

# Homeless youth essay sample

[Life](#), [Adolescence](#)



At some point in time, all teenagers are expected to leave home and venture out on their own. Separating from parents and gaining independence are two central tasks that teenagers must overcome in order to become adults.

Teenagers usually learn how to make this transition through either home or school. Unfortunately, there are some teens today that do not fully develop these two tasks before deciding to leave home. These teens are the teens that we see out on American streets today. Leaving home at an early age can be devastating to the teenager, the cities they live in, and our society, in general. Teens are often victimized and exploited fairly easily while they are out on their own. Due to this, crime rates skyrocket in cities with a large homeless teenage population.

Teens often turn to drug trafficking, prostitution, and other forms of criminal activity in order to survive. In turn, this also causes a wide range of physical and mental health problems, including substance abuse. Although there are large numbers of homeless teens, they still remain lacking in many services. One of the most important services is education. This journal article focuses on the barriers to educating homeless teens and mechanisms that are being created to assist in helping them to survive.

Education is severely affected by homelessness. Most homeless adolescents do not attend school because they are unable to make it to school every day. This, in turn, causes teens to fall behind or fail classes. This causes them to end up dropping out of school. Schools are unable to help the homeless teen. Instead, they cause the teen more frustration and depression, thus encouraging them to stay away from education. Without the basic skills that one earns during high school, the teen is unable to gain legal employment.

This not only affects their current situation, but it also affects their future as well. Although some states have set up programs to assist homeless youth in gaining an education, the teen population still remains virtually ignored.

In this journal article, the definition of homeless adolescents is “unaccompanied youth who live independently of their families.” When referring to the governmental definition, there is a difference between the homeless youth and the runaway youth. The runaway youth is defined as a person who is “under the age of 18 and has been away from his or her home or legal residence at least overnight, without the permission of a parent or guardian. The runaway has chosen to leave home and has a home in which he or she can return (395).” The homeless youth is defined as an individual who “has no shelter and needs services providing supervision and care.”

It is important to understand definitional issues when estimating the scope of the problem of youth homelessness. It is very difficult to obtain an accurate account of homeless youth. The US Department of Justice found that at least 500, 000 youth under age 18 become runaways and throwaways each year. Other studies have found that there are 2 to 3 million youth between the ages of 10 to 17 years are living on the streets, in abandoned buildings, or in “welfare” hotels. This means that there is anywhere from 1/2 million to 3 million uneducated, homeless youth on American streets today.

Due to lack of education, homeless teens are being exploited by adults. This means that the youth is likely to become involved in criminal activity. The length of time a young person has been on the streets should be considered in determining their educational needs. Increased time on the streets makes

it harder to reach kids and serve them. Age is also a factor that needs to be considered when trying to serve the homeless youth. Youth under the age of 16 are required by law to attend school. Due to this, it is easier to force youth into school. Youth over the age of 16, however are not required to attend school. This causes it to be much harder to force these teens to engage in educational services and activities.

Some of the problems that face homeless youth in receiving an education are: street life, substance abuse, living conditions, health problems. Street life, in general, is difficult for the homeless teen. They have to worry about where they are going to eat, sleep, and live. This causes youth to have a difficult time trying to survive, much less allowing them to worry about where and how to go to school. Homeless youth have a high rate of substance abuse. Illegal substances and alcohol are readily available on the streets. Due to this, youth are usually addicted to some type of substance. This causes them to have a much harder time attending school and concentrating on assigned tasks. Drugs and alcohol diminish the youth's ability to focus, comprehend, and learn. The living conditions of homeless youth are not conducive to survival, much less education. Due to this, it becomes even more difficult to assist teens. These teens have a hard time concentrating in school and have an even harder time completing homework assignments. Due to the above listed conditions, homeless teens have an even harder time staying healthy. Many street youth develop chronic health problems. Hence, their development is hindered both physically and mentally.

There are effective ways to provide educational services to homeless adolescents. In order to assist teens in gaining an education, three critical program recommendations have been developed to assist the population. These are: (1) increase collaboration between schools and agencies serving homeless youth, (2) develop an individualized service approach that involves community outreach, and (3) encourage sensitivity to the issues of homelessness among school personnel. SafeSpace is a program that was implemented to assist homeless youth in New York City. This organization is operated by the Center for Children and Families and is located in Times Square. SafeSpace offers food, showers, counseling, referral, health care, arts instruction, life skills classes, and educational programming to homeless youth.

There are other agencies that assist homeless youth as well. Some of these are independent living, substance abuse, and prostitution or outreach programs. These agencies often hire young youth who are able to relate to the homeless youth after they are appropriately trained. These places offer safe, well-established programs that help the youth survive. Along with these programs, individualized programs also exist. Services that are provided to youth allow workers to work with teens on a one-on-one basis as well. This allows the worker to help the youth to set goals and learn how to reach these goals.

Although education offers homeless students the opportunity to break the cycle of chronic poverty and homelessness, most homeless teens are unable to succeed in a traditional academic training program. Due to this,

they need to have a more personalized, therapeutic approach to education. They also need to have comprehensive care (food, clothing, shelter) provided to them. Through these programs, homeless youth should have an easier time being able to survive in society.