



Homeless Youth FAST FACTS

Behind the face of every homeless young person is another heartbreaking story – a teenage boy abused by his alcoholic parent, a pregnant girl rejected by her guardian, or a teenager trying to escape gang membership or a life of forced prostitution. In case after case, the main cause of youth homelessness is physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse from parents or guardians. The facts about homelessness are staggering ... but acknowledging the depth of the problem is the first step in fixing it.

How Youth Become Homeless:

- More than 25% of former foster children become homeless within two to four years of leaving the system.
- According to a study of youth in shelters, nearly 50% reported intense conflict or physical harm by a family member as a major contributing factor to their homelessness.
- 50% of adolescents aging out of foster care and juvenile justice systems will be homeless within six months because they are unprepared to live independently and have limited education and no social support.
- The most common endangerment component of runaway and expelled youth is physical or sexual abuse at home in the year prior to the episode or being afraid of abuse upon return. The second most common endangerment was the youth's substance dependency. (Hammer, Finklehor, & Sedlak, 2002)
- Results indicated in a study conducted in 2001 that 51% left home because of being thrown out, 37% left because of their parents disapproval of their drug use, and 31% left home because of parental abuse. 47% indicated that they were sexually abused, with females reporting significantly higher rates than males. (Rew, Taylor-Seehafer, Thomas, & Yockey)
- According to the Williams Institute, 40% of the homeless youth served by agencies identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual or Transgendered – most thrown out by their families after coming out.

What Happens to Youth WHILE Homeless:

- In the United States, as many as 20,000 youth are forced into prostitution by human trafficking networks every year.
- A study conducted by Loyola University in 2015 revealed that **20% of Covenant House Georgia** youth have been sexually exploited including **13% who disclosed that they were victims of human trafficking**.
- More than one third of homeless youth engage in survival sex. (Ray, 2006)
- 57% of homeless youth spend at least one day every month without food.
- Runaway youth are 6 to 12 times more likely to become infected with HIV than other youth. (RotheramBorus, Song, Gwadz, Lee, Van Rossem, & Koopman, 2004)
- Youth living on their own are at a higher risk for anxiety disorders, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicide attempts and other health problems due to the enhanced exposure to violence. (HCH Clinicians' Network, 2000)

That's why Covenant House works day and night to provide shelter and support for kids who have endured lives of abuse, neglect, and homelessness. In 2015, Covenant House Georgia provided services to nearly 1400 of these youth. Our Residential and Community Service Center programs along with the Covenant House Street Outreach team provide the critical services needed for homeless youth to meet their full potential. All they need is for their community to care.

