



# YOUTH REACH MD

Maryland's Unaccompanied Homeless Youth & Young Adult Count Demonstration Project

## Who are Unaccompanied Homeless Youth and Young Adults?

- Young people who are 24 years old or younger who are not in the physical custody of a parent or legal guardian and lack a fixed, regular, or adequate nighttime residence.
- 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**
- Unaccompanied homeless youth 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 Unaccompanied Homeless Youth and Young Adults are there in Maryland?

Maryland lacks reliable data on the number and characteristics of unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults in our state, but available statistics indicate that the **population is significant and growing**. A 2011 count in Baltimore City identified 640 unaccompanied homeless youth, 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). The first Youth REACH MD demonstration count surveyed 834 youth who were unaccompanied and experiencing homelessness across six jurisdictions in Maryland. This is likely still a significant undercount.

## 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 unaccompanied homeless youth & young adults in Maryland**. 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 unaccompanied homeless youth is necessary to develop effective interventions, appropriately allocate resources, and track progress toward reducing and ultimately ending youth homelessness.

## Who implements Youth REACH MD?

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, The University of Maryland School of Social Work, and the Youth REACH Steering Committee oversee the planning and implementation of Youth REACH MD. They work with local stakeholders, including youth, service providers, and schools, to plan and carry out local counts in each of the 10 participating regions. The University of Maryland School of Social Work will analyze the data and issue a report to the legislature in the fall of 2017.

## When, where and how will data collection take place?

The following nine regions are participating in the data collection: Anne Arundel Co., Baltimore Co., Baltimore City, Carroll Co., Prince George's Co., Washington Co., Southern Maryland (Charles, Calvert & St. Mary's Co.), the Mid-Shore (Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Talbot, & Queen Anne's Co.), and the Lower Shore (Somerset, Wicomico, & Worcester Co.). Local data collection will take place between March 1, 2017 and April 15, 2017, and will involve counting youth who are living on the streets, who are accessing services offered by participating service providers, or who are spending the night in shelters and/or transitional housing programs. Special events and resource fairs will be held to promote data collection efforts and support unaccompanied homeless youth. Additionally, the University of Maryland School of Social Work will work with youth-serving agencies to access administrative data and identify unaccompanied homeless youth within their systems.