

YOUTH REACH MD

Maryland Unaccompanied Homeless Youth & Young Adult Count Demonstration Project

Who are Unaccompanied Homeless Youth and Young Adults (UHYYA)?

- ❖ Young people under the age of 25 who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian
- ❖ Homeless primarily due to family dysfunction and abuse, including rejection due to sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, or disability; exiting the foster care or juvenile justice systems without skills or resources needed to live independently; and/or economic hardship
- ❖ UHYYA may “double up” or “couch surf” with friends, family, or strangers, or live on the streets or in other places not meant for human habitation, such as cars or abandoned buildings. They are at disproportionately high risk of mental, physical, and behavioral health problems; school dropout; suicide; crime victimization; sexual exploitation; unplanned pregnancy; unemployment; and delinquency.

How many UHYYA are there in Maryland?

- ❖ Maryland lacks reliable data on the number and characteristics of UHYYA in our state, but available statistics indicate that the population is significant and growing. For instance, a 2011 count in Baltimore City identified 640 UHYYA, a 50% increase from 2009, and Maryland State Department of Education data indicated a 267% increase in the number of unaccompanied homeless students identified by local school districts between 2008 and 2012 (from 431 to 1,577).

What is Youth REACH MD?

- ❖ Youth REACH MD is a coordinated data collection and analysis effort established by the Maryland General Assembly in 2014 (HB794/SB794) to gather information on the prevalence and characteristics of UHYYA in six regions of the state. The Project is modeled on the federal Youth Count! Initiative and implements a 2013 recommendation of Maryland’s Task Force to Study Housing and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth, which recognized that reliable data about UHYYA is necessary to develop effective interventions, appropriately allocate resources, and track progress toward reducing and ultimately ending YYA homelessness.
- ❖ **Where and when will the data collection take place?** Six regions: Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Prince George’s County, Annapolis/Anne Arundel County, Hagerstown/Washington County, and Somerset/Worcester/Wicomico Counties. Local data collection will begin in October 2015 and span for one week.
- ❖ **Who will implement Youth REACH MD?** The Department of Housing and Community Development, Institute for Innovation & Implementation, and Steering Committee will oversee the planning and implementation of Youth REACH MD. They will work with local stakeholders, including youth, service providers, and schools, to plan and carry out local counts in each of the six participating regions. The Institute will analyze the data with assistance from the Department of Planning, and will issue a report to the legislature.
- ❖ **How will local data be collected?** Local data collection will involve counting youth living on the streets, accessing services offered by participating service providers, and spending the night in shelters and/or transitional housing programs. Magnet events will be held to promote the data collection efforts and support UHYYA. Additionally, the Institute will work with youth-serving agencies to access administrative data and identify UHYYA in their system.