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***Homeless Young People in Baltimore:  
A Parallel Count Accompanying the 2011 Homeless Census***

***Report by Nan Marie Astone, PhD, and Ross Pologe***

## ***Executive Summary***

In November of 2010, Dr. Nan Astone of the Center for Adolescent Health (CAH) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and Ross Pologe of Baltimore Homeless Youth Initiative (BHYI) and Fellowship of Lights, Inc. were approached by Baltimore Homeless Services (BHS) and asked to conduct a parallel count of Homeless and Unstably Housed Young People in Baltimore City. Similar parallel counts had been conducted in 2007 and 2009. The parallel count of homeless youth was done on January 25, 2011, which was the same date as the Baltimore Homeless Census Point-In-Time Count, but was not performed in conjunction with this bi-annual count of homeless people in Baltimore City.

Sixteen community agencies and organizations provided data on homeless youth who were either served on January 25, 2011 or were on the caseload of the organization during December 2010 through January 2011. From these sources, Astone and Pologe identified **640** homeless or unstably housed young people between the ages of 13 and 25. Those counted under 18 were on their own, unaccompanied by a parent or guardian. In 2009, the parallel count number was **426** young people.

**The Center for Adolescent Health (CAH)** is one of 37 Prevention Research Centers supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CAH is committed to assisting urban youth in becoming healthy and productive adults. Together with community partners, the Center conducts research that identifies the needs and strengths of young people and tests programs designed to promote the health and well-being of youth.

**The Baltimore Homeless Youth Initiative (BHYI)** was created in response to a need for a comprehensive continuum of housing, resources, services and care for Baltimore's homeless and unstably housed youth and young adults between the ages of 14 and 24. While Baltimore has many valuable resources for the homeless, there are significant gaps, especially for older youth. Very few services are available for youth under 18 and most facilities and programs are not designed to be developmentally appropriate for youth ages 16 to 24. They do not have the capacity to provide significant supplementary service and there are few coordinated linkages among the services to this population. The goal of BHYI is to increase the sustainability and capacity of the community to serve homeless youth.

## ***Definition of Homelessness***

Our definition of homelessness was broad and included:

- Unaccompanied youth and young adults ages 13-25, on their own, apart from parents or guardians
- Young people who are living in shelters and in transitional housing
- "Unstably-housed youth" who are couch-surfing—staying temporarily with friends, extended kin networks, or lovers
- Young people who were in foster care or juvenile justice custody, but have left the system without placement

We were particularly interested in acquiring data on *unaccompanied* young people, that is, young people who were not with an adult parent or guardian who is responsible for their well-being. Unfortunately, because some adults do not ask the question about whether young people are unaccompanied and on their own, it is difficult to know if a young person is homeless or unstably housed. Those agencies and reporters who could make this determination were instructed to exclude young people who were homeless as part of a family group. The numbers seen in the Findings section of this report are organized to reflect knowledge of whether or not we know the young person is unaccompanied.

We included unstably housed young people in the parallel count because they are likely to be in housing situations that are either exploitative (such as the exchange of sex or illegal activities for shelter) or tenuous and unsustainable (adult lacks the resources to make a long-term commitment). These young people face the challenge to legitimately support themselves without connections to adults willing and/or able to make a long-term commitment to supporting and encouraging them to transition successfully into adulthood. Additionally, many of these young people lack the experience and skills necessary to effectively live and work independently at this time.

### ***Procedures***

Pologe contacted as many youth-serving organizations—public and private—as possible to participate. See Table 1 for a full list of the organizations Pologe approached. In addition, on behalf of Pologe and Astone, the BHS contacted the Baltimore City Public Schools, the Department of Social Services, and the Department of Juvenile Justice for participation. Participation consisted of providing data on young people who were either served on 25 January 2011 or who were on the caseload of the organization during December 2010 through January 2011 who were either under 18 and unaccompanied by a parent or from 18 to 24 and who were unstably housed or homeless. Data could be provided on a form or in digital form (e.g., an Excel file)<sup>1</sup>

During the month of February, Astone received data from 16 different sources. The sources are listed in Table 2. The data were entered into an Excel file. A unique but non-identifying code was used that consisted of the person's initials, month and year of birth.

### ***Findings***

The total number of people reported was **1,854**. Four cases were eliminated because there was no valid date of birth or age. This left **1,850**. Of this total, **1,720** were unique reports, **62** people were reported twice, and **2** people were reported three times.

This is a total of **1,784** unique reports of people with a valid age.

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<sup>1</sup> An important caveat is that the data from the Baltimore City Public Schools covered the period from September 2010 to January 2011. The date the student was entered into the database was clear, but we included all entered students since it was impossible to know if their housing situation was resolved by the time of the count.

From this total of 1,784 unique reports, Astone first eliminated those who were under age 14 (n=1012), those who were over 24 (n=4) and those under 18 who were reported to be accompanied (n=128).

Thus, there were 640 homeless or unstably housed young people between ages 13 and 25 who (if under 18) were unaccompanied by a parent or guardian in December and January of 2010-2011.

Of these 640, 40.1 percent (n=256) were male and 1 was transgender.

Of these 640, 8.0 percent (n=51) were sheltered and the rest were unstably housed, doubled up or in transitional housing.

In addition to listing the agencies that participated, Table 2 provides information on how many of the 640 homeless or unstably housed young people were reported by agency.

Table 3 contains information on the 640 homeless and unstably housed young people with respect to age and sex.

### ***Recommendations***

- Conduct count on a more frequent basis to consistently gather information for macro analysis and planning, and encourage stakeholders to collect and analyze data to assist their program planning.
- Gather Federal Financial Aid Student Application data on Baltimore youth who qualify as unaccompanied and homeless.
- Work closely with Baltimore City Schools to provide assistance to documented unaccompanied homeless students and the staff who work with students.
- Work with Baltimore Office of Homeless Services to encourage investment in and development of additional homeless youth and young adult focused services.
- Support development of a drop-in resource to provide additional access points for homeless and unstably housed youth and young adults.
- Support development of young adult specific services as an alternative to one-size-fits-all approach to adult homeless services.

**Table 1. Organizations Contacted for Participation in the Count**

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Type</i>
AIDS Administration	State Agency
AIRS	Homeless Provider
Algebra Project	P2P Youth Program
Baltimore City Health Department	City Agency
Baltimore City Youth Commission	City Agency
Baltimore Gay Lesbian Community Center	CBO
Baltimore Mental Health Systems	City Agency
Baltimore Office of Homeless Services	City Agency
BCDSS HESU	City Agency
BHYI Network	Network
Big Brothers Big Sisters Maryland Mentors	CBO
Center for Adolescent Health CAB Partners	Network
Center for Prevention of Youth Violence List Serv	Network
Center for Urban Families	CBO
Chesapeake Center for Youth Development	P2P Youth Program
City DJS	City Agency
City DSS	City Agency
City Schools	City Agency
Civic Works	CBO
College Bound Foundation	CBO
Community Conferencing	CBO
Community Law in Action	P2P Youth Program
East Baltimore Youth and Family Services	CBO
Elev8 Baltimore	P2P Youth Program
Equality Maryland	CBO
Family League of Baltimore City	City Agency
Fusion Partnerships	Network
Gabriel Network	Network
Grandmother's Pilgrimage	CBO
Health Care for the Homeless	Homeless Provider
Homeless Persons Representation Project	Homeless Provider
Jewish Community Services	CBO
Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle	P2P Youth Program
Learning Inc.	P2P Youth Program
Legal Aid	CBO
Loving Arms	Homeless Provider
Martin Pollack Project	CBO
Maryland Foster Youth Resource Center	CBO

Mercy Supportive Housing	CBO
MOED	City Agency
New Lens	P2P Youth Program
New Light Leadership	CBO
New Pathways	CBO
North West Youth Services Bureau	CBO
Planned Parenthood	CBO
Power Inside	CBO
Rose Street Community Center	Homeless Provider
Safe and Sound Campaign	Network
Second Home	CBO
St. Francis Academy	CBO
The After School Institute Network	Network
Turnaround	CBO
University of Maryland Clinics	State Agency
Wide Angle Media	CBO
Women's Housing Coalition	Homeless Provider
YMCA,	CBO
You Are Never Alone (YANA)	CBO
Youth As Resources	P2P Youth Program

**Table 2. Homeless and Unstably Housed Young People in Baltimore by Age and Sex**

Source of Data with MOED Combined	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Healthcare for the Homeless	111	17.34	17.34
Baltimore City Public Schools	101	15.78	33.13
MOED	19	2.97	36.09
HEESU	103	16.09	52.19
Loving Arms	7	1.09	53.28
Maryland Foster Youth Resource Center	21	3.28	56.56
UMd PACE Clinic	4	0.63	57.19
Women's Housing Coalition	2	0.31	57.50
Legal Aid	1	0.16	57.66
Rose Street	17	2.66	60.31
Chesapeake Center for Youth Development	5	0.78	61.09
AIRS	133	20.78	81.88
New Lens	2	0.31	82.19
AWOL from Foster Care	114	17.81	100.00
<b>Total</b>	640	100.00	

**Table 3. Age by Gender\***

Age of Young Person	Gender of Young Person		
	Male	Female	Total
14	17 65.38	9 34.62	26 100.00
15	8 38.10	13 61.90	21 100.00
16	16 47.06	18 52.94	34 100.00
17	17 50.00	17 50.00	34 100.00
18	31 35.23	57 64.77	88 100.00
19	26 34.21	50 65.79	76 100.00
20	32 32.65	66 67.35	98 100.00
21	30 35.29	55 64.71	85 100.00
22	29 37.66	48 62.34	77 100.00
23	24 39.34	37 60.66	61 100.00
24	26 66.67	13 33.33	39 100.00
<b>Total</b>	256 40.06	383 59.94	639 100.00

\*Transgender person is 21.





