

## Partners sought to help in YOUth Count survey of youth who are homeless

The Unaccompanied Youth Task Force will soon undertake a second survey of youth in the county who are homeless, with results to be used as a tool to help tailor and evaluate services for those young people.

Called YOUth Count, the survey was first conducted in 2015. This year, the survey will be conducted from April 29 to May 6.

The task force, overseen by the Department of Human Services (DHS), includes approximately 65 representatives of nonprofits, providers, and county and city agencies. The task force was formed following a report issued in 2014 by the DHS Office of Data Analysis, Research and Evaluation (DARE), "[I'll Never Get Used to It: Young People Living on the Streets](#)," which urged closer examination of causes and possible solutions to homelessness among youth.

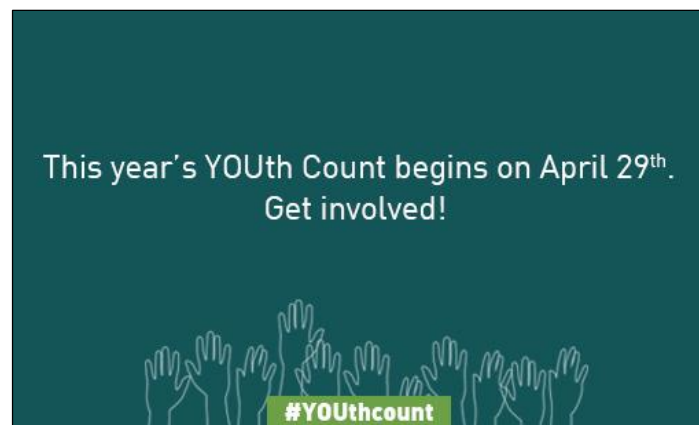
Facilitated by Hilary Scherer, DHS Integrated Programs Specialist, the task force this year is seeking dedicated partners to distribute the survey. Partners who agree to get the survey into the hands of any person age 24 or under and follow through with their pledge will help improve assistance for youth who may be floundering as a result of not having a safe, stable place to live.

"By having reliable local data, we will know the extent of the need, we can plan our resources and we can really make the arguments for funding to secure those resources," Hilary said. "We can also create benchmarks to see if our collection of services is having an impact."

Capturing info about the age group 18 to 24 is especially important to DHS and the task force, since child welfare typically provides for younger youth who would otherwise be homeless. The older cohort has presented a conundrum and concern nationwide.

National studies have found that young adults who have become homeless because of a range of issues – sexual orientation, drug and alcohol use, abandonment – tend to be distrustful, and successfully connecting them to supports that will improve their lives has been difficult.

Improving the situation begins with a count that is as accurate as possible. The upcoming Allegheny County YOUth Count survey, consequently, will take a broad look at homelessness – anyone 24 and



Promotion of the YOUth Count survey will include postings on Twitter (@ACDHS) and the DHS Facebook page. For more information on how to participate, contact Hilary Scherer, [Hilary.scherer@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:Hilary.scherer@alleghenycounty.us), or 412-350-4938.

under who lacks stable, safe housing—and enable DHS and the Unaccompanied Youth Task Force to explore youth housing instability across the varying federal definitions of homelessness.

Hilary will be among task force members who will kick off YOUth Count at the spring meeting of the Homeless Education Network (HEN), beginning at 9 a.m., April 22 at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 616 N. Highland Ave, East Liberty. The network is part of the Homeless Children’s Education Fund (HCEF).

Following remarks by HCEF founder Joe Lagana, a member of the task force, HCEF intern Grace Enick will present a youth perspective and Courtney Lewis, DHS Social Media Specialist, will give a call to action. There also will be a musical performance by Aric. Hilary will give an overview of the survey.

“We hope that our partners in the community will help us with this crucial gathering of information,” she said. “The results could build a brighter future for a segment of the county’s youth that has been disenfranchised.”

More information about YOUth Count is available on the [DHS website](#).

To RSVP for HEN meeting on April 22, click [here](#).