

Homelessness Doesn't Occur in a Vacuum: Contextualizing Homelessness Among California's College Students

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What is Youth Homelessness?

- Anyone lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence
 - Couch-surfing or doubled up, sleeping outside, abandoned buildings, bus depots, cars, hotels/motels, emergency shelter, transitional housing
- Youth: minors under age 18
- Young adult: adults under age 25
- No single, consistent definition of “homeless youth”; different definitions and age ranges for social services, education, and housing programs.

Youth Homelessness in California

- 260,000 homeless students identified in CA's public schools in 2016-17 school year
- 1/3 of the nation's unaccompanied youth reside in CA (HUD)
- Youth homelessness exists in rural, suburban & urban communities
- **1 in 20 UC students, 1 in 10 CSU students, and 1 in 5 CCC students experience homeless**



LGBTQ+ Youth

- 20-40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ
 - True in urban, suburban, and rural communities
- Why:
 - Family rejection (25-40%);
 - Poverty;
 - Difficulty finding culturally competent services;
 - Discrimination in juvenile justice, employment and education



What Does the Research Say?

- Very likely to report family conflict, exacerbated by poverty
- Far more likely to be physically or sexually victimized than their peers; many homeless youth are victimized repeatedly
- 3x as likely as housed youth to be pregnant/parenting
- High rates of depression, PTSD, and suicidality
- Difficulty finding employment; forced into the street economy
 - i.e. exchanging sex for basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing. 1 in 5 HY are trafficked
- None of this is due to deficits within the homeless youth community (what ladders of opportunity are available?)

Homelessness is Trauma

- Causes of homelessness are often linked to trauma
 - Family conflict
 - Victimization/abuse
 - Not having basic needs met
- Trauma changes the way our brains work as well as our reactions to stress
- These behavioral differences are sometimes hard to understand
 - Irritable mood, avoidance, heightened stress responses
- Empathy is key (harm reduction, trauma informed care)

Education is a Pathway to Stability, but Barriers Stand in the Way

- Homeless students are more likely to be suspended or expelled than their peers
- Students w/o a high school diploma are 4.5 times more likely to experience homelessness as adults – the greatest predictor of homelessness
- HY have educational and career goals
- Status Offenses (curfew, running away, truancy), school-to-prison pipeline, criminalization of homelessness
- Trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate policies and practices are integral in shifting this trend

Study of Basic Needs Resources

Measuring Our Success: Campus Supports for College Students Experiencing Food & Housing Insecurity

What resources are available to students experiencing basic needs insecurity?

- year-round student housing
- emergency housing
- emergency grants
- short-term loans
- food resources
- advisors for foster youth & unstably housed students
- programs for foster youth & unstably housed students

50 CCCs + 23 CSUs + 9 UCs = 82 public campuses

Study of Basic Needs Resources

Nearly all of the CCC, CSU, and UC campuses have

- free grocery distribution
- advisors specifically for foster youth

Nearly all of the CSU & UC campuses have

- emergency grants
- short-term loans
- CalFresh application assistance
- programs specifically for foster youth

Study of Basic Needs Resources

Of the 32 CSU and UC campuses:

- 3 in 4 offer year-round housing
- 3 in 4 provide emergency housing
- 2 in 3 have programs specifically for students experiencing housing insecurity

Of the 50 community college campuses examined:

- 4% offer year-round student housing (2 campuses)
- 2% offer emergency housing (1 campus)
- 28% have programs specifically for students experiencing housing insecurity

Study of Basic Needs Resources

Advisors for students experiencing homelessness

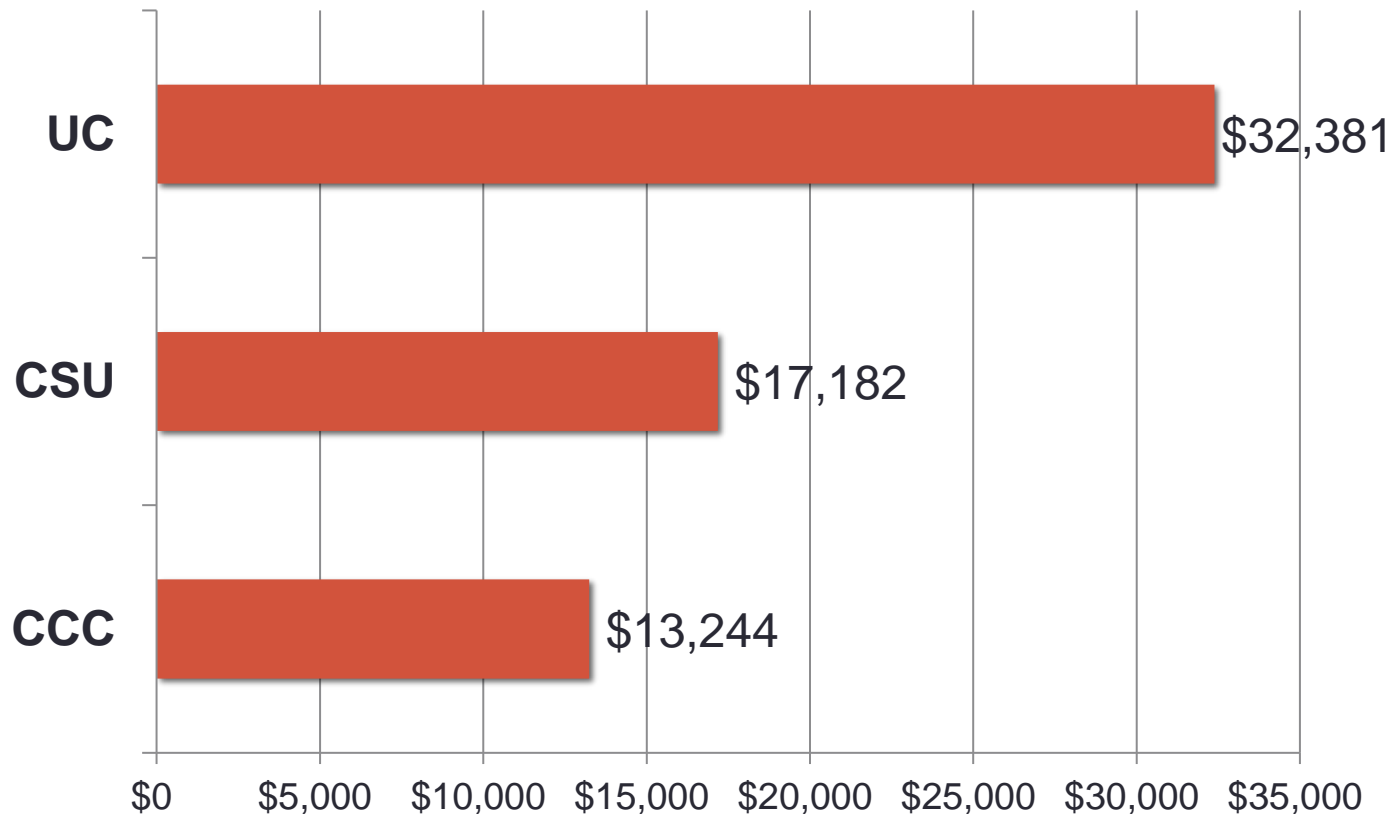
- 62% of the 50 CCC campuses
- 96% of the 23 CSU campuses
- 100% of the 9 UC campuses

2017: 11% of the 82 campuses

2019: 83% of the 82 campuses!!!

Study of Basic Needs Resources

Approximate Funding per
Full Time Equivalent Student (2017-2018)



Recommendations

1. Expand access to year-round student housing
2. Increase availability & affordability of student housing
3. Fund & evaluate housing interventions for students experiencing homelessness
4. Allow students experiencing housing insecurity to participate in foster youth programs on their campus
5. Create or engage with existing regional learning communities
6. More research!

CSUS - Community Example

- Single Point of Contact (Case Manager)
- Established a new campus task force on housing and food insecurity
- Student Emergency Housing Program: 4 students at a time can live in the residence hall for up to 30 days, meals included
- *“The students aren’t doing anything wrong. It’s just that they’re living in a city that’s hard to afford,” Muñoz says. “When it starts to impact their college plans is when we feel responsibility as a university to help them manage. Some students talk about, ‘It’s either work full time just to survive and live here, or drop out of school.’ ”*

New Laws to Support College Students: Food & Housing Insecurity

- **AB 801** - Success for Homeless Youth in Higher Education Act (priority enrollment, designated liaisons, eligibility for CCC fee waiver)
- **AB 806** - Expands AB 801 to include formerly homeless youth
- **AB 1228** - Housing priority & housing plans during academic breaks

New Laws to Support College Students: Food & Housing Insecurity

- **AB 1747** - College Student Hunger Relief Act
- **AB 612** - CCC student access to the CalFresh & Restaurant Meals Program
- **AB 1840** - State agency hiring preference to students facing homelessness & formerly incarcerated youth
- **AB 74** - Budget Act of 2019 allocates funds to rapid rehousing efforts at the CCC (\$9 m), CSU (\$6.5 m), and UC (\$3.5 m) campuses.

Resiliency

- Experiences outside of the mainstream gives the ability to look at issues from different perspectives
- Driven, resourceful, and want to connect to a community
- Likely to create a street family, find safety & power in numbers



Homelessness is a Systemic Crisis, Not a Personal Failure

Research on trajectories into homelessness look only at the individual, absolving the "system" of responsibility

- Family rejection and conflict are not the *only* issues, though prevention and reunification are incredibly important when that is the case



- Responsibility should not only lie with the individual/family, but also society and systems intended to protect them

Policy Recommendations: Our Responsibility

- Prevent homelessness – support families struggling economically, and/or emotionally with supporting their child
 - Invest in Homeless Youth Programs (trauma-informed, harm reduction, low barrier services)
- Ask youth in crisis what they need and build services that meet their needs
 - Most counties in CA have ZERO programs for HY
- Eliminate punitive responses to homelessness, which disproportionately impact LGBT youth and youth of color
- Look at policies with the lens of these youth and young adults

People Recommendations

- Treat people experiencing homelessness w/ dignity & respect
- Share resources
- Challenge stereotypes about “homelessness by choice”
- Help combat NIMBYism by using empathy & facts



CA Can Lead the Way in Ending Hunger & Homelessness at Our Campuses!

Check out: *Measuring Our Success: Campus Supports for College Students Experiencing Food & Housing Insecurity*

Questions?

- Visit:
cahomelessyouth.library.ca.gov
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DREAM BIG! WHAT CAN YOU
DO TO END YOUTH
HOMELESSNESS?
