The Role of Safe and Stable Housing in Preventing Exposure to Violence for Unaccompanied Youth

Deborah Shore, Executive Director
Sasha Bruce YouthWork

Rich Hooks Wayman, CEO
LUK, Inc.

APA/ABA National Conference on Family Violence
May, 2014 – Washington, D.C.
Presentation Goals

- Recognize the role of stable housing and services in preventing violence and exploitation of unaccompanied homeless youth.

- Identify best practices and evidence informed intervention models to achieve housing stabilization, exists from homelessness, and improved levels of personal safety.

- Understanding the role of the homeless youth service system.
INTRODUCTIONS –

• What questions do you have?
• What is our purpose today in the context of this conference?
INCIDENCE STUDIES:

- 1.6 million to 1.7 million youth in the United States experience at least one night of homelessness each year. (Hammer, Finkelhor, 2002, National Incident Studies)
- National Alliance to End Homelessness estimates that over 400,000 youth ages 12-24 experience over a week of homelessness each year.
  - Nearly 40,000 youth experience chronic homelessness.
  - Chronic homelessness is defined as experiencing homelessness for more than year or four episodes in the past three years.
  - These estimates did not include any youth over the age of 18 years.
Physical Violence and Abuse:

- Youth most often self-report severe family conflict as the primary reason for their homelessness.
- Research finds 40 to 60 percent of all homeless youth have experienced physical abuse.
- Between 17 and 35 percent have experienced sexual abuse. Homeless youth are more likely to be abused and neglected than their peers who are housed.
- Homeless youth are more likely to be abused and neglected than their peers who are housed.

SEXUAL ASSAULT, ABUSE, & EXPLOITATION:

- Between 17 and 35 percent have experienced sexual abuse. Homeless youth are more likely to be abused and neglected than their peers who are housed.
- Research cluster: 15 to 30 percent of homeless youth engage in commercial sexual exploitation or are victimized by rape. (NAEH 2011)
SEXUAL ABUSE HISTORIES:

- A study of Minnesota services to homeless girls (12 to 15) with histories of sexual abuse:
  - 14 percent had been prostituted,
  - 34 percent had experienced sexual abuse by multiple perpetrators,
  - 6 percent had been gang raped,
  - 27 percent reported repeated abuse by the same person, and (Saewyc, E., and Edinburgh, L. 2009)
Research findings – *Pathways into homelessness for youth*

- Vast majority will quickly reunify with their families or find housing option;
- Small minority will struggle with episodic homelessness or be subjected to chronic homelessness.
  - 2002 NISMART II study, 1.3 of 1.6 million surveyed runaways were homeless for less than one week.
- Longitudinal research of 183 youth who completed two full years of assessment – 73% exited homelessness after two years – 49% cycled into and out of homelessness and 4 percent remained homeless the entire two years. (Milburn, 2009)
Research findings – intersection between youth homelessness and violence
Research findings – amplified risks for homeless youth vs. housed peers

- deteriorating mental health,
- abuse of drugs and alcohol,
- exposure to violence and trauma,
- Sexual exploitation and rape, and

- Housing is a social determinant – improved safety & reduced exploitation.
Youth of Color

- African American youth and American Indian youth are over-represented in homeless youth populations when compared to their incidence in the general population. 2010 census data and RHYMIS data found that:
  - Whites 72 percent general pop. - only 55 percent of shelter users.
  - African American 14 percent gen.pop. – but 32 percent of shelter pop.
  - American Indian 1 percent gen. pop. but 3 percent shelter pop.
- HUD’s first Annual Assessment Report on Homelessness noted that while whites make up 69 percent of the general population they only make up 41 percent of the sheltered homeless population, and while people of color make up 31 percent of the general population, they comprise 59 percent of sheltered homeless population.
2. Research: marginalized youth.

- **LGBTQ YOUTH** – sexual abuse and exploitation
- LGBT homeless youth experience an average of 7.4 more acts of sexual violence toward them than their heterosexual peers during their lifetime. (Van Leeuwen; Whitbeck 2004; Cochran, 2004)
Homeless youth are relatively evenly split between boys and girls.

Girls tend to access emergency shelter more. (Heinze & Toro, 2004)

Boys are more prevalent in long-term and street-dependent subpopulations. (Cauce, 2000)
GENDER

- Females often runaway at an earlier age than males.
- Compared to boys, girls experience more sexual abuse inside their home and more sexual assaults outside of their home.
- Extra-familial sexual assault is 3 times more common than incest.
- Many youth do not label what they are experiencing as sexual abuse or exploitation.
2. Research supporting recognition of marginalized youth communities.

- **MENTAL HEALTH**

- 1998 National Symposium of Homeless Research: “serious disorders assessed with standardized instruments with diagnostic criteria range from 19 to 50 percent.”

- 50% of a New York shelter sample, 26% of a Hollywood street youth population, (Feirtel, 1992; Russell, 1998; Cause, 1997; Whitbeck, 1999)
MENTAL HEALTH DISABILITY

Homeless youth have elevated risk for mental health disabilities including mood disorders, suicide attempts and post traumatic stress disorder. (Cause, 2000)

Due to their childhood experiences with violence and abuse and exposure to trauma in street environments, a significant minority of homeless youth (one in five) have post-traumatic stress disorder. (Toro, 2003; Stewart, 2004)
There is a substantial need for training and expertise in mental health services.

Youth, particularly those who have been groomed by offenders, are often mistrustful and resistant to mental health services.

Within the larger context of oppression, often those in marginalized groups do not seek, or are resistant to, mental health services due to a history of repressive and stigmatizing practices.

**Alternative forms of approach and services:**

- Use of empowerment, art-based, narrative and integrative therapies which try to interrupt those systems and may be more culturally appropriate for some youth.
Experience from the field – Impact on Youth’s Mental Health:

- Disturbances of self or identity
- Decreased self esteem/self efficacy
- Guilt and Shame
- Substance Abuse
- Aggression and Anti-social Behaviors
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Risky Sexual Behavior

- Severe Family Conflict – causation of homelessness
- Preventing homelessness and reducing exposure to violence – early intervention EBPs:
  - Functional Family Therapy
  - Multisystem Therapy
  - Intensive Family Preservation Services
  - Family Group Conferencing (NAEH 2009)
  - Shelter as Prevention – National Network for Youth
3. Best Practices and Evidence-informed intervention models

- **YOUTH Supportive Housing Models**
  - Host Home Models
  - Rapid Rehousing and Housing First
  - Transitional and Permanent Supportive Housing
  - ROI research on supportive housing
Fed spending on affordable housing? $42 billion
Fed spending on youth housing? $1.8 billion (4%) (Job Corp $1.7 b)
Fed. spending on homeless services? $4 billion
Fed. spending on youth homeless services? $115 mil.

- Responding to peer-on-peer violence and exploitation by community-based organizations
  - Peer involvement in establishing community boundaries to improve safety;
  - Best practices in responding to peer-on-peer violence within drop-in centers and community housing spaces;
  - Training youth service professionals in trauma-informed responses to violence and sexual exploitation.

- **TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICES:**
  - Nonjudgmental engagement
  - Human and patience
  - Empowerment and building trust
  - Universal trauma screening tools
  - Prioritize immediate needs
  - Focus on strengths and assets (not just deficits/barriers)

- **Positive Youth Development framework**

- **Investment in Evaluation** of Community-based programs and agencies

- The role of accessible housing opportunities in ending commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth.
- Research analysis on correlation between homelessness and sexual exploitation of children and minors;
- Role of supportive housing opportunity in addressing CSE.
Tips for Direct Service Providers:
Guiding Principles for Engagement

- Maintain a Compassionate and Non-judgmental attitude at all times.
- Be Consistent; follow through on everything and do not make promises that cannot be kept.
- Build Trust then Relationship; this is a very slow process and relationship testing is expected.
- Cultural Competency; be sensitive to the unique cultural needs and experiences of each person. Personnel need to be aware of their own bias and cultural worldviews.
- Self-determination and Empowerment; youth should have information relevant to their situation and be encouraged to make informed decisions whenever possible. Respond to youth as Survivors.

(YOUTHCare, Seattle, WA – www.youthcare.org)
4. Priorities in legislative and public policy – ending youth homelessness

- Increased investment in youth-focused supportive housing models;
- Systemic, collaborative approaches and intervention methodologies
- Point-In-Tim surveys and data collection – going to scale.
- Model Runaway and Homeless Youth Acts – State Laws
5. ABA Resolutions to support unaccompanied homeless youth.

- Adequately fund programs that are necessary to keep youth off of the street.
- More identification and coordination among federal agencies so that services can be both timely and effective.
- Treat these youth not as criminals, but as the victims that they are:
  - Use our resources to divert them from prostitution, substance abuse or involvement with the juvenile justice system.
  - These children belong in our schools and deserve our protection instead of punishment for the dysfunctionality of their families.

- Opening Doors – Interagency Council on Homelessness
- Intervention model theory
  - Collaborative approaches
  - Risk & Protective Factors
  - Evidence-based Practices
- National Network for Youth’s Policy Brief & Intervention Model.
APA Task Force Report Outlines Actions Psychologists Can Take to End Homelessness

“While the remediation of homelessness ultimately may depend mostly on improving the ratio between low-income households and increasing the number of affordable housing units, psychologists can play a role in helping people with mental health and substance abuse problems get and keep such housing.”
Psychologists can assist by providing cultural competence psychological assessments, intensive case management, assertive community treatment, critical time intervention and ecologically based family therapy, which includes siblings and extended family members.
Direct research efforts toward preventing homelessness in marginalized populations;
Design and disseminate evidence-based interventions for people who are homeless;
Investigate methods to promote resilience in youth;
Evaluate programs with a focus on mechanisms that support a rapid return to permanent housing and methods for sustaining housing. (2009 Task Force, APA)
What Can We Do? APA...

- Incorporate into graduate school curricula theoretical and applied perspectives of working with homeless
- Develop training opportunities for psychologists to work with at-risk populations;
- Create continuing education programs;
- Enlist psychologists to work with service providers,
- Collaborate with others working with the homeless and advocate for legislation. (2009 Task Force, APA)
Engage, Discuss, Support, Advocate
What Can We Do? ABA...

- Lawyers must recognize complications in representing youth:
  - **Quasi Standing** Under Constitutional Rights
  - **Legal and Physical Custody** rights of parents - Under care, custody, and control by Parents
  - **Wards** of States under Parens Patriae Doctrine
  - **Emancipation** – more theory than practice – common law definition
What Can We Do? ABA...

DIRECT REPRESENTATION – PRO BONO

- Youth displaced from parents home finds representation to file an independent petition to receive services as a child in need of protection and services (CHIPS or CHINS);
- Youth thrown out by mother (child support) is offered representation to change child support payments to a third party guardian;
- Youth denied shelter bed (on former expulsion list) given appeal and mediation
- Transgender youth denied services due to licensure of sex-assigned bed spaces
- Homeless youth offered assistance in finding new guardian.
What Can We Do? ABA...

ADVOCATE/LOBBY for BETTER LAWS!

• Statutory Reforms – *focus on State Law*
• Easy access to best thoughts and theories by leading legal experts and agencies in the field
• Drafted model language & Peer reviewed
• Encourage legislative advocacy and law reforms
• Published manual
THE ROLE FOR LAW FIRMS:

- Form State Law Reform Committee;
- Create individual pro bono assistance teams;
- Offer pro bono legal advocacy and lobbying assistance to enact RHY statutes;
- Lend cooperation and sign off as partners to federal advocacy efforts - help NGOs lobby in DC and in State Houses.
Questions and Dialogue

COMMUNITY
Resources

- ABA Center on Children and the Law – www.abaanet.org/child
- ABA Commission on Homelessness and Poverty - www.abanet.org/homeless
- ABA Commission on Youth at Risk
  www.abanet.org/youthatrisk
- National Runaway Switchboard
  http://www.1800runaway.org
- National Alliance to End Homelessness -
  www.endhomelessness.org
- National Coalition for the Homeless
  www.nationalhomeless.org
- National Law Center for Homelessness and Poverty -
  www.nlchp.org
- National Association of the Education of Homeless Children and Youth -
  www.naehcy.org
- National Network for Youth -
  www.NN4Youth.org
Contact Information:

- Deborah Shore
  Sasha Bruce Youthwork
  dshore@sashbruce.org

- Rich Hooks Wayman
  LUK, Inc.
  rhwayman@luk.org