designed specifically for male and female youth ages 16-24, who do not have children, 2) it will include transitional housing along with many other supplementary services such as career and educational training, health services, and life and social skills counseling, 3) it will have a 24-hour drop-in center to reach youth that could be harmed by the dangers on the street at night, 4) it will represent the collaboration of several significant organizations and agencies in Baltimore.

The idea for creating the Comprehensive Youth and Young Adult Resource Center developed from the Baltimore City Workforce Investment Board's Youth Council, which recognized that many of their WIA and YO participants were unstably housed. At present, the Comprehensive Youth and Young Adult Resource Center is a collaboration among the following partners: *AIDS Interfaith Residential Services (AIRS)*, *Fellowship of Lights (FOL)*, the *Mayor's Office of Employment Development (MOED)*, the *Baltimore City Office of Homeless Services (OHS)*, and *Moveable Feast*. Each partner brings extensive and specialized experience and expertise to the collaboration.

The partners estimate that the Resource Center will serve approximately 300 youth a year. It does not intend to house pregnant women or men or women with children but they will be connected with services in Baltimore that do house and serve those populations. A range of skilled staff will be necessary to implement the broad range of services offered to the youth. The first year of funding for this project, including one-time capital costs for the purchase and rehabilitation of the building, furnishing of the interior, and operating costs are estimated between \$2.5 to \$3 million.

This project deserves widespread community support, both public and private as a prototype to develop a model for providing services to a group of underserved youth with almost insurmountable problems. The center has the potential to reach youth that could be harmed by the day and evening dangers on the streets. To be able to help them turn their lives around and put them on a positive trajectory will not only benefit the young people themselves but also the city of Baltimore.

CALL TO ACTION

VULNERABILITY OF BALTIMORE'S YOUTH

For millions of the nation's youth, particularly in urban areas, the transition between childhood and adulthood is socially and economically difficult and prospects for the future often discouraging. The transition process depends upon the interaction between the individual adolescent and his/her social and economic environment. In Baltimore, the environment for disadvantaged youth can be particularly challenging.

Of the 635,000 people who live in the city of Baltimore, almost one in four lives in poverty;⁵ while over one in three Baltimore children live in poverty. Fifty percent of the city's available jobs are low-skill and low-wage. Unfortunately, minimum wage earnings leave workers significantly below the poverty line. Thirty-two percent of the population lacks a high school diploma.⁶ While the citywide dropout rate is 45 percent, in Baltimore's nine neighborhood high schools, which draw students from communities severely impacted by poverty, the rate is 71 percent.⁷

An Affordable Housing Crisis

Baltimore has not escaped the nationwide affordable housing crisis. Twenty five thousand households in Baltimore live in substandard housing or pay over half of their incomes for rent.⁸ These households are at severe risk of homelessness. Affordable housing is generally accepted to mean that the occupants pay no more than 30 percent of one's income for housing costs. Earnings at the federal minimum wage rate are not adequate to afford an apartment at Fair Market Rent (FMR) in any state.⁹ In Baltimore, the FMR for a two-bedroom housing unit is \$844 a month. A full-time worker would need to earn \$16.23 per hour, or 315 percent of the minimum hourly wage, to afford a two-bedroom unit at FMR. Extremely low-income households, earning 30 percent of the Area Median Income, can afford a monthly rent of just \$498.¹⁰

A Brutal HIV Epidemic

Baltimore has been disproportionately impacted by a relentless HIV/AIDS epidemic. Baltimore has the third highest incident AIDS case report rate of any major US

⁵ Department of Legislative Services, Maryland General Assembly, *Portrait of Poverty*. Annapolis, MD, January 2003.

⁶ Department of Legislative Services, Maryland General Assembly, *Portrait of Poverty*. Annapolis, MD, January 2003.

⁷ Baltimore City Public School System, *The Blueprint for Baltimore's Neighborhood High Schools*, revised October 2001.

⁸ Baltimore City Task Force on Homelessness, *Summary Report*, March 2000.

⁹ Fair Market Rent is an estimate of housing affordability developed by HUD and represents the 40th percentile of rent for most areas.

¹⁰ National Low Income Housing Coalition, *Rental Housing for America's Poor Families: Farther Out of Reach Than Ever 2002*, September 18, 2002.

city. Of the 24,200 people living with HIV or AIDS in Maryland, 51 percent were living in Baltimore at the time of diagnosis, though Baltimore makes up only 12 percent of the state's population.¹¹ The most common method of HIV transmission in Baltimore is injection drug use. There are an estimated 60,000 illicit substance users in Baltimore. The proportion of residents needing treatment is double the national rate. Baltimore leads all other major US cities in heroin addiction.¹²

Episodic illness and even general health care maintenance require a stable living environment. Yet persons with HIV may be more likely to live in poverty or have unstable housing for several reasons: lost employment from illness, from discrimination or the burden of high health care costs. It is estimated that 50 percent of all HIV/AIDS infected persons will need some form of housing assistance during their lifetimes.¹³ The evidence reinforces the impression that the housing needs of those living with HIV or AIDS are severe.

Youth At Risk for HIV

Youth hold the fastest growing HIV infection rates in the country. The statistics are startling and troubling. Twenty thousand (20,000) youth are infected annually. Sexual activity is the primary method of transmission for this age group. It is estimated that at least half of all new HIV infections in the US will be among those under the age of 25.¹⁴ Between 1990-1995, AIDS incidence rose 20 percent among 13 to 25 year olds nationwide.¹⁵ In Maryland in 2001, 11 percent of the prevalent HIV cases were in young people age 13 to 29 years old. Twenty percent of HIV infected youth have parents who are HIV positive.¹⁶ These children are surviving into adolescence with a host of needs that their ill parents may not be able to provide.

Baltimore City's population is 68 percent African-American. When HIV prevalence is broken down by race and ethnicity, African-Americans are disproportionately represented in every age group. Seventy five percent of infected youth are minorities.¹⁷ Young African Americans between the ages of 13-24 are the most severely affected of any racial group accounting for 56 percent of all HIV cases. For African-American men, aged 25-44, HIV has been the leading cause of death since 1991; these adults were likely infected during their teens or twenties.¹⁸

¹¹ Maryland Department of Health & Mental Hygiene.

¹² Drug Strategies, *Smart Steps: Treating Baltimore's Drug Problem*, 2000.

¹³ National Coalition for the Homeless, *NCH Fact Sheet #9: HIV/AIDS and Homelessness*, April 1999.

¹⁴ Center for Disease Control, *Young People at Risk: HIV/AIDS Among America's Youth*, Fact Sheet, March 2002.

¹⁵ Center for Disease Control, *Comprehensive HIV Prevention Messages for Young People*, Fact Sheet, January 1997.

¹⁶ AIDS Interfaith Residential Services, April 2003.

¹⁷ AIDS Interfaith Residential Services, April 2003.

¹⁸ Center for Disease Control, *Young People at Risk: HIV/AIDS Among America's Youth*, Fact Sheet, March 2002.

THE NEED FOR A POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

Bleak Prospects for Many Baltimore Youth

Research combined with the experience of youth practitioners reinforces the hard truths that too many youth in the city of Baltimore face overwhelming physical, social, and economic challenges in a city that suffers disproportionately from high rates of poverty, low educational attainment and high rates of HIV and AIDS. In addition to their serious health deficits, African-American youth in particular face large disparities in educational outcomes, housing and employment opportunities and earnings compared with their white counterparts. An estimated 60 percent of America's poor are young African-Americans.¹⁹ In Maryland, African-American and Hispanic youth are more than twice as likely to be out-of-school and unemployed than white youth.²⁰ Low earnings and high unemployment has led some youth to seek work in the underground economy which often leads to confrontations with the law. Coupled with drug activity and abuse, this generation has been plagued by high rates of incarceration and violent crime. Rates of use for both heroin and crack cocaine among Baltimore students in grades 8-10 are higher than national averages. Drug offenses are the most common reason Baltimore youth enter the judicial system.

This austere urban setting leaves many youth hopeless about their futures. In order to counter negative behaviors such as substance abuse, out-of-wedlock births and criminal activity, communities must understand and address the circumstance fostering such behavior in youth. The ultimate goal of an effective youth development system is to enable individuals to achieve self-sufficiency in adulthood and engage in positive and responsible family and social relationships. These goals are achieved by fostering:

- The achievement of basic competencies;
- A sense of connectedness to others and to society;
- A sense of control over one's future and;
- A stable identity.²¹

Effective youth development requires a holistic approach in order to successfully address the multiple needs of youth. Youth development focuses on a young person's assets, communicates high expectations, provides opportunities for leadership, encourages a sense of personal identity, broadens a young person's perspective, provides safe surroundings, and connects youth and young adults with caring adults. Achieving a significant positive impact on the development of vulnerable youth depends upon the collaboration of many society players. A community-based approach can provide the

¹⁹ Bakarl Kitwana, *The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African American Culture* Basic Citivas Books, New York, NY, April 2002.

²⁰ Andrew Sum with Jim Callahan & Marion Pines, *Challenges and Policy Options: Labor Market Conditions Among 16-24 Year Old Young Adults in Maryland and the Baltimore PMSA*, The Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, August 2001.

²¹ US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, *Understanding Youth Development: Promoting Positive Pathways of Growth*, January 1997.

support and opportunities that youth need to develop feelings of competence, belonging and empowerment.²²

A PORTRAIT OF HOMELESSNESS IN BALTIMORE

Homeless Youth Have a Number of Needs and Must Deal with a Lack of Adequate Services

Youth and Unstable Housing

Living in harmful family conditions is the primary reason that youth leave home. A national study of runaway and homeless youth found 46 percent had been physically abused and a family or household member had abused 17 percent sexually.²³ Youth must also contend with addicted parents, lack of supervision, overcrowded households, single parent households, and myriad other exigent living situations. Whether living on the streets or moving from couch to couch among family members and friends, living in unstable housing compounds the challenges youth face. Without a supportive family structure, youth seek familial relationships with peers and may turn to anti social gangs for this contact. Youth need positive and sustained relationships with caring adults to foster a sense of belonging.

Studies show that a history of foster care may also contribute to homelessness. The Baltimore City Department of Social Services has over 7,800 children in protective care with approximately 100 children entering Baltimore's formal foster care system every month. Youth age out of foster care at 18; if they do not receive adequate income support or transitional housing at that time they may be in danger of chronic homelessness. A national study found 20 percent of youth arriving at shelters coming directly from foster care.²⁴

It is difficult to accurately determine the number of homeless persons in an area due to the fluctuating nature of homelessness itself and the mobile nature of homeless persons. On April 24, 2003, Baltimore City's Office of Homeless Services, in conjunction with the Center for Poverty Solutions, undertook a citywide Homeless Census. The data, which is not yet available, will provide a more accurate picture of the population. The number of homeless in Baltimore on any given night is estimated to be 3,000.²⁵ This number is extrapolated from the number of beds in shelters citywide and the average number of persons turned away.

Youth are likely to move in and out of homelessness, making any estimate of an average number of homeless youth at a given time significantly lower than the total

²² US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, *Understanding Youth Development: Promoting Positive Pathways of Growth*, January 1997.

²³ National Coalition for the Homeless, *NCH Fact Sheet #11: Homeless Youth*, April 1999.

²⁴ National Coalition for the Homeless, *NCH Fact Sheet #11: Homeless Youth*, April 1999.

²⁵ Baltimore City Office of Homeless Services, April 2003.

number of youth who experience homelessness over time. Estimates of out-of-home youth in Baltimore - including youth in foster care, shelters and homeless - range from 150 per month to a total of 10,000 annually.²⁶

CHALLENGES OF THE UNSTABLY HOUSED

Health Care Needs

Health care has been identified as a critical need among the homeless, who are more likely to lack medical insurance, suffer from poor health, and not seek proper treatment for health problems. It is estimated that over 50 percent of the homeless have substance addictions, over 30 percent suffer from mental illnesses and over 30 percent have a chronic physical ailment.²⁷

Available health data on homeless youth is limited. However research shows that homeless youth have higher rates of substance abuse, depression, and suicide attempts. Youth on the streets are subject to graver health issues than youth in shelters.²⁸ However, whether in shelters or on the streets, both groups of homeless youth may not seek services for primary health care when their most immediate need is survival. Youth and young adults also perceive themselves as invincible and not susceptible to long-term health problems. They have a tendency to live in the moment without regard to long-range consequences.

A study was conducted in two youth shelters in Baltimore to determine homeless youths' perceptions of their health care needs. The most common youth-identified health problems were STDs, HIV/AIDS, pregnancy, depression, and drug use. HIV/AIDS was identified as the disease youth were most afraid of contracting. Youth identified physical injuries as a major health-related problem on the streets.²⁹

Long-term health maintenance, including the prevention of HIV, is secondary to homeless youth's immediate survival needs. Living in unstable housing precludes any focus on preventive health care. Focus groups revealed that homeless youth conceptualize health in a social context, commonly seeking health advice from friends or relatives. In emergencies, youth utilize local emergency rooms.³⁰

Perhaps most severely impacted by homelessness are youth who have been affected by HIV. Homeless youth are at great risk for contracting HIV. Their survival on the street often depends upon exchanging sex for food or shelter. It is estimated that between 25-40 percent of HIV infected youth have a history of sexual abuse,³¹ which is a

²⁶ Baltimore City Office of Homeless Services, April 2003.

²⁷ Baltimore City Task Force on Homelessness, *Summary Report*, March 2000.

²⁸ Jo Ensign and Joel Gittelsohn, *Health and Access to Care: Perspectives of Homeless Youth in Baltimore City, USA*, Social Science Medicine, Vol. 47, No. 12, 1998.

²⁹ Jo Ensign and Joel Gittelsohn, *Health and Access to Care: Perspectives of Homeless Youth in Baltimore City, USA*, Social Science Medicine, Vol. 47, No. 12, 1998.

³⁰ Jo Ensign and Joel Gittelsohn, *Health and Access to Care: Perspectives of Homeless Youth in Baltimore City, USA*, Social Science Medicine, Vol. 47, No. 12, 1998.

³¹ AIDS Interfaith Residential Services, April 2003.

common denominator among out-of-home youth. HIV prevalence among homeless youth is estimated to be two to ten times higher than rates reported for other young people.³² They are more vulnerable to illness and more likely to die from AIDS, once infected, than other populations. These youth are in desperate need of counseling, support services and health care. Stable housing will ease a youth's ability to keep medical appointments and maintain medicine and treatment schedules.

The Need for Educational Resources

In addition to these critical health issues, workforce training, education and development needs all must be addressed. An entry-level job will not bring youth out of poverty nor sustain him on the path to self-sufficiency. Any program aimed at achieving self-sufficiency for youth must provide both education and occupational training to provide youth with access to jobs that pay a livable wage. Homeless youth are particularly disconnected from education and workforce development services due to barriers such as the lack of a permanent address, legal guardianship issues, inaccessible transportation and greater likelihood of impaired health.

Attaining educational competencies can come in many forms. The extremely high drop out rate in public schools is evidence that the current educational system is failing many of Baltimore's youth. Educational services for at-risk youth served in transitional housing should include access to non-traditional but rigorous academic curricula, internships, work-based learning and job training.

Labor Market Difficulties for Youth

Youth without educational competencies or credentials are especially vulnerable to limited access and success in the labor market, hence are often relegated to life on the margins of society. The term *disconnected youth* refers to young adults who are both out of the education system and out of the labor market. According to the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University, in 2000 there were an average of 4.9 million jobless and out-of-school 16 to 24 year olds in the US. The number of disconnected youth rose by 15 percent in 2001 and is expected to continue growing.³³

During a typical month, there are approximately 36,000 disconnected youth in the Baltimore area; this is 13.5 percent of all the 16 to 24 year olds.³⁴ In Maryland, the representation of men and women among disconnected youth is approximately equal; however, there is great disparity in the representation of ethnic and racial groups in this

³² National Coalition for the Homeless, *NCH Fact Sheet #11: Homeless Youth*, April 1999.

³³ Andrew Sum, et al, *Left Behind in the Labor Market: Labor Market Problems of the Nation's Out-of-School, Young Adult Populations*, The Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, November 2002.

³⁴ This number is based on monthly averages in 1999 and 2000. Andrew Sum with Jim Callahan & Marion Pines, *Challenges and Policy Options: Labor Market Conditions Among 16-24 Year Old Young Adults in Maryland and the Baltimore PMSA*, The Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, August 2001.

population. Nineteen to twenty-one percent of Maryland's Black and Hispanic youth are disconnected, compared to only nine percent of White youth.³⁵

Disconnection from the labor market during late adolescence not only determines the quality of life for these young people but it influences future job attainment and earnings. Those that are frustrated by an unfriendly job market are more likely to stop seeking work in their adulthood. Disconnected youth bring with them a host of social and economic problems such as substance abuse, criminal behavior, welfare dependency, and teenage pregnancy. They often lack skills to overcome these barriers and are more likely to end up jobless, in poverty, economically dependent and often at serious health risk.

The prospects of finding employment are significantly weakened for youth who lack secondary education. Studies show a strong correlation between educational attainment and employment and earnings. The largest subgroup of out-of-school and out-of-work youth between the ages of 16 and 24 is comprised of high-school dropouts. The percent of those employed and those who achieve higher income levels increases with each additional level of educational attainment: from dropout to GED, high school graduate, and some years of college. In Maryland in 1999 and 2000, the incidence of unemployment was six times higher for youth without a high school diploma than for those who graduated from a four-year college.³⁶ During the same period, 59 percent of high school dropouts were employed compared to 76 percent of high school graduates.³⁷ In 2001, the median weekly earnings of high school dropouts nationwide were 20 percent less than those of high school graduates and 80 percent less than those of graduates of bachelor's or advanced degree programs.

During the economic boom of the 1990s, young adults experienced above average job growth, but in a down turning economy, employment of young people declines at above average rates as well. In the present economy with a huge loss of jobs in the past two years, we can expect the number of disconnected youth to rise. Unemployment and low wages contribute to unstable housing situations for many young people. For young people living at the margins of poverty, unemployment, and underemployment make access to secure, stable, affordable housing extremely tenuous. This combination of factors...lack of educational competencies, lack of stable employment prospects, poor health, coupled with the lack of affordable housing puts a great many young people at serious risk of homelessness.

³⁵ Andrew Sum with Jim Callahan & Marion Pines, *Challenges and Policy Options: Labor Market Conditions Among 16-24 Year Old Young Adults in Maryland and the Baltimore PMSA*, The Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, August 2001.

³⁶ Andrew Sum with Jim Callahan & Marion Pines, *Challenges and Policy Options: Labor Market Conditions Among 16-24 Year Old Young Adults in Maryland and the Baltimore PMSA*, The Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, August 2001.

³⁷ Andrew Sum with Jim Callahan & Marion Pines, *Challenges and Policy Options: Labor Market Conditions Among 16-24 Year Old Young Adults in Maryland and the Baltimore PMSA*, The Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, August 2001.

SCOPE OF HOMELESS SERVICES IN BALTIMORE

Range of Services in Baltimore

Baltimore City has many resources for the homeless population. These resources include health services, outreach, legal services, emergency and drop-in services, and transitional housing.

- Health services include: HIV testing and support services, STD counseling and treatment, birth control education, pregnancy tests, dental services, health promotion and disease prevention, substance abuse counseling, mental health services, and meal providers.
- Legal services include: legal assistance for homeless or in danger of becoming homeless, legal information, eviction prevention, and referrals.
- Emergency and drop-in services include: overnight and emergency shelter (average length 19 days)³⁸, drop-in shelter, meals, health services, and counseling. There are a total of 521 units of 24-hour emergency shelter and 122 units of overnight emergency shelter.³⁹
- Transitional housing ranges from under a month to two years with the average stay being 12-18 months. There are approximately 29 transitional housing providers in Baltimore with a total of 645 total units of transitional housing for singles and approximately 314 units for families.⁴⁰

Gaps in Homeless Services in Baltimore

Although there are many valuable homeless services in Baltimore, there are some significant gaps. These gaps are areas that must be addressed to better serve the youth population.

There are four main gaps in homeless services in Baltimore:

- 1) None of the homeless services in Baltimore are designed specifically for male and female youth and young adults ages 16-24,
- 2) About two-thirds of the transitional housing facilities do not provide the needed significant supplementary services,
- 3) The majority of emergency and drop-in centers in Baltimore are open only during normal working hours,

³⁸ Baltimore City Task Force on Homelessness, *Summary Report*, March 2000.

³⁹ Baltimore City Office of Homeless Services, April 2003.

⁴⁰ Baltimore City Office of Homeless Services, April 2003.

- 4) There is little coordinated linkage among services or service providers or a well-coordinated network for advocacy.

None of the homeless services in Baltimore are designed specifically for male and female youth ages 16-24. Existing services are targeted for single men, single women, women with children, men with children, and families. There are only two shelters in Baltimore City that specifically target homeless teenagers.⁴¹ The Fellowship of Lights (FOL) Peggy's Place shelter and Harris House. The two FOL shelters serve 250 youth (12-17 years olds) a year. The maximum length of stay at these shelters is 60 days for foster children and two weeks for self-referred homeless youth.⁴² There are approximately 851 units of housing for people with HIV/AIDS.⁴³ However, there are no housing services in Baltimore that specifically target the HIV/AIDS homeless youth population.

Recently, Baltimore youth attended two meetings of the Baltimore Workforce Investment Board Youth Council Transitional Housing sub-committee to express their views about the situation for youth with unstable housing in Baltimore. These youth conveyed a strong need for a youth transitional housing center. The Baltimore Youth Opportunity (YO) program included youth in their Task Force on Emergency and Transitional Service. These youth expressed the concern that young people do not feel safe at an adult shelter and often choose to spend the night on the street instead. For those that were lucky enough to find shelter, researchers found that the teenagers experienced some anxiety over the shortness of the stay in the shelter.⁴⁴

Two-thirds of the transitional housing facilities in Baltimore do not provide significant supportive services. Of those who do provide supportive services, the services are commonly not comprehensive. Comprehensive services, such as health care, legal assistance, counseling, and employment and educational training, are important for those in need of transitional housing, particularly if the goal is keep these youth on a positive trajectory leading to independence and productivity.

The majority of drop-in centers in Baltimore are open only during normal working hours. In Baltimore, there is only one drop-in center that operates 24-hours a day. People with unstable housing need drop-in center services all day, every day of the week.

There is little coordinated linkage among services, or service providers or a well-coordinated network for advocacy. Many organizations are single issue focused, thinly funded and do not collaborate easily with other services to create an integrated service network. Therefore comprehensive services are not easily accessible.⁴⁵ The lack of

⁴¹ Ensign, Jo and Joel Gittelsohn, *Health and Access to Care: Perspectives of Homeless Youth in Baltimore City*, Department of Psychological and Community Health, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, 1998.

⁴² Fellowship of Lights, April 2003.

⁴³ AIDS Housing of Washington, *Baltimore City HIV/AIDS Housing Plan*, September 2000.

⁴⁴ Ensign, Jo and Joel Gittelsohn, *Health and Access to Care: Perspectives of Homeless Youth in Baltimore City*, Department of Psychological and Community Health, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, 1998.

⁴⁵ Baltimore City Task Force on Homelessness, *Summary Report*, March 2000.

communication and collaboration among organizations may be due to a lack of knowledge fueled by the lack of a comprehensive list and description of homeless services in Baltimore. Currently, the available lists often do not include an adequate description of their services. Most importantly, the proposed project intends to address this issue by seeking commitments among the various providers to develop understandable program linkages.

WHAT CAN BE DONE - “ANSWERING THE CALL”

THE COMPREHENSIVE YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT RESOURCE CENTER

Overview

The ultimate goal of the Comprehensive Youth and Young Adult Resource Center is to provide housing and services to youth so they can become self-sufficient, self-confident young adults. The resource center will be located in Baltimore City because of the high percentage of youth and young adults with unstable housing in Baltimore. The resource center will include a drop-in center and transitional housing facility. The drop-in center will be open 24-hours seven days a week, will accommodate 75 youth per day, and will have training and resources available. The transitional housing facility will house 20 youth.

In addition to the drop-in center and transitional housing facilities, the project plans to include: street outreach, institutional outreach, crisis counseling, alcohol and drug counseling, GED preparation, social skills training, life skills training, job readiness and interview training, job placement assistance, and vocational or post secondary training. The resource center will also be connected to the Douglas Memorial Church Village, which will provide 15 units of permanent housing for youth and young adults.

Addressing the Gaps in Homeless Services in Baltimore

The Comprehensive Youth and Young Adult Resource Center intends to address the four main gaps in homeless services in Baltimore that are identified above:

- 1) The resource center is designed specifically for male and female youth ages 16-24, who do not have children. This project will include services and housing for HIV positive youth ages 16-24. Targeting this age group will reduce concern over feeling unsafe in adult facilities. In addition, the services will be tailored to the unique needs of this age group.
- 2) The resource center will include transitional housing along with many other supplementary services such as career and educational training, health services, and life and social skills counseling. Including a wide range of services with housing will greatly benefit the target youth and young adults.

- 3) The resource center will have a 24-hour drop-in center to reach youth that could be harmed by the dangers on the street at night. This drop-in center will be a safe sanctuary to which street outreach programs can bring youth.
- 4) The resource center will represent the collaborative effort of several significant organizations and agencies in Baltimore. This alliance will encourage a strong network for advocacy for homeless youth and young adults in Baltimore.

A Working Partnership

The idea for creating the Comprehensive Youth and Young Adult Resource Center developed from the Baltimore City Workforce Investment Board's Youth Council. The Youth Council determined that there was a need for this type of facility in Baltimore based on information shared by several youth service providers, Youth Opportunities (YO), South Baltimore Career Center, Malcolm X, and Baltimore City Community College.

To create a holistic approach to serving youth with unstable housing, the Comprehensive Youth and Young Adult Resource Center represents a partnership of several significant organizations in Baltimore City: *Interfaith Residential Services (AIRS)*, *Fellowship of Lights (FOL)*, the *Mayor's Office of Employment Development (MOED)*, the *Baltimore City Office of Homeless Services (OHS)*, and *Moveable Feast*. Each partner brings extensive and specialized experience and expertise to the collaboration:

- **Baltimore City Office of Homeless Services**, which has a history and mission to build collaborations, will identify and make available a comprehensive array of resources to persons experiencing homelessness and will provide some financial support for the resource center.
- **AIDS Interfaith Residential Services, Inc.** will operate the housing and provide supportive services to the youth in the areas of housing readiness and self-sufficiency, including client advocacy, skills training, tutoring, mentoring, and transportation assistance.
- **Fellowship of Lights** will recruit youth and provide supportive services in youth development, facilitate connections between youth and the community, particularly by building youth-adult partnerships and provide overall case management.
- **The Mayor's Office of Employment and Development** will provide referrals and job readiness and placement for the youth, including coordination of youth enrollment in educational or employment programs.

- **The University of Maryland's Department of Pediatrics** will operate an on-site clinic to provide primary and mental health care for the youth.
- **Moveable Feast** is a food service provider to people in need in Baltimore and may become a tenant of the Resource Center. Moveable Feast operates a culinary skills training program that will be a job-training source for the youth. In addition, their food delivery program will be a source of community outreach for the center.

Resources for the Transitional Housing Project

Since the transitional housing project does not intend to house pregnant women or men or women with children, it will be necessary to connect with services in Baltimore that do house and serve these groups. Referrals to other services in Baltimore for this population include: Cottage Avenue Community Transitional Housing, Cromwell House, Dayspring/Phoenix House, Manna House, Marian House, St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center, 20th Street Hope House, Transitional Housing Program/Rutland, and Transitional Housing Program/Springhill. Other services in Baltimore serving the reproductive health needs of adolescents include: Baltimore City Health Department - Healthy Teens and Young Adults Program, and Planned Parenthood of Maryland. These critical services will be linked to the project.

Cost Estimates

The partners estimate that the Resource Center will serve 300 youth a year. A range of skilled staff will be necessary to implement the broad range of services offered to these youth. Staff will be needed to supervise the transitional housing facility 24-hours a day and seven days a week. Similarly, staff will be needed to operate the drop-in center 24-hours a day seven days a week. Skilled staff will also be necessary to for GED instruction, job training, life and social skills training, counseling, and health services. The total staffing needs for the residential facility, drop-in center and educational services combined are estimated at approximately \$750,000 a year.

The first year of funding for this project, including one-time capital costs for the purchase and rehabilitation of the building, furnishing of the interior, and all operating costs are estimated between \$2.5 to 3 million. Thus far the project has secured \$500,000 for acquisition of the building and \$250,000 in the form of a Community Development Block Grant.

The Resource Center hopes to acquire funds from a combination of Federal, State, Local and private sources to support the one-time capital costs and operational costs of the project, including the cost of maintaining a strong collaboration among partners.

CONCLUSION

The many problems facing people plagued by unstable housing are compounded for homeless youth, many of whom are dropouts without basic skills. Homeless youth are even more disconnected from education and workforce development services than other youth due to barriers such as the lack of a permanent address, legal guardianship issues, inaccessible transportation and greater likelihood of impaired health.

Perhaps most severely impacted by homelessness are youth who have been affected by HIV. Both substance abuse and HIV prevalence in Baltimore are above national rates. Youth on the street are at high-risk for HIV infection. A safe place, designed specifically for youth, is needed to help them stay off the street and start redirecting their lives. A transitional housing facility designed to serve Baltimore youth in the early 21st century should provide not only beds, but also a range of comprehensive wrap around services including health, education and workforce training. A comprehensive youth development approach is needed to address the holistic needs of each individual.

Given the scope of the issues facing youth and young adults in unstable housing, the creation of this resource center is a critically important step, but it is only a first step. This project deserves widespread community support, both public and private as a prototype to develop a model for providing services to a group of underserved youth who face a myriad of obstacles to living a safe and productive life. The ability to help them turn their lives around and put them in a positive trajectory will not only benefit the young people themselves but also the city of Baltimore.

GOALS AND KEY ACTIONS

The Baltimore Workforce Investment Board Youth Council Transitional Housing Committee began its strategic planning process at a retreat facilitated by the Mid-Atlantic Network of Youth and Family Services (MANY) on January 9, 2004. Over a four-week period the committee members developed specific action steps to occur during the next twelve to eighteen months that will bring to fruition a Comprehensive Youth and Young Adult Resource Center for Baltimore's Homeless Youth. The Aids Interfaith Residential Services (AIRS) has agreed to pursue the application process through Open Society Institute (OSI) to secure an OSI Fellow to shepherd this process.

Strategic Plan Goals – Key Actions:

Goal One

Identify a site for the Youth and Young Adult Resource Center.

Recommended Action steps

Facility:

- Identify potential sites
- Decide whether to buy, lease or build
- Decide location of center
- Get community buy in

Goal Two

To develop guidance and direction for implementing the Resource Center Leadership.

Recommended Action steps

Leadership:

- Establish a youth advisory group
- Develop a specific vision, mission, philosophy statement
- Identify governance structure
- Articulate leadership model
- Offer training in the development of youth adult partnerships
- Develop youth partnership Model

Goal Three

Identify financial resources to build/renovate and operate the Resource Center.

Recommended Action steps

Finance:

- Cost out capital & program needs

- Create multi-layered budget
- Develop realistic budgets

Goal Four

Recognition of Baltimore Resource Center as a model for a continuum of services to address the needs of “homeless/ unstably housed” youth.

Recommended Action steps

Communications/Marketing:

- Create and Execute multi-media public awareness campaign
- Market need in media (s)
- Distribute white paper

Goal Five

Coordinate and promote a program that provides access to housing, education, health care, training and support that will enable homeless/unstably-housed youth to become self sufficient, productive citizens.

Recommended Action steps

Program Development:

- Create common language
- Clarify population and specify their needs
- Develop program model
- Develop program plan (need a model that includes youth)
- Create data collection and evaluation model

Goal Six

Enlist the appropriate mix of stakeholders to move the project toward completion

Recommended Action steps

Mobilization:

- Identify and Recruit additional partners (examples: mental health, business)
- Establish formal commitments among partners
- Engage youth as members of workgroup
- Build political support (executive and legislative)
- Formalize Mayor’s commitment

Goal Seven

Identify existing resources and gaps in service that would be necessary for the resource Center

Recommended Action steps**Resource Mapping:**

- Identify current agency resources
- Map existing services
- Identify gaps
- Develop a strategy to leverage existing resources for cost-savings

Task analysis has been completed for each of the Key Actions. These may be obtained by calling 410.396.6722.



Sponsored by the Baltimore Workforce Investment Board Youth Council, the Mayor's Office of Employment Development, and multiple workforce partners.

