

Media Relations

Carsey: 1000-Plus N.H. Teens, Young Adults Are Homeless

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DURHAM, N.H. – More than 1,000 adolescents and young adults in New Hampshire are homeless, and their numbers are growing, a new brief from the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire finds. The brief, co-published with the Children’s Alliance of New Hampshire, provides an estimate of homeless youth in New Hampshire calculated from national and state data, and describes the needs of homeless youth based on interviews and a survey of providers of homeless services in the state.

The number of homeless teens and young adults in New Hampshire was derived by adding an estimate of the number of homeless young adults (ages 18 - 24) to a count of homeless high school students. This estimate is very conservative; experts believe many more than 1,000 young people are homeless in New Hampshire. Homelessness is a growing issue for youth in the state, increasing 168 percent among high school students alone between 2004 and 2009, especially in the past two years of the recession.

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“Because so many of these young people hide their homelessness or their numbers are included in either counts of children or counts of adults, the size of the problem is difficult to estimate and easy to ignore,” says brief author Barbara Wauchope, research associate professor at the Carsey Institute. “Young people don’t want it to be known or may not even realize that ‘couch surfing’ means they’re homeless. These kids aren’t the homeless you see sleeping on benches in parks – many are staying with friends or in their cars. That means many are not being counted but more importantly, they are not getting the help they need.”

Wauchope reports that policies and programs for housing and other homeless services in the state are still driven by the needs of single homeless adults and homeless adult parents with children without fully considering the unique needs of adolescents and young adults, including teen parents, coping with homelessness. Creating emergency or overnight shelters for unaccompanied youth under 18 is the top policy recommendation the brief makes.

“Despite New Hampshire being rated by the Annie E. Casey Foundation as the number-one state in which to be a child, homelessness among our adolescents and young adults is growing at a disturbing rate,” says Ellen Fineberg, president of the Children’s Alliance of New Hampshire, which commissioned this study. “At just the age when young people are learning the skills they need to become contributing adults, homelessness leaves them without a foundation element on which to build a life. This report is a wake-up call to our state that we have to ensure all youth ages 13 to 24 have an equal opportunity to succeed.”

The brief, “Homeless Youth in New Hampshire,” is available to download here:

http://www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu/publications/PB_Wauchope-Homelessyouth.pdf.

It is a joint publication with the Children’s Alliance of New Hampshire, part of the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Kids Count Initiative. It was funded in part by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The Children’s Alliance of New Hampshire promotes policies and practices that enable all children to lead healthy and productive lives and to reach their full potential. Learn more at <http://www.childrennh.org>.

The Carsey Institute conducts policy and applied research on vulnerable families and on sustainable community development, giving policy makers and practitioners the timely, independent resources they need to effect change in their communities. Learn more at <http://carseyinstitute.unh.edu/>.

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Report author *Barbara Wauchope* is available at 603-862-1235 or barb.wauchope@unh.edu. Her name is pronounced "WALK-up". *Ellen Fineberg*, president of the Children's Alliance of New Hampshire, is available at 603-225-2264 or efineberg@childrennh.org.

Media Contact: [Amy Sterndale](#) | 603-862-4650 | Carsey Institute

Secondary Contact: [Beth Potier](#) | 603-862-1566 | UNH Media Relations



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