Transitions to Adulthood for Homeless Adolescents:

Education and Public Policy

About CHEPA

The Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis (CHEPA) is an interdisciplinary research unit led by Director, William G. Tierney, and Associate Director, Adrianna Kezar. The Center was established to engage the postsecondary-education community actively, and to serve as an important intellectual center within the Rossier School of Education; it draws significant support and commitment from the administration. The Center's mission is to improve urban higher education, strengthen school-university relationships, and to focus on international higher education, emphasizing Latin America and the Pacific Rim. Working on fulfilling that mission are the Center's faculty, research assistants, and staff. We are currently involved in a three-year study of college access and financial aid for low-income students, a multi-year investigation of governance and decision-making in higher education, a study on ways to increase the diversity of faculty, and a project that will provide ways to increase the transfer rate of urban community college students to four-year institutions.

Over the last decade we have received funding from the Ford Foundation, the Pew Charitable Trusts, Atlantic Philanthropies, the James Irvine Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the J. Paul Getty Trust, Lumina Foundation for Education, The Education Financing Foundation of California, Sallie Mae Fund, and the Ahmanson Foundation.

This research is supported by a grant from the John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation. Established in 1926 by a prominent, reform-minded physician and his suffragist wife, the John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation is a leading supporter of social science research for Los Angeles. It is also the oldest private foundation in the city.

Transitions to Adulthood for Homeless Adolescents:

Education and Public Policy

William G. Tierney
Jarrett T. Gupton
Ronald E. Hallett

Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis
April 2008

Contents

Homeless kids, we're the same as anyone else. It's not our fault we are in the situation we are in.
--Michael, 17 years old, African American, couch surfer

I: INTRODUCTION

IMPROVING THE POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES for low-income students is one of the foci at the Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis (CHEPA). We conduct studies with sub-groups of low-income students (e.g. youth in foster care and undocumented youth) to improve policies and practices that impact their access to higher education. Education plays a critical role in how adolescents mature into adults. One of the most vulnerable, and often forgotten, sub-populations of the poor is homeless youth. While they experience challenges similar to other low-income students, their lack of a stable or adequate residence creates a unique set of educational barriers. CHEPA researchers spent 18 months documenting the experiences of homeless adolescents in Los Angeles. The data derive from 123 interviews with homeless adolescents between the ages of 14 and 19, and an additional 45 interviews with shelter staff, social workers, parents, teachers, and school district administrators. Follow-up interviews were conducted with 30 of the youth to understand their experiences in greater depth. Over 400 hours were dedicated to observing the daily lives of homeless youth.

The project had two primary goals. The first objective was to give a voice to homeless youth who are frequently powerless and invisible. Second, we initiated a dialogue with policymakers and practitioners concerning the improvement of educational policy as it pertains to homeless youth. The following research questions framed the analysis:

- What are the lives of homeless adolescents like?
- How do homeless youth conceptualize themselves?

- How do they spend their time?
- How do they negotiate educational and social barriers?
- How do they create support systems in and out of school?
- What are the different factors they prioritize as crucial to their development?

Homelessness during adolescence increases the likelihood of an individual experiencing homelessness as an adult. Thus, the cycle of homelessness and extreme poverty may then be passed on to the next generation. During our research, we began to understand the complex lives of homeless adolescents. We recognize that some of the issues homeless youth confront are beyond the capacity of the educational system to remedy. However, if improving long-term stability for homeless youth is the primary goal, then increasing educational opportunities and access to higher education is indeed relevant to the discussion.

I want to go to school, but right now I just have too much going on you know. I mean, I make it there when I can, but I don't learn much. When I'm at school I can't concentrate and I'm always tired 'cause I don't sleep at the shelter. I just want to take care of myself first and then go back to school.

-- Jo Anne, 14 years old, Latina, emergency youth shelter

II: BACKGROUND ON THE PROBLEM

Homeless Youth in Context

Currently 3.5 million people experience homelessness each year in the United States. About half of those who endure homelessness are families in need of shelter (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2006). Over one million youth are without a stable residence on a given night and more than 750,000 are of school age (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2004; Collingnon & Nunez, 1997). A little over 5 percent of all youth in America who are under 18 will experience homelessness at some point before adulthood (Ringwalt et al., 1998). Being homeless or running away as a youth increases the likelihood of experiencing homelessness as an adult (Simons & Whitbeck, 1991).

Demographics of Homeless Youth

- ✓ 1.35 million young people experience homelessness each year (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2004).
- ✓ Unaccompanied youth living on the street without a parent or guardian account for 3% of the urban homeless population (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2005).
- ✓ Approximately 186,000 youth are in shared housing at any given time (National Coalition for the Homeless, 1999; Wilder Research Center, 2001).
- ✓ More than one in five youth who arrive at shelters come directly from foster care, and more than one in four have been in foster care during the previous year (National Association of Social Workers, 1992).

Not having access to stable housing negatively influences how youth transition to adulthood. Homeless adolescents are more likely than their housed peers to engage in antisocial behavior to survive (Whitbeck, Hoyt & Yoder, 1999). Issues including sexual activity, substance use, and abusive histories have an impact on a young person's psycho-social development, but also influence his or her ability to access public education. Experimentation with drugs, alcohol, and sex is greater for homeless adolescents than the general population (Halcon & Lifson, 2004). Less than 4% of all adolescents exchange sex for money (Edwards, Iritani & Hollfors, 2006); however, 28% of youth living on the street and 10% of those in shelters engage in 'survival sex' in exchange for food, shelter or money (Greene, Ennett & Ringwalt, 1999). Homeless females have a higher rate of teenage pregnancy than their counterparts who have a stable living environment (Greene & Ringwalt, 1998). Approximately 75% of homeless youth have suicidal thoughts at some point during their adolescence (Thompson et al., 2004).

Finding a place to sleep at night, and if it's safe was hard. And then eating. Those were the two major things I worried about. I would go to my friend's house and he would bring me a sandwich or something, but I would have to wait all day.

-- Eddie, 18 years old, Latino, former street youth

Moving from a national to a local context, Los Angeles County has a homeless population larger than most states (Los Angeles Coalition to End Hunger and Homelessness, 2005). Over the duration of one year, approximately 150,000 individuals are homeless in the county. On any given night, more than 70,000 people are homeless (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, 2007). Single mothers are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population in Los Angeles (Dyrness, Spoto, & Thompson, 2003). Additionally, roughly 500,000 individuals live in acute poverty, meaning that they are one financial crisis away from losing their housing (Flaming & Tepper, 2006). In terms of youth, Los Angeles County has over 10,000 homeless youth under the age of 18 (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, 2007). Although generally an invisible population, the magnitude of these numbers reflects the urgency of addressing this issue.

III: DEFINING HOMELESS YOUTH

THE PHRASE 'HOMELESS YOUTH' IS ALL-ENCOMPASSING in that it includes youth living in shelters, on the streets, and at group homes; couch surfers; and those doubled up with other families. Although the term is inclusive, how homeless youth experience residential instability often varies. For example, youth living on the street without a guardian likely have experiences and needs that differ from families living doubled up in an apartment. Since policymakers and researchers define and categorize homeless youth in different ways, not all federal agencies utilize the same criteria to define homelessness when determining eligibility for services. Educational policies tend to focus on the current residence of the young person as the basis for defining the student's homeless situation. Another approach considers the relationship the youth has to family or social service agencies. Taken together, the two approaches demonstrate the complexity and diversity of the population as well as the challenges policymakers face when creating appropriate educational policies.

RESIDENTIAL STATUS

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. §§11431; 42 U.S.C. §§11434A) frames how federal, state and local policymakers understand and respond to homelessness. Based on McKinney-Vento, a homeless individual is someone without a fixed, regular place to stay; lacks an adequate nighttime residence; lives in a welfare hotel, transitional

living program or place without regular sleeping accommodations; or lives in a shared residence with other persons due to the loss of one's housing or economic hardship. The Act is meant to provide general educational assurances for homeless youth and offer a basic level of stability.

The federal definition of homelessness is inclusive. Youth that do not have a fixed, regular and adequate residence include street youth, people in shelters, families in hotels, couch surfers and families living doubled up. This approach captures the multiple locations where homeless youth seek refuge.

Categories Based on Residential Status

- ✓ *Shelter youth*: Youth under the age of 18 residing in emergency (short-term) or long-term shelter for homeless adolescents. This includes young people who are with or without their family.
- ✓ *Disconnected youth:* Youth under the age of 18 living with their family or on their own in a car, abandoned building, campsite or place not suitable for nighttime residence.
- ✓ *Hotels/motels:* Families living in a hotel or motel due to economic hardship. The hotels or motels generally lack a kitchen and a public bathroom is shared by tenants.
- ✓ *Couch surfers:* Youth that sleep on a different friend's or extended family member's couch or floor each night.
- ✓ *Doubled up:* Families that move in with another family due to economic hardship. The crowded environment only affords a semi-stable situation; if there is a dispute or one family experiences a financial crisis, all residents potentially end up without a home.
- ✓ *Street youth:* Youth who seek refuge in high-risk, nontraditional locations, such as under bridges or in abandoned buildings. They are generally disconnected from services for homeless youth.

Relationship between Youth and Family

The relationship youth have with their family or social service agencies is another way that researchers and practitioners categorize homeless youth. This approach does not capture the residential locations. However, researchers use this approach to differentiate how homeless youth interact with their family.

Categories Based on Relationship to Family

- ✓ *Accompanied youth:* Individuals who are under 18 and live with a parent or guardian in an unstable environment.
- ✓ *Unaccompanied youth:* "Young people under the age of 18, who are living apart from their parents or legal guardians in unstable or inadequate living situations" (The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2004, p. 4)
- ✓ *Throwaway youth:* A young person who was asked to leave home by a parent or other adult in the household and prevented from returning home.
- ✓ *Systems youth:* Young people who have been involved in government systems, such as juvenile justice and foster care, due to abuse, neglect, incarceration, or family homelessness.

By delineating the definitional approaches in this manner, we do not intend to suggest that no overlap exists among categories. Someone who might fall under the category of a throwaway youth may also be couch surfing, or an unaccompanied youth may have recently been accompanied. Homeless youth frequently have a residential history that includes transitioning between multiple residential experiences and categories. Thus, the fluidity of these terms makes it difficult to generalize about what types of educational support systems are needed.

Revised Typology of Homeless Youth

While the above categorizations are helpful, they do not fully capture the experiences and situations of the homeless adolescents we interviewed. As such, we offer a provisional typology that merges the location of homeless youth and their relationship to family or social services. The assumption is that policymakers and practitioners need to be cognizant of the location and family dynamics when developing educational policies.

Typology of Homeless Youth

1. Those who live with an adult guardian in an unstable, but secure, environment (shelter, storage room).
2. Those who live with an adult guardian in a semi-stable, but potentially dangerous environment (hotel, motel).
3. Those who are unaccompanied, live in an emergency youth shelter, and are transitioning into foster care for the first time or have run away from a foster care placement.
4. Those who are unaccompanied and live in long-term group homes as a foster care placement, but have a recent history of homelessness.
5. Those who live, or have lived for a significant period of time, with or without a guardian on the street and may be in the care of a shelter or agency.
6. Those who are doubled up with a parent or guardian in another person's home for an extended period of time.
7. Those who couch surf without an adult in a different person's home from night to night.

IV: FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL POLICIES

Federal Level

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is the main federal legislation that pertains to homelessness in general, and education of homeless youth in particular. In 1990, the Act was expanded in three areas: removing barriers to attending school for homeless students; encouraging interagency collaboration to promote student success; and, prohibiting the segregation of homeless students from the general population of students. Since the introduction of McKinney-Vento there has been a steady rise in the percentage of homeless youth enrolled in school from 52% in 1994, to 73% in 1997, to 84% in 2003 (Wilder Research, 2003). While youth are enrolling in schools at a higher rate, they still continue to face multiple educational barriers.

Although the McKinney-Vento Act impacts the way that state governments view homeless youth and education, it is primarily a federal mandate monitored by the U.S. Department of Education. Therefore, the state governments are required to take the general mandates and definitions from the federal government and find practical ways to enact them. Although the legislation is far from perfect, it is the first federal act that provides homeless youth with a right to an equal education akin to their housed counterparts. In doing so, the legislation tries to eliminate educational barriers, such as geographic proximity to a school site as a requirement for attendance.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

The McKinney-Vento Act provides several provisions to improve the educational services for homeless youth. This legislation is designed to promote educational stability for homeless youth, including the following protections:

- ✓ Students in homeless situations may remain in their school of origin for the entire time they are homeless, regardless of their residential mobility.
- ✓ The school district arranges transportation for homeless youth that remain at their school of origin, but move outside the school boundaries as a result of residential instability.
- ✓ Homeless youth can enroll without delay, even if they lack the necessary documentation or immunization records.
- ✓ Unaccompanied homeless youth can be enrolled without a parent or legal guardian.
- ✓ School districts are mandated to hire and train a homeless liaison to coordinate services for homeless youth and ensure that schools are in compliance with federal and state mandates.
- ✓ The school or district provides homeless youth with uniforms, backpacks and supplies that may be 'required' for school attendance, but that students may not have access to as a result of their residential instability.
- ✓ Districts are required to review and change policies or practices that inhibit the educational participation of homeless youth.
- ✓ Homeless youth can not be segregated from their peers solely as a result of their residential status.

State Level

The McKinney-Vento Act mandates that state or local policymakers change laws or policies that hinder the opportunity for homeless students to attend school. McKinney-Vento funds are distributed by the state to school districts in an attempt to improve their ability to meet federal mandates. The Act stems from

the position that homeless youth are adequately served when they are mainstreamed into public schools. Underlying the McKinney-Vento Act is the assumption that the educational experiences and needs of homeless students are similar to that of other low-income students, thus the best way to serve homeless youth is to ensure that they are able to attend school and then provide them with the same services as low-income students. To be sure, enabling homeless youth to enroll in and receive transportation to school is important, but this only begins to address their educational needs.

People should know that I'm not a bad person and that homeless kids aren't bad people. We're struggling with our issues just like everyone else, you know.
-- Jackie, 14 years old, Latina, long-term group home

Local Level

The McKinney-Vento Act requires that each school district assign a homeless liaison to monitor the implementation of the federal mandates. Frequently, the district liaison has multiple responsibilities; serving as a homeless liaison fulfills one of those duties. The liaison distributes the funding received by the state and trains school site staff. The liaison resolves issues that may arise if a school, parent or advocate raises a concern about the enrollment or transportation of homeless youth.

Over the last several years, a few shelters have tried to open quasi-schools in collaboration with public schools, but in general, these schools have been quite small - fewer than 10 students - and temporary. These classrooms were designed to provide short-term support to youth that were in crisis. The original goal was to stabilize the youth before transitioning to a public school, under the assumption that even a short educational stay would be beneficial. In order to succeed, however, the shelter needs to partner with a local public school district to hire a fully credentialed teacher who may only work at the shelter part-time. Since the programs focus on getting the students back into the rhythm of school and identifying academic

concerns before they transition to a typical school environment, the shelter staff often find that providing basic services is difficult enough. The additional legal and bureaucratic burden on the staff is overwhelming and beyond their responsibilities. Given the underlying philosophy of McKinney-Vento that mainstreaming is optimal, the creation of separate but equal facilities is anathema. Funding for such an undertaking is sparse and hard to find. The result is that although such schools exist, they are rare.

When a homeless student enrolls it takes us on average about 48 hours to get everything together to make an enrollment decision. I mean we have to drop everything we are doing and focus on getting necessary information. Yes, homeless youth can enroll with less documentation, but we still need certain bits of information to make an informed decision, we can't just guess if the student has an IEP or belongs in certain math class.

-- Diploma Project Advisor

V: RESEARCH ON THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF HOMELESS YOUTH

THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF HOMELESS YOUTH, with the exception of a few studies (i.e. Quint, 1994; Finley, 2003; Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003; Ferguson & Xie, 2008), have rarely been the focus of research. The vast majority of studies on homeless youth have focused on the physical or psychological aspects of homelessness from a medical perspective. Although education was not the primary focus, statistical data on school attendance and experiences were collected by previous researchers.

Approximately 40% of homeless adults do not have a high school diploma and less than 2% have a postsecondary degree (Tepper, 2004). Homeless youth have comparatively lower literacy rates and more frequent suspensions from school (Thompson et al., 2004). Nearly two-thirds of homeless youth in high school are not proficient in math and English (National Center for Homeless Education, 2007). Homeless youth are more likely to score significantly below grade level, repeat grades, and have poor attendance compared to their housed peers (Rafferty & Shinn, 1991).

Over half of homeless students report they have been suspended four or more times for infractions such as being tardy, not wearing the proper uniform and accumulating excessive absences (Cardenas, 2005). All of these factors, of course, could be seen as an inevitable consequence of being homeless. Homeless students are more likely to drop out or attend an alternative school than their peers, and over 30% report having unruly behavior in school that

resulted in educational problems (Kurtz, Jarvis & Kurtz, 1991).

Average daily attendance is 74% for homeless students as compared to 89% for their housed peers; however, the disparity is greater for high school students with daily attendance of only 51% for homeless students as compared to 84% for the general population of high school students (Rafferty & Rollins, 1989). Transitioning between schools and districts is common for homeless youth. Students miss an average of five days each time they change schools (Rafferty & Rollins, 1989).

Homelessness does not define who I am and it doesn't define my daughter either. I made a bad decision in a relationship, that's why we're in this situation, that's not who we are as people. We don't define ourselves based on where we live.

--Ida, African American, family shelter

Some researchers have compared homeless youth with other low-income students. For instance, Rafferty, Shinn and Weitzman (2004) examined the school experiences and academic achievement of adolescents in families who experienced homelessness and those whose families were housed but received public assistance. Measures taken after the homeless students were re-housed showed both groups highly valued school and were similar in cognitive abilities. Formerly homeless students had a higher rate of school mobility, were more likely to repeat the same grade, and mothers reported worse school experiences. Homelessness was associated with further declines in achievement during the period of maximal residential disruption, but had no effects five years later. These youth had lower postsecondary educational aspirations and scored poorly on standardized tests of academic achievement. The findings are consistent with other studies of homeless youth in higher education (Rafferty et al., 2004).

VI: WHAT WE FOUND

THIS PROJECT WAS DESIGNED TO UNDERSTAND THE EXPERIENCES of homeless youth and the educational barriers they face. We interviewed 123 youth in Los Angeles County who were identified by schools and social service agencies as homeless. The majority of interviews with youth were conducted in public schools, at youth shelters and group homes, and during after school programs. The average age was 16 with 53% male, 44% female and 3% identified as transgendered. The majority of youth were Latino (39%), African American (36%), or Biracial (16%), with the remaining youth either Caucasian (5%) or Asian American (3%).

The residential location of the youth varied. Youth described a residential history with transitions between different categories of homelessness. In general, youth were able to identify a specific event or series of events that led to their residential instability. These events included the death of a parent, family conflict, incarceration of a guardian and an economic crisis. A few youth reported being homeless their entire life. The table following describes the location of youth when interviewed, as well as their residential history. Each column identifies the number of youth interviewed in each category.

Living on the streets made me who I am. It was bad when I was going through it. That's how I found out I was transgender and not a gay boy. I mean it just helped me find out who I am.

--Eugene, 17 years old, African American, emergency youth shelter

	Current Residence*	History of Residence**	Total
Shelter	6	18	24
Hotel or Motel	18	6	24
Emergency youth shelter	24	7	31
Long-term group home	16	2	18
Streets or car	0	16	16
Doubled up	11	11	22
Couch surfing	6	6	12

* This column identifies how many youth lived in each category at the time of the interview.
** This column identifies how many youth had a history of living in each category, but had transitioned to either a different category of homelessness or recently located stable housing.

The interviews and observations revealed structural barriers preventing homeless students from achieving academic success. The youth who participated in the study identified aspects of their lives that influence how they perceive and participate in the educational system. Below we discuss the three overarching themes that emerged from the interviews.

Patterns of Schooling

Participation in high school. The youth rarely enrolled in the same high school from 9th through 12th grades. The frequent transition between schools was correlated with the stability of their living environments. Higher stability (transitional living programs or living doubled up) was associated with attendance at fewer schools; lower stability (emergency shelters or couch surfing) was associated with attendance at more schools.

Many youth failed several high school classes

and did not have enough credits to graduate from high school in four years. Youth who received a 'D' in a required class were generally satisfied that they would not have to take the class again. The primary goal was to pass the required classes needed to earn a diploma. Some youth did not attend school on a regular basis; 5% had dropped out of school entirely and several more stated that they skipped school at least once a week. Youth who were out of school for an extended period of time were frequently interested in getting back into school. Nearly 10% of homeless youth received special education services. The services provided ranged from an hour appointment with a resource specialist to attendance at a self-contained high school.

Awareness of rights. Youth were not consistently provided transportation, supplies or uniforms. Although the federal law requires immediate enrollment of homeless youth, the process of transferring between schools varies from as little as two days to more than a week. The individuals we interviewed did not challenge the school when enrollment was denied. A few students discussed repeated absences from school because they did not have the proper uniform or transportation. Few students were aware that the school had a responsibility to provide these services.

We have problems enrolling students and homeless students that don't have their immunization records. The school nurse always sends them back to us and says we can't enroll them without immunization records. Usually we're able to enroll the student, but the nurse just makes a difficult process that much more difficult.

-- Pupil Services and Attendance Counselor

School staff faced challenges in enrolling and verifying the number of homeless youth at the school sites. There was not an individual whose sole responsibility was to work with homeless youth. At the schools with the largest population of homeless youth an attendance and/or dropout counselor was typically assigned. The district liaison trained the counselor, but homeless youth was but one of several groups of students assigned to the counselor. The caseloads were so large that school sites could do little more than crisis management. In particular, high schools

that served a high-density of homeless youth had a difficult time identifying, enrolling and supporting this segment of the student body.

My dad is getting out jail in the spring, but I'm not going to go live with him. The last time I lived with him we got into an argument and he punched me in the face. My nose was bleeding bad and everything and he was yelling at me to clean myself up. After that I knew I couldn't stay with him anymore. I just don't want to get caught up in that mess again.
-- Angela, 19 years old, Latina, doubled up

Influence of Social Networks on Education

The homeless youth interviewed had varying levels of social support networks. The networks included family, shelter staff, teachers, friends and mentors. Youth discussed how these relationships impacted their daily routines and emotional stability, which influenced their participation in school. In addition, youth identified relationships that directly impacted their education both positively and negatively.

Family. Youth described a variety of family formations. Nearly 15% of youth lived with both biological parents and an additional 4% lived with a parent and stepparent. The majority of youth either lived with one biological parent (27%) or neither parent (53%). The youth in single parent households were typically headed by mothers. A few youth lived with family friends or extended family members. Less than 10% reported having a parent with a college degree or trade school certification. They stated that their parents wanted them to graduate from high school, but they rarely spoke to their parents about grades, extra-curricular activities or postsecondary education. In some situations the youth were encouraged to seek employment immediately after graduation to contribute to the family income. For those who were disconnected from their families, their relationship with their parents usually required a high level of emotional energy and time such that he or she was unable to fully participate in school.

I couldn't go to school because I was constantly moving and my mom was on drugs and all her money went to drugs.
-- Samuel, 15 years old, Hispanic, couch surfer

Group home staff. The youth living in long-term group homes are generally under the supervision of the foster care system. Many of the youth have a

history of homelessness. The group homes hire staff that serve administrative, supervision and mentoring functions. The staff provides transportation to school and assists during the enrollment process. Youth living in group homes may have access to a tutor or staff may serve in that role. These youth may or may not have contact with their parents; however, the relationships are generally plagued with conflict and dysfunction. Youth rarely reported a close relationship with group home staff and frequently experienced conflict with staff that enforced rules.

Shelter staff. Youth in emergency youth shelters were less likely to develop a lasting or trusting relationship with staff. These youth may only stay at the shelter for a few weeks until they reunited with their family, their social worker located a permanent placement, or the youth returned to the streets. Youth living in a shelter with their family had sporadic contact with the shelter staff; however, some sites provided a space for volunteer tutors to assist with homework.

I like the staff at the other shelter better than the people here. I mean here they don't listen to you, and they don't care about you. So when they don't listen to me I start getting all loud and stuff to get their attention, but then I just get in trouble. At the other place I didn't need to scream and cuss all the time cause the staff would listen and talk to me.
-- Jo Anne, 14 years old, emergency youth shelter

Youth interested in college did not typically speak with shelter staff about their goals or aspirations. Some shelters provided educational support for their residents by recruiting volunteers to assist with homework or by establishing a mandatory study time. The primary role of the staff was to meet the youths' basic needs, enforce the shelter rules and assist youth with basic educational issues (i.e. transportation to school and enrollment.) Youth in shelters rarely had a relationship with a staff member that offered specific educational guidance or the opportunity to discuss postsecondary aspirations.

Teachers and school site personnel. The majority of the homeless youth interviewed attended large, overcrowded, multi-track high schools. While homeless adolescents had at least five classes, fewer than 15% of students identified a close relationship with a

teacher that involved speaking outside of the class period or about personal concerns they had that affected their educational participation. Some youth had superficial relationships with their teachers (e.g. they spoke with teachers about assignments or said hello in the hallway), but most teachers did not have the time to serve as mentors. Further, many of the homeless youth did not feel comfortable speaking to their teachers about their living situations or postsecondary aspirations. Some youth were concerned that the school might contact a social worker and they would be separated from their family if anyone learned about their living conditions. Other youth did not feel school staff cared about them and thought expressing vulnerability was a waste of time because they did not believe a teacher could help.

Most of my friends are gang related. When we hang out we usually just, you know, gang bang. I can't really say much more than that. I don't have any friends that aren't in the gang. I don't trust people that aren't in my gang.
-- Angela, 15 years old, Latina, emergency youth shelter

Friends. Youth frequently identified friends, but often had a difficult time naming a 'best' friend. Most friends either were casual acquaintances or had a negative impact on their education. The youth spoke with their friends about day-to-day activities, but rarely discussed educational aspirations. Some youth had friends that engaged in illegal activities and other behaviors that drew the student away from school. Many youth could not identify a peer that they had know for and extended period of time and trusted.

The rate of mobility influenced the youth's ability to develop friendships. On some occasions the transition to a new school offered the student a safer environment and the opportunity to build a social network that supported them academically. More often, the youth who moved frequently were unable to establish relationships with teachers or friends that encouraged consistent participation in school. These youth did not expect to remain at the school long enough to invest in relationships.

Extracurricular activities. Involvement in extracurricular activities was low. Over 75% of youth stated that they were not involved in any extracurricular activities. Less than 10% were involved in sports, band or other activities. Approximately 10% attended a homework support program, which generally assisted youth for one hour after school with assignments. In general, youth involved in extracurricular activities identified a coach or mentor who encouraged participation in school. The programs provided a safe place for students and volunteers that assisted with homework. Encouraging students to complete a high school diploma was the primary academic focus.

I don't have friends. Friends are just people who want something from you; it's always a tradeoff. Most people just want to use you anyway. So why have friends?

-- Shaunisha, 17 years old, Biracial, emergency youth shelter

Perceptions of Education and Future Aspirations

Role of secondary education. The majority of youth had a difficult time connecting their high school courses with future goals. Youth understood the importance of graduating from high school if they wanted to attend college. However, the daily material presented in class was more difficult to connect with their goals. Boredom in school was a common topic during interviews. High school was something that was to be endured, but rarely did they enjoy or fully engage in class. A handful of youth clearly identified graduation from high school and postsecondary education as a path to future stability. They worked with a high school counselor or a mentor to develop an educational plan. These youth attended school regularly and strived to do well in class.

Goals and aspirations. The majority of youth identified educational goals and career aspirations. Goals ranged from getting a GED to a Ph.D., but most fell into the category of wanting to graduate from high school and then go on to college. Although virtually all youth desired careers that require higher education, they usually focused on the immediate goal of

I want to go to college, but when I think about my future I always see it as turning out bad. You know, like something bad is going to happen to me or to my mom. I've just come to expect bad stuff to happen to us.

-- Aaron, 15 years old, African American, single room occupancy

graduating from high school. Many, if they reach this goal, will be the first in their family to earn a diploma.

College preparation. The majority of students nearing graduation had not taken college entrance exams. They knew there was an application process to get into college, but most were unaware of deadlines and requirements. Several youth nearing graduation had not identified the college they planned to attend. In addition, many youth did not know how to file financial aid forms. The assumption many youth made was that preparing for and applying to college were activities that happened near the end of their senior year or after graduation.

Differentiating between a trade school and a private research university was difficult for most youth. A common assumption was that the requirements were the same at each institution. Paying for tuition was a concern expressed by virtually all the youth that desired to attend college. Family income qualified all of the youth for financial support from the federal government, state grants and institutional scholarships or grants. However, many youth identified financial need as an educational barrier.

Man, I feel lonely everyday, there's just different types of lonely. It's like friend lonely, family lonely, girlfriend lonely… and then just lonely period, you know? I feel like there is something missing but I don't know what it is.

-- Eddie, 18 years old, Latino, former street youth

Summary of Challenges

Before moving on to a discussion of the challenges that homeless experience, two points stand out from the data presented here. First, the temporary nature of the living situations in which these adolescents find themselves can not be emphasized enough. The unstable and chaotic nature of homelessness has a substantial adverse affect on a student's educational, emotional and social well-being. While some youth were able to maintain their social ties and keep up with their education, far too many homeless youth had their aspirations and relationships derailed.

Second, being homeless was a stigma. Students did not want individuals to know that they were homeless and did not want teachers to treat them in any way different from other students. If anything, the students in this study largely wanted to remain invisible, even if that invisibility further marginalized them. There were no homeless clubs in the schools we visited and the vast majority of teachers, counselors and administrators were unaware who was homeless and who was not. Shelters where young people visited were largely void of educational services and struggled simply to provide lodging and food. The result was that these youth ended up in a self-perpetuating cycle from which they all too frequently did not escape. These students missed classes or, on occasion, years of schooling because they were constantly on the move. The importance of school fell by the wayside as they searched for housing or personal stability. The ability to form friendships, peer groups, or relationships with adults was made that much more difficult.

To be sure, the situation for many homeless youth is not hopeless. However, if effective strategies that provide homeless students with educational and residential stability are not implemented, then education will become irrelevant and the avenues out of poverty will be foreclosed. These strategies need to take into consideration the mobile nature of the homeless experience and the social stigma that exists.

I don't know what to do. I go to school and I'm working and, I mean, I am doing good things, but I got no home.
-- Carlos, 19 years old, Latino, emergency youth shelter

VII: CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY YOUTH

DURING EACH INTERVIEW WE ASKED YOUTH TO DESCRIBE THE BARRIERS they felt impacted their educational performance. At the conclusion of the interview, we gave the interviewee an opportunity to recommend changes to the educational process that would improve their ability to participate. The following is a list of the most frequent responses:

PATTERNS OF SCHOOLING

- *Frequent absences from school.* The reasons for missing were directly associated with the youth's residential status. Sporadic attendance negatively influenced their educational success.
- *High mobility rates.* Residential instability influenced the youth's participation in education and the stability of relationships.
- *Limited access to required supplies and materials.* Interviewees did not consistently have necessary supplies, backpacks, uniforms, and transportation.
- *Inadequate homework space.* Youth had limited space to complete their homework.

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS ON EDUCATION

- *Lack of educational guidance.* The students did not have educational mentors or a relationship with someone who had graduated from college. As a result, youth had a limited understanding of postsecondary requirements, application processes, and funding options.

- *Violence in neighborhoods and schools.* Gang, drug and criminal activity were common in the neighborhoods and schools where homeless youth attend.
- *Substance abuse and addiction.* A few youth had drug and alcohol issues. More often, youth discussed the substance abuse of family members that contributed to residential instability.
- *Strained family or personal relationships.* Residential instability negatively impacted students' ability to form and maintain relationships.

Perceptions of Education and Future Aspirations

- *Disconnect between daily choices and long-term aspirations.* Immediate needs and desires took precedence over long-term planning.
- *Vague goals without structure.* The interviewees had general career and educational goals; however, they were unaware of the steps required to achieve their goals.
- *Internalized Low Expectations.* Youth internalized low aspirations when they were surrounded by friends and family who perceived few career and educational opportunities were possible.

I'm not saying it's bad, but I would want a home where I could take a shower and, you know, brush my teeth in a real sink. Actually flush the toilet, you know. I would want at least an apartment, I'm not asking for a big mansion, at least a small apartment.

-- Esther, 14 years old, Latina, living in a storage room

The few youth that were able to cope effectively with the stresses of homelessness usually participated in multiple support networks. The majority of youth were unable to foster positive relationships that hindered them as they transitioned to adulthood. Educational support services were problematic for homeless youth in shelters. While some shelters offered tutoring and/or mentoring, these programs worked sporadically and did not always allow students to form long-standing relationships with adult mentors.

VIII: STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR HOMELESS YOUTH

The McKinney-Vento Act has done a great deal to minimize barriers to school enrollment for homeless youth. One difficulty in serving homeless students is that many wish to remain invisible to teachers, school administrators and other students. Further, teachers or counselors are generally unaware of how someone who is homeless experiences life outside of school. Obviously, school staff members can not address a problem if they are unaware that one exists. The six recommendations below focus on ways that educators and policymakers might improve service implementation for homeless youth.

Provide greater fiscal and personnel support to schools and school districts to enforce the provisions in McKinney-Vento.

As with any policy, changes over time may be in order if the stated goals of the policy have not been achieved. Over half of the school districts nationwide report that transportation barriers still exist for homeless youth (National Center for Homeless Education, 2007). Many school sites require proof of residency and immunization records before parents can register their children (Mawhinney-Rhoads & Stahler, 2006). Only 26 states submit complete data on homeless youth to the federal government (National Center for Homeless Education, 2007). In 1990, three years after the Act was first passed, 40% of states fully complied (Helm, 1993). Over 15 years later, the nation has taken a small step forward with nearly half of the states in compliance.

Although McKinney-Vento does not resolve

all of the educational barriers for homeless youth, its primary purpose is to ensure access to school. Implementing the basic protections of McKinney-Vento is a long overdue first step toward providing homeless youth an adequate education. In order for compliance to be achieved, increased funding will be needed to enable the school sites to develop the programs and partnerships recommended below.

Assign a full-time counselor dedicated to meeting the educational needs of homeless students at schools with large populations of homeless youth.

The sheer number of homeless students at schools in the most impoverished neighborhoods impacts resource distribution. Schools may have in excess of 300 identified homeless youth and over 90% of the remaining students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. Generally, these schools take a reactive approach. If a student has a severe attendance issue, which may not be identified until the student has missed several weeks of school, the attendance counselor sets up a meeting with the student and guardian. If the student is failing, a dropout counselor may contact the family. Homeless youth, who generally have a difficult time with attendance and grades, typically do not know who to contact when they need help with school. The counselors may not identify the problem until the youth has moved out of the area and no longer is able to attend the school.

By hiring a full-time counselor the schools with a large number of homeless youth could take a proactive role in meeting the needs of homeless students, rather than a reactive or unaware posture. A student who is doubled-up may have different educational needs than a student living in a shelter. The school staff and administrators should not expect uniform approaches to be adequate nor should they

assume the issues homeless youth experience are the same as other low-income students. A counselor dedicated to serving homeless youth at these schools could help locate educational resources for the family, work with the student to develop short and long-term educational plans and serve as a liaison between the school, district, family and social service programs.

Create and sustain partnerships between schools, school districts and shelters or other agencies that serve homeless youth.

My teacher asked me what he could do to help me, 'cause I'm like failing his class. And I was just like there's nothing you can do. I know he wants to help me, but I told him I need to take care of myself and my situation right now.

-- Jo Anne, 14 years old, Latina, emergency youth shelter

School and shelter staff work diligently to serve homeless youth; however, their efforts might be improved through collaboration rather than isolation. School sites are generally unaware of the services provided by community programs and the community programs are largely unaware of the educational process, specifically as it pertains to higher education. Through the development of partnerships, the school will be able to identify services that are being duplicated and, more importantly, those that are needed. While collaborative programming will help the academic preparation of homeless students, it also allows homeless students to acquire social and cultural capital. Consequently, collaborative programming has the potential to improve homeless students' self-efficacy related to education. Collaboration could take many forms including site visits to the various social welfare programs and planning regular meetings to discuss issues concerning service implementation. In addition, the schools may host a series of trainings to inform staff of social service opportunities and procedures.

Education and learning are now seen as activities that occur in and out of the classroom, during school and when school is not in session. Granted, schools remain critically important and simply getting homeless youth to the school itself remains problem-

atic. Rather than a disjuncture between the shelter and the school we are suggesting that a closer relationship needs to be built and maintained. School personnel, by and large, do not know those students who are homeless, and they know even less about the places where many youth reside. Shelter and group home staff may know the schools where students in their area attend, but they do not have the educational training to create an environment of learning. One strategy will be to create a sustained relationship for social service programs and educational organizations insofar as they function in the best interests of the adolescent.

It gives you more barriers, because instead of worrying about school, you worry about your life, you worry about what you 're gonna do the next morning, when you go home how you gonna live, how you gonna sleep, how you gonna eat, how you gonna survive.

-- LaTisha, 17 years old, African American, family shelter

PROVIDE YOUTH WITH ACCESS TO A MENTOR WHO STAYS WITH THE STUDENT THROUGHOUT HIGH SCHOOL.

Homeless youth are typically unattached to an adult whose primary concern is their educational welfare. The purpose of McKinney-Vento is to create a stable educational environment for students, but that goal has been in large part unsuccessful. Sporadic attendance and high mobility rates have consequences for young learners, including abysmal graduation rates. Mentoring is one strategy that has the potential to ameliorate many of the challenges homeless youth face. The mentor can identify the individual needs and ensure the student receives resources necessary to succeed in school. As the youth moves between different residences, the mentor can be a stable source of educational guidance.

Requiring schools to locate, train and pay a mentor for each homeless student in a large urban area is beyond reason. However, mentoring programs run by community agencies and universities already exist. These programs already serve highly mobile populations and can share best practices based upon their experiences. Developing lasting relationships

between mentors and mentees is challenging when the youth move frequently. School districts should collaborate with established programs to increase capacity and share best practices.

Establish programs that facilitate access to financial aid and postsecondary education.

In January of 2007, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the College Access and Opportunity Act. This act allows unaccompanied homeless youth to be considered independent students upon verification of their living situation by a McKinney-Vento school district liaison, a shelter director, transitional shelter, or independent living program. This bill has the potential to improve homeless students' access to financial aid by allowing them to apply for financial aid directly (National Association on Education for Homeless Children and Youth, 2006). The main issue with this policy is that homeless students that do not reside in shelters will be unlikely to have contact with a school district liaison or shelter staff.

The College Access and Opportunity Act helps homeless students gain access to financial aid. However, it does not address other issues that might improve success, such as school stability and academic support programs. Furthermore, in previous research we found that many low-income students require assistance navigating the financial aid and college application process. Homeless youth are no exception.

The first step is publicizing this information at the local level. Many families are unaware of the new law, how funds are distributed, or which students qualify. Second, students will need support filling out the applications and negotiating the financial aid system. This support can be given either at the school or

through community partnerships. Finally, community organizations can assist with the transition between high school and postsecondary institutions.

Develop charter schools targeted toward dropout prevention and that offer a residential component.

While it remains important to continue to enroll homeless youth in local public schools, some homeless youth might benefit from alternative educational environments, just as thousands of other children do. There has been a surge in the number of charter schools that serve students as an alternative to the traditional public school system. In 1990, there were no states that approved charter schools (Renzulli & Roscigno, 2005). Currently, there are more than 4,000 charter schools serving over one million students (Center for Education Reform, 2007). We are not suggesting that all homeless youth ought to be sent to a charter school. However, we also reject the assumption that mainstreaming all homeless youth is the only educational structure that is in their best interests. In the past a few schools were created for homeless youth with low expectations and an exclusionary model that limited their educational attainment. We are not suggesting a return to an ineffective, archaic model. The past failings were based on poor pedagogy and design, but do not justify rejecting the possibility of designing new programs. Multiple educational experiments are being conducted for different types of students so that their needs might be best met. The possible benefits of charter schools designed to meet the needs of homeless students should not be discounted as an opportunity to improve educational opportunities for a disenfranchised group.

I don't think it is good for a homeless person to go straight from being homeless to a public high school because it will show and if the kids at the high school find out they will tease you.
--Christopher, 19 years old, African American, couch surfer

The residential option offers the most vulnerable of this at-risk population a basic level of stability.

Unaccompanied youth without a safe, stable residence may benefit from an educational setting that offers housing. For example, high school students who work towards a diploma need to earn specific credits to graduate. Highly mobile youth frequently transition between schools, which impacts their grades and ability to earn required credits. Further, unaccompanied youth rarely have a space to complete their homework and frequently are absent from school as a result of their living situation. For these youth, a residential option at a structured school setting may be the change that enables them to complete their diploma.

Obviously these recommendations are interrelated, and when combined they help to provide comprehensive educational support to homeless youth. Future educational policies that address the diversity of the homeless youth population will better be able to meet their unique needs.

I haven't been to school in a year. I don't think I need to go back. All you need to survive is people skills and common sense. Maybe after I get an apartment I'll get my GED, but go back to regular high school… no way.

-- Jane, 16 years old, White, emergency youth shelter

IX: CONCLUSION: MOVING BEYOND MCKINNEY-VENTO

The McKinney-Veto Homeless Assistance Act strives to remove barriers to enrollment and increase the percentage of homeless youth that attend school. McKinney-Vento has been successful to a certain degree; however, it is now time to address the issues beyond enrollment. While schools and districts have a better sense of the number of homeless youth and the schools where they attend — albeit sporadically — solutions on how to help these students have remained elusive. Based on our findings, we suggest that the policy conversation turn towards addressing specific educational needs. Such a task requires a great deal of effort on behalf of multiple communities (e.g. educators, legislatures, shelters, and community agencies). The alternative is that today's homeless youth will become tomorrow's homeless adults. To prevent youth from being trapped in a cycle of homelessness an educational intervention is necessary.

One obvious problem is that homeless youth are poorly educated — most do not graduate from high school and few go on to study at a postsecondary institution. If society is to break the cycle of homelessness, then educational leaders need to come to terms with the challenges that homeless youth face and figure out ways to have the educational system support them. The creation of alternative educational opportunities, mentoring programs, and closer working relationships between shelters and schools warrants greater public discussion on federal, state, and local levels. Currently, the educational system is

either irrelevant or hostile to the daily needs of homeless youth. To create the change needed to improve educational services requires a move beyond simply getting students enrolled in school and toward a focus on how to best serve the overall educational needs of homeless students.

School is very important to me. I want to be a personal stylist or a neurologist. My mom has always stressed education. She graduated from college and she wants me to go to USC because she always wanted to go there but couldn't afford it. My mom does everything she can to make sure I'm prepared for school. Even though we're homeless and in a shelter right now she makes sure that I do my homework, and that I have a way to get to school. I really want to get a scholarship to college 'cause it would really help my mom out and be a way to pay her back.

-- Carolina, 14 years old, Biracial, family shelter

X: USEFUL REFERENCES

Cardenas, Z. L. (2005). *Toxic playground: Growing up in Skid Row.* United Coalition East Prevention Project.

Center for Education Reform (2007). *All about charter schools.* Retrieved on November 1, 2007 from www.edreform.com.

Collingnon, K., & Nunez, R. (1997). *Creating a community for homeless children.* Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Retrieved on March 30, from http://www.ascd.org.

Dyrness, G. R., Spoto, P., & Thompson, M. (2004). *Crisis on the streets: Homeless women and children in Los Angeles.* Report commissioned by the Union Rescue Mission to the Center for Religion and Civic Culture (CRCC), University of Southern California. Los Angeles, CA: CRCC.

Edwards, J. M., Iritani, B. J., & Hallfors, D. D. (2006). Prevalence and correlates of exchanging sex for drugs and money among adolescents in the United States. *Sexually Transmitted Infections, 82,* 354-358.

Ferguson, K. M., & Xie, B. (2008). Feasibility study of the social enterprise intervention with homeless youth. *Research on Social Work Practice, 19*(5), 5-19.

Finley, S. (2003). The faces of dignity: Rethinking the politics of homelessness and poverty in America. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 16*(4), 509-531.

Flaming, D., & Tepper, P. (2006). *Ten-Year Strategy to End Homelessness: Public Discussion Draft.* Prepared by The Partnership to End Homelessness.
Retrieved on January 15, 2007 from www.economicrt.org.

Greene, J. M., Ennett, S. T, & Ringwalt, C. L. (1999). Prevalence and correlates of survival sex among runaway and homeless youth. *American Journal of Public Health, 89*(9), 1406-1409.

Greene, J. M., & Ringwalt, C. L. (1998). Pregnancy among three national samples of runaway and homeless youth. *Journal of Adolescent*

Health, 23(6), 370-377.

Halcon, L. L., & Lifson, A. R. (2004). Prevalence and predictors of sexual risks among homeless youth. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 33*(1), 71-80.

Helm, V. M. (1993). Legal rights to education of homeless children and youth. *Education and Urban Society, 25*(4), 323-339.

Julianelle, P.F., & Foscarinis, M. (2003). Responding to the school mobility of children and youth experiencing homelessness: The McKinney-Vento Act and beyond. *The Journal of Negro Education, 72*(1), 39-54.

Kurtz, P. D., Jarvis, S. V., & Kurtz, G. L. (1991). Problems of homeless youths: Empirical findings and human services issues. *Social Work, 36*(4), 309-314.

Los Angeles Coalition to End Hunger and Homelessness (2005). *Hunger and homelessness in Los Angeles 2006 fact sheet.* Retrieved on March 25, 2006, from www.lacehh.org.

Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (2007). *2007 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count.* Retrieved on March 1, 2007, from www.lahsa.org/homelesscount.asp.

Mawhinney-Rhoads, L., & Stahler, G. (2006). Educational policy and reform for homeless students: An overview. *Education and Urban Society, 38(*3), 288-306.

National Alliance to End Homelessness, (2006). Fundamental issues to prevent and end youth homelessness. *Youth Homelessness Series, 1,* 1-4.

National Association of Social Workers (1992). *Helping vulnerable youth: Runaway and homeless adolescents in the United States.* Washington, DC: Author.

National Center for Homeless Education (2007). *Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program: Analysis of 2005-2006 Federal Data Collection and Three-Year Comparison.* Retrieved on January 3, 2008 from http://www.serve.org/nche.

National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (2004). *Legal tools to end youth homelessness.* Washington, DC: Author.

National Coalition for the Homeless (1999). *NCH fact sheet #11: Homeless*

youth. Retrieved on March 30, 2006 from http://www.nationalhomeless.org

Quint, S. (1994). *Schooling homeless children: A working model for America's public schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Rafferty, Y., & Rollins, N. (1989). *Learning in limbo: The educational deprivation of homeless children*. New York: Advocates for Children. (ERIC Document Reproduction No. ED 312 363)

Rafferty, Y., & Shinn, M. (1991). The impact of homelessness on children. *American Psychologist, 46*(11), 1170-1179.

Rafferty, Y., Shinn, M., & Weitzman, M. (2004). Academic achievement among formerly homeless adolescents and their continuously housed peers. *Journal of School Psychology, 42*, 179-199.

Renzulli, L. A., & Roscigno, V. J. (2005) Charter school policy, implementation, and diffusion across the United States. *Sociology of Education*, *78*(October), 344-366.

Ringwalt, C. L., Green, J. M., Robertson, M., & McPheeters, M. (1998). The prevalence of homelessness among adolescents in the United States. *American Journal of Public Health, 68*(9), 1325-29.

Simons, R. L., & Whitbeck, L. B. (1991). Running away during adolescence as a precursor to adult homelessness. *Social Service Review, 65*(2)224-244.

Tepper, P. (2004). *Homelessness in Los Angeles: A summary of recent research*. Institute for the Study of Homelessness & Poverty. Retrieved on October 3, 2004, from www.weingart.org/institute.

Thompson, S. J., Zittel-Palamara, K. M., & Maccio, E. M. (2004). Runaway youth utilizing crisis shelter services: Predictors of presenting problems. *Child & Youth Care Forum, 33*(3), 387-403.

Tierney, W. G., & Hallett, R. E. (forthcoming). Writing on the margins from the center: Homeless youth and cultural politics. *Cultural Studies and Critical Methodologies*.

U.S. Conference of Mayors (2005). *A Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness in America's Cities: 2005*. U.S. Conference of Mayors, Washington, DC: Author.

Whitbeck, L. B., Hoyt, D. R., & Yoder, K. A. (1999). A risk-amplification model of victimization and depressive symptoms among run

away and homeless adolescents. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 27*(2), 273-296.

Wilder Research Center. (2003). *Homeless youth in Minnesota: Statewide survey of people without permanent shelter*. Retrieved on March 30, 2007 from www.gmhf.com/Home/reports/wilder_2003.htm-6k.

Wolch, J. R., Rahimian, A., & Koegel, P. (1993). Daily and periodic mobility patterns of the urban homeless. *Professional Geographer*, *45*(2), 159-169.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our colleagues for their insights that contributed to this monograph: Shirley Abrams, Zoë Corwin, Mona Desai, Kristin Ferguson, Susan Finley, Daniel Flaming, Lisa Foster, Paul Freese, Susan Rabinovitz, Melissa Schoonmaker, Paul Tepper, and Jennifer Wolch. In addition, we worked with several youth organizations and schools that gave us access to the students they have dedicated their lives to support. We appreciate their efforts to improve the lives of young people and for the support of our project. Finally, we extend a thank you to all the youth who opened their lives up to us.

The Center could not function without the assistance of Diane Flores and Monica Raad. Undergraduate student workers Ashley Hill and Vanessa Corral were integral to publishing the monograph. We appreciate their time and energy.

CENTER FOR HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY ANALYSIS
Rossier School of Education
University of Southern California
701 Waite Phillips Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90089-4037

(213) 740-7218
www.usc.edu/dept/chepa