CR-Sent
12-9-88

ASSESSING THE NEEDS
OF
HOMELESS AND RUNAWAY YOUTH
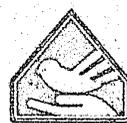
Wendy Baker and Wendy Naidich

COVENANT HOUSE

ASSESSING THE NEEDS OF HOMELESS AND RUNAWAY YOUTH

by

Wendy Baker

and

Wendy B. Naidich

NCJRS

Covenant House
460 West 41st Street
New York, New York 10036

AUG 9 1988

ACQUISITIONS

Acknowledgments

PREFACE

Since 1981 Covenant House, partially supported by a grant from
ACTION, has provided technical assistance to other organizations
and individuals interested in finding solutions to the problems
of youth. We have assisted in developing new programs and in
improving existing ones, and have provided information to those
who wish to help homeless and runaway youth but who are unable to
crystalize their ideas. Through our own program development
efforts and consultations with numerous groups and individuals,
we have carried out and provided guidance in conducting needs
assessments. This experience has led us to appreciate the
critical role that needs assessments play in the development of
any new service.

Though the needs assessment process is the subject of numerous
publications and papers, only a limited amount of material exists
on examining the needs of homeless and runaway youth. This
diverse population is not always visible on the streets and often
eludes the traditional social service system making official
statistics and information scarce. The population, therefore, is
difficult to study.

With this in mind, in the chapters that follow, we suggest a
systematic process for learning about the problems and needs of
homeless and runaway youth in your community and for using what
you learn to define needed services. The framework we outline
can be used by social service professionals as well as people new
to the field; and, it can be generalized to other populations
that you or your organization may wish to study.

CONTENTS

==

1

INTRODUCTION

> Never in the history of this country has the
> importance of sheltering children from the risks
> and demoralising atmosphere of street life...been
> less in need of argument.
>
> (Government Report, England, 1915)

The above quote, taken from a report published in England at
the turn of the century, is as relevant today as it was them.
Throughout the United States, public organizations and private
citizens are recognizing the disturbing reality of young urban
nomads, "street kids," -- homeless and runaway youth who cannot or
feel they cannot return home. Some have no home to return to;
some have been asked to leave or have been pushed out by their
families; and others leave home without the permission of their
parents or guardians because of family conflict, abuse or neglect,
as well as a host of other reasons. For some youngsters, given
their home situations, leaving may actually be the healthiest
thing they can do; however, if they do not get help quickly, this
act of health can result in tragedy.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) defines a
runaway youth as one who is "under 18 years of age who absents
himself or herself from home or place of legal residence without
the permission of parents or legal guardians." Each state also
designates an age under which a youngster is considered a runaway.
These ages range from 16 to 18 and, in some states, differ for
males and females.

HHS defines **homeless youth** as a youth "under 18 years of age who
is in need of services and without a place of shelter where he or
she receives supervision or care." The federal definition limits
homeless youth to those under 18, however many youngsters are not
ready to enter the adult world when they reach 18. Concern for
these youth is growing. Some organizations around the country
have extended their services to young people up to the age of 21
(and some, beyond), though government funding for programs serving
this age group is still limited.

Working definitions, issued for governmental purposes specifically, can unfortunately mask the many and diverse characteristics of this elusive population. Homeless and runaway youths come from all classes and races, from intact families, single-parent families, relatives' homes and social service agencies. Some are parents themselves. Because they often do not make use of the traditional social service system and, therefore, are not included in official statistics, these youngsters are notoriously difficult to count and the complex determinants leading to their homelessness go undocumented.

However, a 1984 study by Columbia University of children entering runaway and homeless youth shelters in New York City has identified some common characteristics. The study showed that 50% had suffered repeated or severe physical abuse at home; more than half came from homes characterized by drug and alcohol abuse and violence; and one-half had been in foster care. Eighty-two percent of the children studied were suffering from at least a temporary "significant psychiatric disability."

Poor functioning in school, the inability to find and/or keep work and pregnancy are thought to be related to a young person's decision to strike out on his/her own. Strains placed on a family unit by financial difficulties, unemployment, and inadequate housing are also considered relevant factors.

Homelessness both exacerbates young people's problems and itself creates new ones. Their naivete compounds the dilemma. They are isolated from familiar support systems and have no experience in navigating in the adult world. They do their best to cope. Some youngsters go to a friend, relative or neighbor when they first leave home; often this arrangement is only temporary, ultimately leaving the youth on the street. Some youth get to the existing services and runaway shelters. Some find legitimate work. Too many, however, turn to panhandling, stealing, dealing drugs, and prostitution. They live in parks, in subways, in abandoned buildings or cars. And, as is well known, too often they end up abusing drugs and alcohol.

Every age and every country has its children of the streets: Dickins' urchins in Oliver Twist, though romaticized, testified to the injustices of the day. Today, the presence of homeless and runaway youth in our communities is a sad witness to the breakdown of the family in our society. The cruel truth that children always and everywhere remain the victims of our socials ills is not a point in need of argument and defense. It is rather the challenge that all of us must face: to reach out, to care, to offer a humane response to those young people - and their families - in need of our help. Moreover, it is our opportunity to safeguard "life's aspirations" which "come in the guise of children." (Tagore, Fireflies, 1928)

2

WHY DO A NEEDS ASSESSMENT?

- How a Needs Assessment Can Help
- The Process
- The Answers You Need

Concern about the growing numbers of homeless and runaway young people around the country has lead many professionals and laypeople to plan new services to help these youngsters and their families, both before and after they leave home. As a reader of this manual, you may be considering what you can do.

Before investing time, money, and energy in planning new services for homeless and runaway youth - even when the need for these services seems obvious - it is important to understand as much as possible about the youth and why they appear to be having problems in your community. This task is a challenging, often frustrating one because of the complex and illusive nature of the phenomenon. Since information specifically about this population of youth is usually not readily available, it requires a focused effort to unearth what is available and put it in a useful form, by conducting a needs assessment.

A needs assessment is a study process similar to market research that is used in the business world. In the field of social services, a needs assessment means learning about the problems of a group of people in a specific area and, based on that information, formulating recommendations for action. Needs assessments can be broad, providing, for example, a comprehensive view of the human service needs in a city or state. They can also be limited in scope: an examination of the mental health needs of adults in a deteriorating neighborhood; the overall situation of senior citizens in a rural community; or the difficulties faced by working mothers in a new housing development.

Let's look at a few examples based on actual experiences of people whose good intentions to help homeless and runaway youth were thwarted by difficulties which probably could have been avoided with information learned through a needs assessment.

The citizens of Oceanview were seeing more and more youth who seemed to be runaways congregating on the streets of their seaside community. These youngsters were out at all times of the day and night, and local parents began to worry about the affect that this might have on their own children. A group of concerned citizens took it upon themselves to do something. They appealed to their families, friends, and the companies for which they worked for donations to purchase a facility for an emergency shelter for runaways. After months of hard work, the Oceanview youth shelter opened amidst fanfare and publicity.

Three months later the shelter had served only a handful of youngsters. It was learned during that time that the youths were older than had been assumed. They required long-term approaches to resolve the problems which kept them on the street and attracted others like them. The program and staffing of Oceanview youth shelter were inappropriate for these older youth. Substantial changes would have to be made in the facility to provide for their needs and to get the official authorization necessary to offer the more relevant services. The shelter was forced to close.

The Youth Service Agency of Perryville wanted to expand its program to include outreach counseling for homeless youth who were coming to their attention more frequently. A major foundation expressed interest in funding the project. The agency director met with the foundation director but, in response to his questions, had few facts at their disposal about the target population. They were unable to justify the need for outreach counseling or to explain why they had decided six additional staff were needed. Funding was denied.

In the city of Urbandale, a civic group felt that there was a juvenile prostitution problem in the downtown area. They decided to raise money for a drop-in center. When business leaders in the area where the center would be located heard about the plans, they questioned the severity of the problem and maintained that existing services could handle it. The civic group could only respond with what they'd seen. Eventually they lost momentum and disbanded.

How a Need Assessment Can Help

● A needs assessment provides documentation, or recorded proof, that there is or is not a need for particular services; for particular age groups; to help people with particular problems.

● Such documentation is essential in planning for the most relevant services - services which will really have a positive impact on the problem.

● Documentation is necessary for determining which of a number of needed services should get priority - to which services should you devote your time and energy and to which services will funders most likely devote their scarce resources.

● Documentation will help you garner financial support.

● It will help you respond to concerns and fears that neighbors and other community members may have when a new service is introduced.

● Through the assessment process, you might be able to identify possible sources of funding for your program.

The Process

While the process varies according to local circumstances, there are elements that all such studies have in common:

1) identifying the nature and extent of the problem.

2) analyzing the possible reasons for the problems and anticipating possible changes given the local social, economic and political environment.

3) determining how the current service system is responding/planning to respond to the problem.

4) determining what steps would help to fill gaps in service provision, what steps realistically can be taken, and how to go about taking these steps.

Since the factors which may lead to homelessness are related to the families and communities in which homeless and runaway youth have grown up and in which they live, we feel it is necessary to understand these entities in order to plan services. We suggest getting an overall picture of the environment which supports, neglects, protects, provides for youth and their families. Then you can focus in on the youth themselves.

The process looks something like this:

Study the community: the social, economic, and political environment.

Learn about **families** in the community: local supports, stresses.

Find out about the problems of **youth** in the community, particularly those with problems thought to be related to homelessness.

Learn about the **homeless and runaway youth** in your area: who are they, why are they there, what are their needs, what help is available.

This framework will be used throughout the manual: understanding the community provides the basis for understanding families and youth in the community. This in turn provides the basis for examining the population of youth who are "at-risk" of becoming homeless or of running away, and for looking at those youth who are homeless and runaways already.

The Answers To Seek

To help the homeless and runaway youth of your community, you will need to know the answers to the following questions:

The Community and Families

The Environment

1) What is the community like?
    Social Environment
    Economic and Business Environment
    Government Structure

2) What changes in the community can be anticipated in the future?

3) What is the level of community awareness of homelessness in general and homelessness among youth?

4) How are families faring in the community?

"At-Risk" and Homeless and Runaway Youth

Who The Youth Are

1) How many homeless and runaway youth are in your area?

2) What are the characteristics of the youths?

    Age range
    Number of males and of females
    Race/ethnicity
    Where are they from?
    Why are they homeless?
    Why did they run away?
    How long have they been away from home?

3) Where are the youths found and why do they congregate there?

4) What is the history of the problem in your community? And, is it getting better? Worse? Why?

What They Now Do To Survive

1) What do they do to get food, shelter, clothing, and health care?

2) What do the youths feel are their problems and how do they deal with them?

How The Service System Takes Care Of Youth

1) What services already exist in your area for homeless and runaway youth?

2) To what extent are these services utilized?

3) How do youth find out about these services?

4) Are there youth who need help but who are not seeking help? Why?

5) Are there youth who are seeking help and not receiving it? Why?

What Is Needed

1) What do the service providers and other members of the community think is needed?

2) Are there special populations of youth not being served?

   Teenage mothers/pregnant teens
   Gay youth
   Non-English-speaking youth
   Older youth
   Substance abusers
   Sexually exploited
   Abused (physically and sexually) and neglected
   Juvenile offenders
   Deinstitutionalized youth

3) In which location should additional services be placed?

4) What problems are exacerbated by the way the service system operates?

5) What are the possible solutions based on what already exists, what is planned and what are the possible funding streams?

Let's see how you can get the answers to these questions. In the following chapters we will introduce you to the various methods of collecting information, as well as help you outline the parameters of your research and assess your financial and human resources.

3

PLANNING A NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- Defining the Scope of the Research
    - The Focus
    - What's Been Done
    - The Methods
- Staffing
- Budget
- Scheduling the Project

Before beginning a needs assessment, it is wise to take stock of your situation and the resources available to you, and to determine your plan of action accordingly. This chapter will help you step through the planning process. As you read through this chpater, keep in mind that all the sections must be built more or less simultaneously.

The first section, **Defining the Scope of the Research**, will help you think about the amount of research you need to do, the focus of your efforts, and what methods to use. A final definition of Scope will be dependent upon the people you will be working with, the resources available to you and the time constraints.

The **Staffing** section helps look at who is in your immediate work group, what are your skills and experience, and what other people you can call on to help you.

The next section, **Budget** shows the probable expenses involved in each method of research, and is designed to help you think about what financial resources and donated services are available to you.

The final section of this chapter, **Scheduling the Project**, provides an opportunity to identify the individual tasks, and to plot out the order and time to be allotted to each one. This will give you an idea of when you can expect to complete your needs assessment.

Throughout the rest of this manual, we will follow the progress of a group of needs assessors - from planning through report writing. Our group uses a series of worksheets to plan their needs assessment and gather information. At the end of the manual, copies of each worksheet are provided for use in your needs assessment.

```
The Case Study

The staff at the Crisis Intervention Hotline (CIH) in
Riverside have been receiving an increasing number of
calls from homeless and runaway youth and their families.
Several of the hotline volunteers believe that the
problem is serious enough that some specialized services
are warranted in the community.  They convinced the
hotline administrators to donate one day a week of one of
the paid staff member's time for six months to coordinate
the research.  The goal is to determine whether there
indeed is a problem for which a specialized program is
necessary and, if so, what should be the focus of this
program.
```

Defining the Scope of the Research

The first steps in planning your needs assessment will be:

- determining what question(s) your research is to answer - what will be the focus.

- finding out if assessments on the subject or related subjects have already been done in your area or state and reviewing them.

- determining what method(s) you will use to learn about the needs in your area.

The Focus

What question(s) do you hope to answer through this needs assessment? (The issues or problems you want to research)

① Is there a homeless youth population for which new services are needed?

② If yes, what are the characteristics of these youth?

③ What services are needed?

④ Which of these are feasible for us to provide or develop given our resources?

What facts, impressions or feelings do you already have in answer to the questions(s)?

	Fact	Feeling/ Impressn
① The hotline received 1000 calls from homeless youth in 1984 ; 1800 calls in 1985.	✓	
② The hotline received 1500 calls from families of kids who ran away in 1984 ; 2000 calls in 1985.	✓	
③ There is one nearby runaway shelter —only takes kids up to age 17.	✓	
④ Hotline staff feel that there are few appropriate referrals for these youth or families		✓
⑤ Staff are noticing what seems to be a larger number of youth hanging out downtown, many more people begging and many more sleeping in the park.		✓

Viewing information objectively is important. It's easy to let your own experiences, assumptions and biases affect your interpretation of information you gather. Awareness of what you bring to your research is a first step toward objectivity.

What geographical area will you be studying?

__State_____   __Metro Area_____   ✓City Riverside_____
__County(ies):_____
__Neighborhood(s):_____
__Community Boards/Districts_____
__Other_____

What special population, if any, will you be considering?
The homeless youth population might include any of the below subgroups — we'll let our research tell us which, if any.

    ____ Teenage mothers/pregnant teens
    ____ Gay youth
    ____ Non-English-speaking youth
    ____ Older youth
    ____ Substance abusers
    ____ Sexually exploited
    ____ Abused (physically and sexually) and neglected
    ____ Juvenile offenders
    ____ Deinstitutionalized youth
    ____ Other_____

Age range? _under 21_____

The age at which a youngster legally becomes an adult varies from
state to state. Since this may affect how you define the scope of
your research, we have included a chart with this information.

JUVENILE AGE LIMITS

	UNDER			UNDER			UNDER
ALABAMA*	16	KENTUCKY	18	NORTH DAKOTA	18		
ALASKA	18	LOUISIANA	18	OHIO	18		
ARIZONA	18	MAINE	17	OKLAHOMA 16-boys	18-Girls		
ARKANSAS	18	MARYLAND	18	OREGON	18		
CALIFORNIA	18	MASSACHUSETTS	17	PENNSYLVANIA	18		
COLORADO	18	MICHIGAN	17	RHODE ISLAND	18		
CONNECTICUT 18-court order		MINNESOTA	18	SOUTH CAROLINA	16		
DELAWARE	18	MISSISSIPPI	18	SOUTH DAKOTA	18		
WASHINGTON,D.C.	18	MISSOURI	17	TENNESSEE	18		
FLORIDA	18	MONTANA	18	TEXAS 17-Boys	18-Girls		
GEORGIA	17	NEBRASKA	18	UTAH	18		
HAWAII	18	NEVADA	18	VERMONT	16/18 with neglect		
IDAHO	18	NEW HAMPSHIRE	17	VIRGINIA	18		
ILLINOIS 17 Boys/18 Girl		NEW JERSEY	18	WASHINGTON	18		
INDIANA	18	NEW MEXICO	18	WEST VIRGINIA	18		
IOWA	18	NEW YORK	18	WISCONSIN	18		
KANSAS	18	NORTH CAROLINA	16	WYOMING	18		

*Alabama - Age 18 for girls from Jefferson and Montgomery Counties.

What's Been Done

List the needs assessments or related documents that have been
written in your area on the topic of homeless and runaway youth or
related topics such as the homeless, youth and family needs or
human service needs in the state. Possible sources include:

- Mayor's Office
- City Planning Department
- State Planning Department
- Coalition for the Homeless
- United Way
- Volunteers of America
- Related Associations or Coalitions
- Agencies Working with Related Populations

Name of Document _Human Services Needs Assessment - 1980_____
Source _City Planning Dept City Hall (222-1000)_____
     (organization, address, phone, contact person)
In Library ✓Yes __No   Reviewed ✓Yes __No   Cost $_____
_Brief section on youth - not much on homeless youth - info__
_is a bit old now._____

Name of Document _Study of Demographic Trends in Riverside 1984_
Source _Chamber of Commerce   (224-1100)_____
     (organization, address, phone, contact person)
In Library ✓Yes __No   Reviewed __Yes __No   Cost $_____
_Demographic information from 1983   (sex, ethnicity, economic__
_information, education, employment)_____

The Methods

In Chapters 4 through 6 some of the methods which have been used, either singly or in combination, for researching the needs of homeless and runaway youth are described with the pros and cons of each method. The methods are as follows:

* **Collecting Basic Information** - Outlines the process of compiling statistical and written information about homeless and runaway youth and related topics to provide both background information on the community and specific information on the youth you are researching.

* **Surveys** - Describes methods of gathering information from social service providers and other people knowledgeable about youth through questionnaires administered in person, over the telephone or through the mail.

* **Group Think Sessions and Community Forums** - Describes methods of gathering groups of people together to get information about youth or about perceptions of youth in the community.

Each method, although valuable, is not without its limitations and may not give a complete picture of the needs of youth. For example, analysis of the Basic Information alone is rarely enough to substantiate a need. It will provide parameters for your study and can serve as a base for other methods; however, it needs to be supplemented by the opinions and first-hand experiences of individuals who come into regular contact with homeless and runaway youth and with the opinions of the youth themselves.

We feel it is advantageous to select a combination of methods suitable to your circumstances and resources. When two or more methods are compared and similarity is found, the needs assessment increases in validity and provides a more stable basis for your program. If contradictions are discovered, program planners need to consider why they might have found contradictory information and may need to do further research to determine which information is more accurate. It is important to have substantial and non-conflicting data before deciding to develop a program.

```
What method(s) will you use?

 ✓ Collecting Statistical Data
 ✓ Collecting Written Info        ___ Mailed Questionnaires
 ✓ Observations                   ✓ Group Think Sessions
 ✓ Face-to-Face Interviews        ___ Community Forums
 ___ Telephone Interviews         ___ Other_____
```

Staffing

```
Who are you?

    ____an individual layperson
    ____a group of laypeople
    ____a non-profit organization starting a new program
    ____an experienced agency looking to expand
    _✓_a group within an experienced agency
    ____other_____
```

If you are an individual or a newly formed group or organization
without a track record in your community, you might find it
advantageous to seek the support or help of an established
organization. As you might imagine, without a "track reocrd",
people you contact for information might be reluctant to talk with
you or might not respond as quickly as you would like. It will
affect what information you get and what methods are best to get
it. Possibly, other groups in your area might be interested in
participating in your assessment, lending more credibility to your
effort (not to mention additional resources). Some groups to
consider contacting include:

- City Planning Office
- The United Way
- University Social Work or Sociology Departments
- Programs or Coalitions for the Homeless
- Large Youth Serving Programs

```
If you are part of an agency or group, to what extent do you have
the support of this group?

 (10)   9    8    7    6    5    4    3    2    1    0
Full Support               Tolerant               No Support
```

Without the support of your organization, it will be difficult to
gather the staffing and financial resources to collect the
information you need. If you are lacking in support, take a look
at the reasons why. You might need to alter the methods you plan
to use for gathering information, or do some preliminary research
to gain the support you need.

How much time and expertise are the members of your group or agency willing to devote to this project?

Name	Level of Expertise	# of Hrs/Wk	# of Weeks	Tasks Person Will Work On
① Harriet Brooks	MA human services - hotline staff	8 hrs	26 wks	Coordinate, develop questions, write report
② John Sullivan	Hotline volunteer	8 hrs	indef.	Research, interviews
③ Anne Gibson	Hotline volunteer	20 hrs	indef.	Anything
④ Lester Evans	Hotline trainee, no human service experience - banker	8 hrs	indef	Planning, typing, interviews
⑤ Marsha Steinman	B.S.W. student	40 hrs	July & Aug ½ June	Help develop questions, interviews, plan group think.

The amount of time you or your group have to devote to the research will affect the methods of information gathering and the number of weeks or months you should give yourself to complete your research. It will also help determine whether you seek outside assistance or volunteers.

Who will be responsible for organizing or supervising the components of the needs assessment:

Data Collection and Research   John
                Analyzing Data   Anne
        Compiling the Final Report   Harriet

We recommend that one individual assume responsibility for each item to ensure that all the necessary data is collected in one place and that the report is written in a consistent manner.

It is possible that once you have evaluated what it will take to complete a needs assessment, you will decide that you have neither the time nor the other resources to devote. In this situation, it may be possible to locate professionals or volunteers to do the research. Some of the alternatives to consider are:

- Local institutions of higher education and research, for example, social work schools may have students interested in projects for theses or dissertations.

- Market research departments from local companies

- Local United Way Chapters

- Local health and welfare planning councils

Budget

An important step in the planning process is establishing a budget for your work. It is obviously beneficial to know ahead of time that you have allotted adequate resources to complete your project. Below we have provided an estimated budget for the methods of assessing needs which are described in Chapters 4 through 6. From this you can get a general idea of what each might cost and determine what is possible given your own circumstances.

In the full budget, we assume that work space and the use of a telephone will be donated. We also assume one full-time staff person for six months. As you will see, a full-time staff person is a substantial expense. However, the work can be done with part-time staff and volunteers, or totally with volunteers. It can also be done over a longer period of time (though your effort could lose momentum if it goes on too long).

Next to the full budget is the Riverside budget. This shows the costs anticipated by the work group as well as the services and supplies that were donated to their project. As you look over this budget, consider which of the costs you might defray through donations.

Before beginning work on your budget, read on through Chapter 6 before developing your own budget. This way, the scope of your project and its budget can be determined simultaneously. You will also need to determine:

- How much funding and what donations you can expect from your organization or group.

- What other funding sources might be available.

SAMPLE PERSONNEL BUDGET				
Item	Cost	Sub-Total	Riverside Costs	Possible Donation
1 Research Asst for 6 months @ $18,000/year	$9,000		$1,800	✓ by CIH
Fringe Benefits @ 20%	$1,800			✓ by CIH
		$10,800	0	

Item	Cost	Sub-Total	Riverside Costs	Possible Donation
SAMPLE OTHER THAN PERSONNEL SERVICES (OTPS) BUDGET				
Collecting Basic Information				
Purchase of Census Materials	$35		*—*	*At library*
Purchase of Social Service Directories & Other Publications	$50		*$45*	
Photocopying 200 pages @.05/pg	$10		*—*	*by CIH*
Transportation 10 trips @.60 each	$ 6		*$3.60*	
Telephone	$50			
		$151	*$48.60*	
Surveys				
Office Supplies (paper, envelopes, pens, etc)	$100		*—*	*by CIH*
		$100	*0*	
Mailed Questionnaire				
Photocopying and Printing 100 5-pg questionnaires @.05 each	$25		*—*	*N/A*
Postage – 100 mailings with return envelopes @.22 each	$88		*—*	*N/A*
		$113	*0*	
Telephone Survey				
Photocopying and Printing 50 5-pg questionnaires @.05 each	$13		*—*	*N/A*
Telephone Usage – Local and in-state daytime long distance calls.	$100		*—*	*N/A*
		$113	*0*	
Face-to-Face Interviews				
Photocopying and Printing 50 5-pg questionnaires @.05 each	$13		*—*	*by CIH*
Transportation-20 visits (40 trips @.60) + 30 20-mile trips @.20/mile	$144		*$24*	
Postage – 100 letters @.22 each	$22		*$8.80*	
Telephone Usage	$50		*—*	*by CIH*
		$229	*$32.80*	

SAMPLE OTPS BUDGET (continued)

Item	Cost	Sub-Total	Riverside Costs	Possible Donation
Community Forum/Group Think Session*				
Rental of Meeting Space	$500		—	Trinity Church by CtH
Photocopying/Printing 200 flyers + 50 20-pg reports @.05 ea.	$60		—	
Postage-100 flyers @.22 + 50 reports @.50 ea.	$47		$23.80	_____
Telephone Usage	$25		—	by CtH
Materials - large pads, markers	$100		$25	
Refreshments	$100		$25	
Typist - 20 pg report @$3/pg	$60		—	Work Group
Publicity - printed posters	$100	$992	$73.80	N/A
Analyzing Data/Writing Report				
Typist-50 pg report @$3/pg	$150		—	Work Group by CtH
Photocopying and Printing 50 copies of 50 pg report @.05/pg	$125		—	
Postage	$63	$338	$50 $50	_____
Personnel Subtotal		$10,800	0	
OTPS Subtotal		$2,036	$204.60	
TOTAL		$12,836	$204.60	

FUNDING SOURCES

Amount available from your organization $0

Other potential sources of funding
__Foundations _____
__Corporations_____
__Service Organizations_____
✓Other _Goodman Stationers_____ $50_____
       _Staples Restaurant__ $100_____

*Depending on your community and the people you are trying to reach for your meeting, you may also consider providing transportation to the meeting for those in need; interpreters for those who do not speak English; and/or childcare.

Scheduling the Project

After considering the scope of your research, the people you have
to work with and your budget, you can plan the course of your
needs assessment. To do this, determine how long each task will
take, what staff will work on them, and what the start and finish
dates should be for each task (in any). If you only have a few
staff, you may need more time to work on specific tasks, or you
may decide to seek more volunteers. Or, you might select methods
of data collection which require fewer people or cut back on the
degree to which you complete a method, e.g., do 30 interviews
instead of 50.

Tasks and Time

Task	Number of Hours/Days	Who	Start Date	End Date
Staffing the Project				
Setting Up Office/Purchase Supplies		Harriet	5|1	5|31
Planning – *bi weekly meetings*	2 hrs ea.	All	on going	
Collecting Basic Information				
Collect and Review Census Material	8 hrs	John	6|1	6|30
Collect Statistical Info	20-30 hrs	John, Anne	6|1	6|31
Review Social Service Directories	4 hrs	Anne	6|15	6|30
Collect/Review Articles/Reports	8 hrs	Anne	6|1	6|30
Complete Observations 8-10 *observations of*	2-3 hrs ea.	Lester, John, Marsha	6|15	7|31
Other_____				
Surveys				
Develop Questionnaire	40 hrs	Harriet, Marsha	6|1	7|1
Develop Key Informant List	4 hrs	All	6|15	7|1
Write Coverletter	—			
Mail Questionnaires	—	—	—	—
Select and Train Volunteers	2 2hr sessions	All	6|15	7|1
Arrange and Conduct Interviews 50 *2-3 hrs each*		Anne, John,	7|1	9|15
Review Completed Questionnaires	1 hr each	Lester &		
Follow up Contacts with Participants	½ hr ea.	Marsha	↓	↓
Other_____				
Community Forum or Group Think Session				
Determine Topic/Purpose/Questions	10 hrs	All	7|15	8|31
Establish Groundrules	10 hrs	All	7|22	8|31
Find Chairperson	10 hrs	Marsha	8|1	7|15
Locate Space	10 hrs	Marsha	8|1	8|15
Select/Train/Schedule Volunteers	4 hrs	All	8|15	8|31
Publicize Event	10 hrs	Marsha, Anne	8|15	8|31
Arrange for Daycare	—			—
Arrange Refreshments	2 hrs	Anne	9|1	9|7
Hold Meetings	3 hrs	All		9|7
Follow up Contacts with Participants	15 hrs	Anne	9|8	10|1
Other *Type up minutes*_____	8 hrs	Lester	11|8	11|25

```
+-------------------------------------------------------------------------+
| Tasks and Time (continued)                                              |
|                                                                         |
| Analyzing Data/Developing Report                                        |
|   Collating Basic Information        60 hrs | Anne, | 9\8  | 9\30        |
|   Collating Mailed Questionnaires           | John &|      |             |
|   Collating Information from Interviews      | Lester|      |             |
|   Collating Information from Forum           |       |      |             |
|   Writing and Editing the Report     40 hrs | Harriet| 10\1 | 11\31      |
|   Distributing Reports                      | Anne  |      | 11\6        |
|   Planning Your Next Steps                  | All   | 11\6 | ongoing     |
+-------------------------------------------------------------------------+
```

With the above information, plot the tasks in order of start date
on the chart below. It is important to keep up the momentum of
your work, so don't spread out the needs assessment over too long
period of time. We've allowed about six months in the sample
chart; planning future steps is added on in the next two months.
The process can take less time if the community is small, if you
have a lot of staff, or if your staff is already knowledgeable.

Plan of Action

```
NEEDS ASSESSMENT PLAN
                        MAY   JUN   JUL    Month       OCT   NOV   DEC
 Tasks                   1     2     3     4     5      6     7     8
Planning                 |     |     |     |     |      |     |     |
•Recruit Interested     |xxx  |     |     |     |      |     |     |
   Volunteers            |     |     |     |     |      |     |     |
•Establish Research     |  xx |     |     |     |      |     |     |
   Questions/Methods     |     |     |     |     |      |     |     |
•Assign Tasks           |   x |     |     |     |      |     |     |
Collect Basic Info       |     |     |     |     |      |     |     |
•Gather Census Info     |     |xx   |     |     |      |     |     |
•Gather Articles/       |     |xxx  |     |     |      |     |     |
   Assessments/Etc       |     |     |     |     |      |     |     |
•Gather Other Stats     |     |xxxxx|     |     |      |     |     |
•Review Directories     |     |  xxx|     |     |      |     |     |
•Do Observations        |     |  xxxxxxxx|  |     |      |     |     |
Surveys                  |     |     |     |     |      |     |     |
•Develop Questions      |     |xxxxx|     |     |      |     |     |
•Develop List of Key    |     |  xxx|     |     |      |     |     |
   Informants            |     |     |     |     |      |     |     |
•Arrange Interviews     |     |   xxx     |     |      |     |     |
•Select/Train Vols      |     |   xxx     |     |      |     |     |
•Conduct Interviews/    |     |     xxxxxxxxxxxxx      |     |     |
   Review Recordings     |     |     |     |     |      |     |     |
Group Think Sessions     |     |     |     |     |      |     |     |
•Plan Topics            |     |     |  xx |     |      |     |     |
•Establish Rules        |     |     |  xx |     |      |     |     |
•Locate Chair/Space     |     |     |  xx |     |      |     |     |
•Invite Participants    |     |     |     |  xxxx|      |     |     |
•Hold Event             |     |     |     |  x  |      |     |     |
Analyze and Report       |     |     |     |     |      |     |     |
•Collate Data           |     |     |     |     | xxxxx|     |     |
•Write and Edit         |     |     |     |     |  xxxxxx|    |     |
•Distribute             |     |     |     |     |      |  xx |     |
•Plan Next Steps        |     |     |     |     |      |  | xxxxxxxx
```

4

COLLECTING BASIC INFORMATION

● Statistical Data
● Using the U.S. Census
● Other Sources of Information
● Observation

Although you will find information directly related to homeless and runaway youth, it will be limited. Therefore, you must draw some inferences about this group of youths based on the characteristics of your community as a whole and, particularly, of the families within your community and the problems they are experiencing.

For example, child maltreatment is frequently cited as a contributing factor in a child's decision to leave home. As a result, looking at local child abuse rates in comparision to rates in other areas of the country or in comparison to rates in previous years might tell you something about the changes in the incidence of runaway episodes in your area. Knowing this might also help you focus your inquiries.

Such information, however, must be considered carefully and used with caution because statistics are not always kept in a consistent fashion from one location to another and because many factors can influence changes in rates. To continue with the child abuse example, reports of child abuse can increase as a result of increased publicity or a change in a social service or law enforcement policy - not necessarily because of an increase in the actual incidence of child abuse.

As you collect this data, do not expect to find one iron-clad set of conditions that will directly indicate the presence or needs of a population of homeless or runaway youth. A combination of social conditions such as the absence of extended family networks, unemployment, and poor housing conditions might indicate stresses on the families in your area which can result in homelessness. Difficult economic conditions create situations where children feel forced out of their homes. They may feel that their families cannot afford to take care of them or that their overwhelmed parents do not care about them.

Nonetheless, the basis for formulating questions for interviews and questionnaires and for understanding the information you recieve will be the background information you collect. You'll want to:

- collect statistical data on homeless and runaway youth and related subjects

- review newspaper and magazine articles

- review research papers done on the community or specific issues within the community

- familiarize yourself with community resource and/or social service directories

- learn about the local, state and federal agencies dealing with health, employment and social services as they relate to youth.

Statistical Data

Statistics are an excellent source of data on the characteristics and social conditions of a specific geographic area. They can alert you to topics you will want to pursue through interviews or questionnaires, and they provide a background against which information from interviews, surveys, and community forums can be compared. Statistical information can also be useful when planning the specific services, size or location of a new program, or when writing a grant proposal. You can compare data:

- over time, e.g., increases in suicide attempts or in teen pregnancies from 1982 through 1985 ... which can help you prepare for the special problems or issues that the youngsters will bring with them.

- from one neighborhood to another ... which can help you select a neighborhood in which to locate a new program.

- from your city to other cities ... which can graphically illustrate why you need the funding.

A great deal of statistical information is available to the public from city, state and federal agencies and private organizations. The chart on the following page lists, according to the categories of our model, some of the statistics that you may be interested in gathering and possible sources of these statistics. Following this chart is another on which to log the information you gather. Be sure to keep track of your sources of information – you may want to return to this source for updates or to cite these sources during a presentation or in your report. Footnoting your final report adds credibility to your work.

Topic	Information	Source
Community and Families	●Demographics, e.g. total population, Median income, Median education level, Special populations, Housing conditions.	Bureau of the Census Chamber of Commerce
	●Overall crime rate	Uniform Crime Reports State & City Police Depts.
	●Unemployment rate	Bureau of Labor Statistics
	●Number of homeless people	Dept of Social Services Adult Shelters for the Homeless National and local Coalitions for the Homeless
Troubled Youth	●Number of juvenile arrests and convictions	Juvenile Bureau of Police Depts
	●Number of child abuse reports	State Child Protection Agency National Child Abuse Agencies
	●School drop-outs rates; truancy rates	Board of Education/School Dept
	●Youth unemployment 16 to 19 years of age	Bureau of Labor Statistics
	●Number of pregnant teens, unwed mothers ●Teen suicide rate, number of psychiatric hospital admissions ●Veneral disease rate ●Number of teen substance abusers	Health and Mental Health Dept local National Center for Disease Control
	●Number of residential facilities for teens	Department of Social Services
Homeless and Runaway Youth	●Number of reported runaways and runaway arrests	Family or Juvenile Court Police Department
	●Number of calls to runaway hotlines	National and Local Runaway Hotlines
	●Number of runaway shelters or beds for homeless and runaway youth	National Network for Homeless and Runaway Youth Services
	●Number of youth served by runaway shelters	Runaway Shelters
	●Number of youth in adult shelter Number turned away	Department of Social Services Adult Shelters
	●Number of youth in adult court for vagrancy	Courts or Probation Departments

STATISTICS WORKSHEET

Item	Source	Nat'l	State	Riverside City	___	___	Comparison City Urbandale
Total Population	U.S.	234.5 mil		470,000			420,000
Youth Ages 5-17	Census	45 mil		89,300	19%	20%	84,000
Ages 18-21	1980	15 mil		28,200	6%	4%	16,800
Ethnic Breakdown	Chamber						
Black	of	12%		45%			
White	Commerce	85%		45%			
Hispanic	Study			8%			
Other ___	1984	3%		2%			
Median Income*	Chamber Study	$24,600		$15,000			$21,000
% Poor Families	Chamber	10%		26.4%			15%
% Poor Children	Study						
Unemployment*	Bureau						
Adult	of Labor	10.7%		12.3%			11.2%
Youth (16-19)	Stats	21.4%		34.4%			30%
Education*	Board of						
Illiteracy Rate	Educat.						
Dropout Rate	1985	13.2%	10%	22.4%			11%
Truancy Rate		7.2%		18.5%			9%
Crime Rate*	Uniform						
Adult Index	Crime	5,900		6,757			6,100
Youth Index	Report						
# Runaway Report	Youth		Arrests	115			90
# Convictions	Bureau						
				kids	families		
Runaway Hotline	CIH		1984	1,000	1,500		
Local			1985	1,800	2,000		
National							
Child Abuse*	State Child						
Reports	Protection						
Findings per 1000	Agency	1984	7.1	13.6			8.1
		1985	7.3	15.2			8.5
Teen Pregnancy*	The Urban	1 of 15		1 of 8			
Ages 15-19	League						
Other # of Homeless	Human Services Assess. 1980			4,000 (5% are youth)			

*Variations by race may point to special populations in need of services or special attention.

Using The U.S. Census To Collect Demographic Data

Census data is a good starting point for collecting information on an area; however, using census data requires some background knowledge. First, you must be aware that census statistics are grouped into geographical areas. The largest areas are regions of the United States, then the states, counties, cities, and smaller areas down to the size of a city block. Though information is available on the state, for the purpose of a needs assessment you most likely will be interested in the following categories:

Metropolitan Statistical Areas are comprised of one or more counties grouped around a central city.

Census Tracts are subdivisions of counties that have visible boundaries and average 1,000 inhabitants.

Block Groups are a group of blocks comprised of addresses that begin with the same first digit.

Block consists of the four sides of a square without crossing any streets.

In addition to geographical area, census information is also catalogued according to subject matter:

Population characteristics - age, race, marital status.

Housing characteristics - number of rooms per unit, persons per room, type of kitchen and bathroom facilities.

Social and economic characteristics - income, occupation, educational level, ancestry.

Some of the information in the census material (such as the number of children, families headed by females, or housing units without plumbing) is based on data collected on everyone in an area. This is called "100% Data." Other information was asked of only a sample of households and adjusted to represent the total population. 100% Data or adjusted data are both useful in helping you get a general understanding of the community.

The census is taken only once every ten years so that later in the decade, as the community changes, it becomes less useful. However, some information is updated biannually by the Census Bureau (though not for areas as small as cities). Check with the municipal authorities in your town or the library to see if a more current census has been conducted by a local organization.

Published census data are usually available in libraries, city planning offices, the mayor's office, chamber of commerce. It can be purchased for a modest price wherever government publications are sold. For further information or assistance in reading the census data, contact the regional offices of the Census Bureau.

BUREAU OF THE CENSUS REGIONAL OFFICES

Address and Phone Number	States Served
Atlanta, GA 30309 1365 Peachtree St., N.E., Rm.625 404-881-2274	Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee
Boston, MA 02116 441 Stuart St., 10th fl. 617-223-0668	Connecticut, Maine, Mass, New Hampshire, northern New York, Rhode Island, Vermont
Charlotte, NC 28202 230 S. Tryon St. Suite 800 704-372-0711	Kentucky, southern Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina
Chicago, IL 60604 55 E. Jackson Blvd. Suite 1304 312-353-0980	Illinois, Indiana
Dallas, TX 75242 1100 Commerce St. Rm. 3054 214-749-2394	Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, New Mexico
Denver, CO 80225 P.O. BOX 25207 575 Union Blvd. 303-234-5825	Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, Utah, Wyoming, North and South Dakota, Montana, Nebraska
Detroit, MI 48226 231 W. Lafayette Rm. 565 313-226-4675	Michigan, Ohio
Kansas City, KS 66101 One Gateway Center 816-374-4601	Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Wisconsin
Los Angeles, CA 90049 11777 San Vicente Blvd. Rm. 810 213-824-7291	California, Hawaii, Nevada
New York, NY 10007 26 Federal Plaza, Rm. 37-130 212-264-4730	Northern New Jersey, southern New York
Philadelphia, PA 19106 600 Arch St. Rm. 9244 215-597-8314	Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey
Seattle, WA 98109 1700 Westlake Ave. N. 206-442-7080	Alaska, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Washington

Other Sources of Information on the Area and the Problem

After compiling statistical data from the census and other sources, it's a good idea to check their validity against other sources. Review local newspaper and magazines for articles on:

- runaways
- the homeless
- school drop-outs
- youth unemployment
- teen pregnancy
- juvenile prostitution
- child abuse

These articles may give you a sense of how your area compares to others and may point to some other sources, both the people you speak with and the material you read, to follow up on.

If your organization has been in operation for a while and has previously submitted grants or conducted fund-raising campaigns, there is probably already a great deal of information available in-house. Other local organizations may also have conducted studies and may be willing to share the results. Plan on making lots of telephone calls and on visiting a number of human service agencies. Consult the "Government Offices" pages of the telephone book and visit your local library for articles, publications, and directories.

What follows is a list of possible sources for you to check. It is by no means all inclusive so we recommend that you use it to give yourself other ideas for sources of information.

```
+-----------------------------------------------------------+
|            Checklist of Possible Sources of Data          |
|                                                           |
|   __✓__  Past Grant Proposals on Related Subjects         |
|   _____  Other Agency Files of Information                |
|   __✓__  Regional or Local Census Bureau                  |
|   __✓__  Back Newspapers and Magazine Articles            |
|   _____  State and Local Departments of Social Services   |
|   __✓__  United Way                                       |
|   _____  Urban League                                     |
|   _____  City Hall or City Planning Department            |
|   _____  Local Catholic Charities, Federation of Jewish   |
|          Agencies or Protestant Agencies                  |
|   _____  Other Large Social Service Agencies              |
|   _____  Local University Sociology, Urban Planning,      |
|          Geography Departments                            |
|   __✓__  League of Women Voters                           |
|   _____  Community Planning Boards                        |
+-----------------------------------------------------------+
```

Use the form below to record the sources of the preliminary information you collect. You'll then have them handy when you want refer to them in your written report. After determining what information already exists, you can focus future efforts, collecting the missing pieces that relate to your project.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Information Source _United Way_   Contact Person _Natalie Green_
Telephone _488-2000_   Address _811 Maywood Ave_

Type of Info.
Social Service Directory

Information Source _League of Women Voters_ Contact Person _Irma Smith_
Telephone _____   Address _____

Type of Info.
Info on government agencies

Information Source _U.S. Census_   Contact Person _Harry Reed_
Telephone _222-1000_   Address _At City Planning Department_

Type of Info.
Demographic information   —   housing information

Information Source _Agency Grant Proposals_ Contact Person ___—___
Telephone ___—___   Address ___—___

Type of Info.
Statistics on the types of calls & the referrals made.

Information Source _Daily Reporter_   Contact Person ___—___
Telephone ___—___   Address ___—___

Type of Info.
Newspaper Articles   "Teen Pregnancy Epidemic" March 12, 1986
_   "Alcoholism and the Family"   Jan 8, 1986_

Information Source _Riverside_   Contact Person _Abe Fink_
Telephone _____   Address _____

Type of Info.
Magazine article   "Our Homeless"   November 1985
Call Abe Fink to find out if he has additional info

Observation

Another good way of gathering both basic background information on a city or town and information on homeless and runaway youth is through your own observations. This involves going to areas in the community and unobtrusively looking at neighborhoods, changes in neighborhood, and watching people -- specifically youth who are on the street. This will help you think of questions, understand the conditions that interviewees describe and it may give some insight into what kinds of services are needed by the youth. For example,

Make note of new housing, whether it is publicly or privately funded, and areas which appear to have been recently abandoned, torn down, or burned out. These observations will help correct the time lag in census data, e.g., if an area according to the 1980 census was not one in which poverty was an issue, but in 1986 the area showed signs of decay.

How do you know where to go? Again, we suggest moving from the general to the specific by observing the city, then areas or neighborhoods, and finally narrowing your observation down to particular streets. Drive around the city and look for areas that attract youth, such as entertainment centers where there are video arcades, movie theaters, fast-food restaurants; also parks or shopping centers. Check the bus and train stations and the fringes of busy areas to see if there are youngsters hanging around. You can also ask the police, human service agencies, school counselors, or local clergy where homeless and runaway youth may be found.

When do you go? At first go at different times of the day--ten o'clock in the morning, early afternoon, late afternoon, evening, and then from ten p.m. until about 1 a.m. You will have the opportunity to see nearly everyone who lives or works in the area. Note where the public bathroom is, the alleyways, the fast-food restaurants, and the park. Observe for two to three hours. You'll see where the youngsters congregate. Be cautious and never take chances with your safety. If you venture into questionable areas, go with someone who is known in the area.

What do you look for? The average age of the youngsters. How many are girls? How many are boys? What race or ethnic group they are? How do they spend their time? Are their clothes clean? Is their posture provocative? Do they walk aimlessly or with a purpose? How do they interact with strangers? With each other?

Do you talk to people on the street? Interviews with youngsters on the street and with people in the area are the very last step, if you take this step at all. Again, we advise caution. If you are going to talk with anyone, do it through a connection -- someone trusted on the street, perhaps someone who does outreach work. Above all, never put yourself or a youth in a compromising situation that could be misinterpreted. Do not, at any time,

leave the area with a youth and do not speak with youngsters
who are "working" as prostitutes on the street. This could be
dangerous for both you and the youth if the youth is being
watched by a pimp.

The following worksheet can help you think about your
observations by putting them on paper. A blank form appears
at the end of the manual and can be photocopied in order for
you to do a series of observations.

Observation Form

Time of day: _10pm — 1am_   Day of the Week: _Friday_

Level of street activity:
                                                    X
----
deserted   few people   many people   crowded

Description of the People, Adults and Youth:

Very active evening. About 20 people look under 21.
Mostly boys. About 1/2 black, 1/2 white. Other people look
like they're dealing drugs. Cars driving around, slow down
on the Main/Broadway corner - kids get in & out.

Description of the Area:

Commercial strip with bars & restaurants. Several
blocks from downtown office area.

Information learned:

Talked with 2 youths. One hustles. The other said he was too old
to hustle (20), sells drugs. When they have the money,
they rent a hotel room at night. When they don't,
they sleep on the buses until they are thrown off.
Both have been on street for about 4 years. Had been
to runaway shelter — too old now. When hungry, they
steal food. When very sick, they go to the emergency
room.

5

SURVEYS

- Survey of Key Informants
  Selecting Key Informants
- Survey Methods
  Personal Interviews
  Telephone Interviews
  Mailed Questionnaires
- Developing Your Survey Instrument
  Types of Questions
  Steps in Developing Questionnaires
  Topics for Questions
  Testing the Questionnaire
  Selecting and Training Interviewers

At this point in your study, you have gathered background information on the community and its families, on the social service structure and on youth (those having problems and those who are homeless or who have runaway). Now it's time to go into more detail about homeless and runaway youth and about those "at-risk" of becoming so. This is done through surveys. Conducting a useful survey can be time-consuming, but the information that you'll accumulate will have more bearing on your ultimate decision-making than any other method.

Key Informants

Surveying service providers and other knowledgeable people is perhaps the most important method of acquiring information about the needs of homeless and runaway youth. This guarantees you a true-to-life perspective from those who have daily contact with youth. It is critical to speak with providers from a broad range of services--runaway shelters, schools, the courts, community centers--because most people do not have a total view of the youth and their knowledge may be skewed toward the area of their direct experience.

We use the term "key informant" to refer to these knowledgeable people. Key informants include community leaders, police, clergy, school counselors, and people who own businesses where youngsters gather, as well as individuals who directly are involved in the provision of services. It also includes the youngsters who are currently using services, who have used them in the past, and who may use them in the future. They should have the opportunity to define their problems and needs; and they can provide a wealth of data on the characteristics of the service population, problems in obtaining services, and on the effectiveness of services.

Getting to talk with youth is sometimes difficult. Some service providers might allow you to interview their clients with the client's consent; however, some might not for reasons of confidentiality. Police, clergy or other contacts you've made might be able to introduce you to some youth. You want to learn from the youths how long they've been on the street, where they sleep, if they know many others like themselves, and if they want to stop living as they do.

Selecting Key Informants

From your previous research, you will have identified people who are knowledgeable about homeless and runaway youth or "at-risk" youth -- perhaps you saw names in a newspaper article -- and agencies which work with these young people. Pull together a list of persons to contact from all facets, including adult shelters. You might start by interviewing a few people who seem most in touch with the homeless and runaway youth population, and ask who else in the area is knowledgeable. Social service directories are a particular help in this process.

If you are doing personal or telephone interviews, you will probably want to limit your list of persons to contact to about thirty to fifty. As you interview, you may learn new information for which additional questions could be helpful, and the key informants may mention new names as important sources. If time allows, you should expand your effort to contact the additional persons and to ask a few more questions.

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                  KEY INFORMANT CHECKLIST                    │
│                                                             │
│  ✓  Staff of programs for homeless and runaway youth        │
│  ✓  Staff of programs for homeless adults                   │
│  ✓  Staff of battered women's shelters                      │
│  ✓  Employment counselors and vocational educators          │
│ ___ Staff of community centers                              │
│  ✓  Police department and units that deal with youth        │
│ ___ Juvenile court judges                                   │
│ ___ High school principals and teachers                     │
│  ✓  High school counselors and social workers               │
│ ___ The Mayor                                               │
│  ✓  Clergy                                                  │
│  ✓  Staff of drug or alcohol abuse programs                 │
│ ___ Salvation Army                                          │
│  ✓  Child protection workers                                │
│  ✓  Juvenile probation officers                             │
│ ___ Leaders of youth advocacy groups                        │
│ ___ Staff at welfare programs                               │
│ ___ Public health professionals                             │
│  ✓  Youths themselves                                       │
│  ✓  Owners of businesses in areas where youth congregate    │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                  KEY INFORMANT WORKSHEET                      │
│                                                               │
│  Name and Title        Agency          Address        Phone   │
```

Name and Title	Agency	Address	Phone
Martha Ward, Dir.	Youth Emergency Shelter • 111 Elm St		450-1111
Mary Carrichio	Samaritan House • 9 Forsythe St.		450-2122
Frank Quercio, Cpt.	Youth Bureau Police Dept. • 214 Chandler		928-6000
Cathy Williams	Child Protection Agency • 80 Elmwood Ave.		421-3215
Rev. Gordon Larsen	Trinity Youth Center • 480 Main St		421-2899
Ruth Lopez, Dir	Hope House	P.O. Box 626	928-4511
James Duncan	Board of Ed Guidance Dept. • 84 Elmwood Ave.		
Hal O'Donnell, Asst Dir	Job Opportunities Inc. • 99 Main St.		862-6622
Sylvia Plowden, P.O.	Juvenile Probation Dept. • 89 Kilby St		421-4000
Dr. Ellen Weiss	City Hospital	100 Highland Ave	790-1000
Alma Ramirez, RN	project director on child abuse grant		
Dr. Joseph Bletter	Community Mental Health Center • 17 Court St		790-4882

Survey Methods

There are three methods of conducting surveys: personal
interviews, telephone interviews, and mailed questionnaires. At
times a combination of methods can be useful.

Personal Interviews. This involves selecting a group of key
informants; contacting them to explain the work you are doing and
to arrange an interview; and, completing the interviews and
collating the information.

The number of interviews will depend on the size of the community,
what services exist and on your resources. Thirty to fifty
interviews will generally give you a good basis for drawing some
conclusions. In general, the interviews should take no more than
an hour, though three to four hours should be allotted for each
interview. This will allow time for setting up the interview,
travel to and from it, and reviewing your notes.

Advantages of Personal Interviews

● Personal interviews provide the opportunity to hear directly and in detail from those in the know.

● The interview is most appropriate for revealing information about complex, emotional subjects.

● It provides the interviewer with the opportunity to explain questions that are misunderstood, to request more specific answers, and to be certain that the respondent understands the reasons for the survey.

● People may be more willing to cooperate in a survey which does not require the time-consuming activity of writing a response.

● The interview format gives you a chance to introduce yourself to the people and agencies who work with homeless and runaway youth. It is this group of people with whom you will work if you start a program, and this is the start of the "networking" you will want to do. It is important for these people to know that you have done careful research and consulted the appropriate sources in your effort to do something to better the area.

● Interviews will give you an opportunity to see the agencies that serve youth in your area.

● The response rate, i.e. the percent of people on your list of key respondents who actually contribute to your study, is generally higher with a personal approach (rather than a mail approach) This makes for more reliable data.

Disadvantages of Personal Interviews

● The face-to-face interviewing process can be time consuming if you are to conduct a large enough number of interviews to obtain an adequate amount of information on which you can base conclusions and recommendations.

● Recruiting, training, transporting and supervising interviewers can also be time consuming, especially areas where the population (including your staff) and the agencies are spread out over a number of counties.

● Your staff must be available during office hour in order to reach most key informants. Therefore, if you rely on volunteers to do the interviews, someone must be available during the day.

Telephone Interviews. The telephone interview process is similar
to the personal interview. Select the list of key respondents.
When you contact them by telephone, introduce yourself and your
organization and state the reason why you are calling. For those
who cannot talk at the time you call, arrange a time to call back.
These interviews tend to be shorter, about one half hour. They
can be used as a technique in and of themselves, or they can be
used to reach people with whom you were unable to arrange a
personal interview.

Advantages of Telephone Interviews

  • Each interview can be completed successfully in twenty
  to thirty minutes, provided you call at a convenient time
  or arrange an appointment.

  • Interviews conducted by phone are still more personal
  than a mailed questionnaire and have many of the
  advantagees of the personal interview: they allow for
  probing, for explaining questions, and for making sure
  that people understand the reason for your research. The
  response rate is also good.

  • There is no travel time or travel cost involved.

  • The telephone is a good way to fill in information or
  get interviews with people with whom you are unable to
  meet face-to-face.

Disadvantages of Telephone Interviews

  • It is easy to miss cues to probe certain responses or
  to explain because you cannot read the respondent's
  facial expressions or body language.

  • Many people, particularly young people, do not
  communicate as freely over the telephone as they do in
  person.

  • You will not be able to reach all the people who
  would be helpful if you only use this method. Homeless
  youth have no phones.

Mailed Questionnaires. As with the other methods, when sending out a mailing of questionnaires the first step is to compile the list of key informants. The list, however, can be broad, reaching people with a more limited knowledge of homeless and runaway youth but who know about specific topics that affect youth such as vocational education. The questionnaire should be sent out with a cover letter explaining who you are and your purpose. Include a self addressed stamped envelope for the return of the questionnaire. Even with this, follow-up telephone calls may be necessary to improve the response rate which can vary from 10 to 50 percent.

Advantages of Mailed Questionnaires

● Mailed questionnaires are an inexpensive way of reaching a large number of individuals in many locations.

● Because the interviewer is not present, answers to the questions have no chance of being influenced by the interviewer.

● Respondents can have a greater confidence in their anonymity, if they choose to remain anonymous, and thus may feel freer to express controversial opinions.

● Questionnaires can be filled out at the respondent's convenience.

Disadvantages of Mailed Questionnaires

● There is often a low rate of response though including a stamped, self-addressed envelope will improve it.

● A number of factors other than the merit of the project can influence the rate of return are: who is sponsoring the questionnaire; the attractiveness of its design; length; ease of filling it out and mailing it back; whether the questions are interesting; and the tone of the covering letter.

● There is no opportunity to probe or to hear ideas that come up spontaneously in conversation.

● The collated information can be skewed based on who chooses to respond.

● The questions must be vary carefully worded and self-explanatory to ensure that all who answer read them in the same way - no one will be available to explain.

Developing Your Survey Instrument

There's nothing magical about putting a group of questions
together and taking them to people. You must decide on what it is
you need to know and how you want to ask the questions. To
clarify what information should be sought, look back over the
questions that we asked you at the end of Chapter One. In the
research that you've done thus far, have you already begun to
learn some of the answers? What do you still need to know? At
this point in your study, what do you think are most important--
facts or opinions?

Types of Questions

In deciding how to ask the questions, you have two methods to
choose from: **open-ended questions** and **fixed-alternative questions**.
Open-ended questions are designed to allow for free responses.
They raise an issue but do not provide a structure for answering.
For example:

> In your opinion, what are the most pressing needs
> of homeless and runaway youth?

As you can see, the open-ended question provides a good indication
of whether key informants have any information about the issue,
whether they have a clearly formulated opinion, and how strongly
they feel about it. The interviewer also may get the chance to
hear interesting examples which will be useful later on in the
formal report to illustrate or highlight the problem.

A fixed-alternative example of the above question is as follows:

> What are the three most immediate needs of homeless
> and runaway youth?
>
>   ____shelter
>   ____food
>   ____health care
>   ____showers
>   ____clothing
>   ____counseling
>   ____protection (from sexual exploitation, child
>   abuse)
>   ____other_____

Fixed-alternative questions have the advantage of being quick to administer and simple to classify. They allow those you interview to make easy judgments provided there is a category that fits their opinion. They are more reliable for securing factual data (age, education, etc.) that can be tabulated and put into chart form; and, for eliciting opinions about issues on which people hold clear, easily articulated views. However, the omission of a necessary alternative in a fixed-alternative questionnaire can lead to biased results even when a space for "Other" is given. Unless one can be certain--based on logic or prior investigation-- that the alternatives run the gamut, it is preferable to use open- ended questions.

Questionnaires can contain a combinations of types of questions determined by the type of information you are gathering. You might also consider starting with open-ended questions and using these responses to put together a full questionnaire. This way you can discover the range of probable responses on which to based your fixed-alternative questions. You will also learn ways to word questions so that the meaning is clear to all.

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:1em;">

Steps in Developing a Questionnaire

1. Make a list of all the topics you want to cover. Don't exclude anything--there will be time to edit later. Treat this like a free-association exercise or a brain-storming session.

2. From the list of topics, formulate your questions. Be thorough.

3. After questions have been formulated, consider the best sequence of questions.

   What topic leads naturally to the next? (This is not always a logical order but rather a psychological order.)

   Start with familiar questions, then lead into more difficult ones, and finish with simple ones.

   Consider adding extra questions to check the validity and consistency of responses. Word them differently from originals and keep them separate.

4. Test and finalize your questionaire.

</div>

Topics for Questions

The information that is essential to get from your questionnaire are the number and characteristics of homeless and runaway youth, and the accessibility and availability of services for youth. We'll explain why.

Numbers

Pinpointing numbers is difficult, but you will need some estimates for planning purposes. If you need financial support you'll be hard-pressed to get it without numbers to back you up. If you have to purchase a building, you will need to know how many youngsters you will be housing. Those who are already providing services will most likely be able to give you the closest estimate, but make it a point to ask everyone you interview.

Possible Ways To Phrase Questions About Numbers

We're asking people like yourself to estimate how many homeless and runaway youth are on the street at any given time in hopes of seeing a pattern. We'll use what you tell us in conjunction with other estimates to come up with some concensus on the size of this difficult-to-count population. Just give us your opinion of the situation based on your observations.

____0 to 10   ____10 to 20   ____20 to 30   ____30 to 40
____40 to 50   ____50 to 100   ____more than 100

What is your estimate of the number of homeless and runaway youth in _____?

How many young people do you know who are homeless? How many are under 21?

How many homeless and runaway youth under the age of 21 are you aware of?

Characteristics

You have to know the characteristics of the youth on the street in order to plan relevant services. Those characteristics include age, sex, race, education, employment status, financial situation, and origin of home. If you're thinking of a foster-care program for runaways and later learn that you are dealing with a homeless youth population which is over the age of majority and needs a transitional living program, you've taken one step forward and two steps back.

A Fixed Alternative Example of How to Ask About Characteristics

In your opinion, what percent of the homeless and runaway population are:

Age	Under 18 _____
	18 to 21 _____
Sex	Female _____
	Male _____
Race	White _____
	Black _____
	Hispanic _____
	Other _____
Education	H.S. drop-outs _____
	H.S. graduates _____
Employment Status	Unemployed _____
	Laid-off _____
	Employed _____
Financial Situation	No source of income _____
	Receiving general or home relief _____
	Receiving food stamps _____
	Receiving AFDC _____
	Receiving other public assistance _____
	Unemployment insurance _____
	Other sources of income, specify _____ _____
Home/ Origin	From city _____
	From metropolitan area _____
	From state _____
	From region _____
	From out-of-state _____
	From out-of-country _____

Here's are some examples of how information on characteristics might be of help:

Age
- Determines what licensing and other regulations a program will have to comply with.

- Different age groups need different services, e.g., younger children need school placement, older youth may need help with jobs.

- Will help determine to what extent parental involvement will be required or desireable.

Sex
- In residential programs, you need to plan the building layout appropriately.

- Specialized medical services might be necessary depending on sex.

- Clothing needs vary.

Race/ Ethnicity
- Special staff may be necessary to work with youth who do not speak English.

- The location of the program might vary depending on who the target population is.

Education
- If you are likely to see youth who have poor reading and math skills, an educational program might be needed.

Employment Status and Financial Situation
- Unemployed youth might be in need of jobs or job training.

- Help in gaining public assistance might be indicated if youth have no source of income.

Home/Origin
- Contact with the administrators of the Interstate Compact* must be made if the minors you will serve will be from out-of-state.

* The Interstate Compact on Juveniles is an agreement between the home state and the state in which the child is found. This agreement outlines the legal process by which a child is returned to the home state.

Group Characteristics

Other characteristics that you'll want to consider are "group characteristics," the behavior of the runaway and homeless group as a whole in your community. These include where they sleep, where they congregate, how they spend their time. Here are some examples of open-ended questions you can ask (you could also turn these into fixed-alternative questions by adding a list of choices):

```
In what areas are you likely to find homeless and runaway
youth?

What do they do there?

As far as you know, what do these youth do now for shelter,
for food, for health and for other basic needs?
```

Next you want to know about the problems that caused the youths to become homeless or runaway and then the problems they are facing because they are homeless.

```
Based on your experiences, what do you see as the contributing
factors leading to homelessness among youth?

     ___Lack of family
     ___Family problems
     ___Abuse and neglect
     ___Economic problems
     ___Drug or alcohol abuse by parent
     ___Sibling problems
     ___Peer pressures
     ___Pregnancy
     ___Unable to live independently
     ___Other_____
```

```
What problems are created because they are homeless?

     ___health problems
     ___serious emotional illness
     ___pregnancy
     ___termination of education
     ___unemployment
     ___conflict with the law
     ___substance abuse
     ___other_____
```

Availability and Accessibility of Services

Are there existing services for youth and are the youth using
these services? This information is important: if services are
not available, you may want to develop those particular services;
if they are available but are not being used, your program may
involve helping youngsters use those services. So, if you learn
that youth are not using services, find out why not.

The following is an example of how you might gather this
information though you would need to allow additional space
for writing responses:

I am going to read a list of services which homeless youth or "at-risk" youth and their families might use. Let me know if there are enough of these services available to meet the need, and what problems, if any young people have in making use of the services.		
	Enough?	What Barriers?

Shelter
  Emergency
  Transitional
  Permanant for over 17		

Health Care
  Physical Illness/Injury
  Pre-Natal/Post-Natal
  Dental		

Mental Health Care
  Psych Hosp/Day Centers
  Counseling/Therapy		

Basic Assistance
  Financial
  Housing
  Food
  Clothing		

Employment Services
  Job Training
  Job Placement		

Educational Services
  Special Education
  GED		

Substance Abuse
  Detox
  Residential
  Out-Patient		

Testing the Questionnaire

You'll want to try out your questionnaire to make sure it works.
A trial run:

- allows you to catch and solve problems in the phrasing,
  length, and sequence of questions, and to determine whether
  you need to add or eliminate questions.

- assures you that the questionnaire can be administered in
  a reasonable length of time. This way you can say to
  people you wish to interview, "I need forty minutes of your
  time," and be accurate.

Testing the questionnaire is done through several personal
interviews with people similar to those who will actually be
interviewed. A valuable part of the test is discussing the
questions with respondents after they've finished the
questionnaire. Select several of the more "weighty" questions and
ask the respondents:

- what the questions meant to them;
- what the difficulties were in replying;
- what further ideas were evoked by the questions; and,
- how would the respondent phrase the questions.

The interviewers should ask themselves the following questions:

1. What difficulties did you have in selecting the
respondents?

2. What difficulties did you have in interviewing them?

3. Did any points cause resistance or seem to be sensitive
areas?

4. Did respondents become bored or impatient? When?

5. Did you have trouble establishing a rapport?

6. On which questions did respondents need clarification?

7. Did you have room for recording answers?

8. Are there points brought up by respondents that were not
covered in the questionnaire?

If you find from the responses that substantial changes are
necessary, a second testing should be done.

Selecting and Training Interviewers

The interviewer's art consists of creating a situation wherein the respondent's answers will be reliable, that is, no matter who asks the questions, they are understood by the respondent to mean the same thing and the answers are based on that similar understanding. The ideal situation is a relaxed one in which respondents are encouraged to voice frank opinions without fearing that their opinions will be repeated to others not involved in the survey and without a value judgment made by the interviewer.

Either members of your group or volunteers specially recruited for these interviews can conduct them. Colleges or universities are a good source of volunteers. Graduate students might participate in the survey for college credit or as part of their field placement. Students who are the same age as the youngsters being interviewed should not be used for those particular interviews. This sets up potential problems: the youths might know one another or have friends who know each other and the respondent would then doubt his or her anonymity. Interviewers who are too young might, in some circumstances, lack desired credibility.

Keep in mind that these interviews may be your first contact with the agency or person being interviewed and, therefore, the start of an important on-going relationship. You want to slect and train people who will leave a positive first impression.

Those who do the interviewing must have a clear understanding of the purpose of the study and specific intent of each question: they must know whether each question is understood and answered in the intended manner. Training for the interviewers is therefore important.

The following areas should be covered during training:

Introducing Your Project: Each interviewer should begin with a brief introduction explaining who they are, about their interest in homeless and runaway youth and the reasons for the research and for interviewing this particular person and learning about their observations and concerns.

Asking The Questions: Training should help the interviewers phrase the questions in a consistent manner and give alternatives for rephrasing questions when necessary. If each interviewer rephrased questions as seemed necessary to him or her, there would be no guarantee that the responses could be compared.

```
+-----------------------------------------------------------+
|           Some Tips for Asking Questions                  |
|                                                           |
| If a respondent doesn't understand a question, the        |
| interviewer should first repeat it slowly.  This is       |
| usually all most people need.  If the question is         |
| still confusing, interviewers should offer the            |
| explanation that has been advised.  If comprehension      |
| is still lacking, note this on the questionnaire and      |
| move on.                                                  |
|                                                           |
| The interviewer should not skip questions or jump         |
| around on the questionnaire form since each question      |
| sets up a frame of reference for succeeding questions     |
| and sometimes the answer to a later question will be      |
| influenced by facts brought to attention in an            |
| earlier one.                                              |
|                                                           |
| It may sometimes seem that a respondent has already       |
| given his or her opinion in answering a prior             |
| question, but the interviewer must ask the later          |
| question to be sure.  The question could be prefaced       |
| with: "Now we may have touched on this already, but..."   |
+-----------------------------------------------------------+
```

Obtaining a Valid Response: This is the most difficult
part of the interviewer's job. People often curtail their
opinions or say they don't know. Other times they
misinterpret the question, go off on a tangent, or
contradict themselves. The interviewer must be alert to
these responses.

When doing interviews, interviewers should get in the habit
of asking themselves after every reply, "Does that
specifically answer the question?" Follow-up questions, or
"probes," are sometimes necessary. These probes indicate
that the interviewer is interested and they make a direct
request for more information. For example, if an answer is
too general, then the follow-up should be: "In what way?"
or "Give me an example."

For incomplete answers, follow up with, "Any other
reasons?" "Can you tell me a little more?" Other follow-
ups: "What makes you think this?" or "What do you have in
mind?"

Simply repeating what the respondent has said is another
good way to probe. The respondent, hearing his or her
words, may be prompted to say more. Sometimes a simple
pause accompanied by an expectant look will encourage the
respondent to continue. Probes should remain neutral. The
interviewer must be careful not to suggest a reply.

The "I don't know" answer presents another problem. It can be an honest answer or it could be an easy way out of expressing vague opinions, or reluctance to focus on the issue or to speak one's mind. To get around this, follow up with, "I just want your opinion on it; there are no right or wrong answers." Or, "Many people have never thought about this, but I'd like to have your ideas on it anyway."

Recording the Response: An interviewer should be prepared to begin writing as the respondent is talking. Responses to free-answer questions must be recorded completely. It will be difficult to get down everything that the respondent says but, aside from inconsequences and repetitions, this should be the goal. Right after the interview, the interviewer should make a quick spot-check of the questionnaire to make sure nothing was missed.

Interviewers should have an understanding of how the answers will be used so that they can see the danger of paraphrasing in recording answers. What your interviewers write down is all that the information you will have when you analyze the data (unless, of course, your analysts are your interviewers). If something is omitted, an important distinction may be lost, causing the answer to be misclassified. Tape recorders can be used with the respondent's permission. However, transcribing tapes is very time consuming and therefore taping may be impractical.

6

COMMUNITY FORUMS AND GROUP THINK SESSIONS

- Community Forums
- Group Think Sessions
- Advantages and Disadvantages

Any person living or working in a community is likely to have consciously or unconsciously developed some ideas about the needs of youth in that community. No one person has a comprehensive view; and, it is likely that no two people have the same view. Yet each view portrays some aspect of the existing reality. By pulling them together you start to develop a picture -- although an impressionistic one -- of the needs of youth in a community. Two quick and effective methods of tapping these views are Group Think Sessions and Community Forums.

We do not recommend the Group Think Sessions or Community Forums as the primary needs assessment tool because the results are dependent on many variables, which will be discussed later. However, at the start of an assessment, these methods can provide background for your research or help focus your questions. At the end of an assessment, they can fill in some gaps. They can also be used as an information-sharing technique to involve citizens in a particular problem and to identify those most interested in doing something about it. These people can be helpful as volunteers for carrying out other segments of the needs assessment, in planning and implementing ways to overcome unmet needs, and in identifying others who could help.

Community Forums

The Community Forum approach to needs assessment involves one or more public meetings to which residents of a community are invited to provide comments, opinions and additional information about community needs. In some instances, you may be required to hold a public forum on the issues (e.g., for some types of government funding or if you are part of a government agency). On the other hand, if you are a new or an inexperienced group, you may not command the type of participation that would make a forum useful.

The essentials of planning a useful and informative community
forum include the following:

A Purpose To The Meeting Knowing and clearly articulating
your purpose will provide the forum with direction. It
should be stated in clear terms so that everyone can readily ·
understand what is to be achieved and, after the forum, what
has been achieved. Be upfront about your purpose. It
should be stated that this is a research project which might
not result in additional services if a need does not exist.

People To Organize and Staff The Forum People are needed to
define the purpose, locate a chairperson and site, publicize
the meeting, invite and schedule speakers, direct traffic,
record minutes and arrange refreshments. If you have
experienced people in your group, you might get directly
involved in the conduct of the meeting. If not, your staff
should be available to answer questions and raise issues at
the forum. They should be careful not to dominate the
meeting or restrict discussion as this might inhibit
participation by certain community members.

Carefully Planned Publicity Publicize the forum through as
many media channels as are likely to reach the prospective
participants, making special attempts to reach segments of
the community from whom you might not usually hear, e.g.,
teenagers, the elderly, disabled, or non-English speaking.
Publicity can include notices in local newspapers; posters
in stores; fliers distributed on busy sidewalks, in shopping
malls, or subway stations; mass mailings, and announcements
on radio and television stations. Local radio and TV
stations might be willing to air a public service
announcement (PSA) about your forum, free of charge.

Public announcements should include the general purpose of
the forum, place, date, time, organizers and leaders. It
may be relevant for some media notices to be in other
languages.

A Neutral and Accessible Location It is best to choose a
centrally located public space that does not have any strong
affiliation to a particular group so that people feel at
ease about going to the forum and open to speaking their
mind.

A Widely Respected Chairperson The forum should be chaired
by a person who is respected by diverse groups within the
community and who has the ability to run a meeting without
needing to dominate it. This person's role will be to
explain the purpose of the forum, establish groundrules, and
recognize speakers. Closing comments should come from the
chairperson in the form of a summary of the needs and
services identified and/or the recommendations developed by
the group in order of consensus.

Clear and Simple Groundrules At the very outset of the forum the chairperson should propose the groundrules to the group and ascertain their approval. These should include rules for the order of speakers, length of time allotted to each, and adherence to the topic.

Some suggested groundrules include a maximum of three minutes of talking per person and preference in speaking given to those who have not spoken before. The chairperson will find that some people get off the subject. In those instances, it will be necessary to periodically remind the forum of the general purpose of the meeting. However, if someone insists on speaking about another subject, it is often best to just let them have their say for the time prescribed. The chairperson should then be able to lead the discussion back to the subject.

A Way To Record All Comments To the extent possible, the meeting should be recorded either manually or electronically to preserve all viewpoints and discussions for future reference. The recorder must be able to remain neutral so that the record of the meeting is truly representative of the comments that were made. Since some people are uncomfortable being tape recorded, if you are planning to tape, let the participants know before the proceedings start.

If the community forum approach is to be successful, efforts must be made to stimulate discussion and clarify the group's perception of the needs of the population at risk. It is sometimes beneficial to divide a large turnout into small groups which come together at the end to combine ideas.

It is very important to take action of some sort on the basis of the forum. If this is not done, the forum's momentum-generating capacity is lost and the opportunities for later successful meetings reduced. While it may not be feasible to reach everyone who attended, a report summarizing what was learned and what action, if any, is to be taken as a result should be sent to key community leaders, local newspapers, television and radio stations. Enthusiastic participants can be contacted to help work on the issues, or you can assign individuals or groups to specific tasks at thee time of the meeting.

Group Think Sessions

Group Think Sessions are another method of getting community views on the needs of homeless and runaway youth. Sessions might be held as a method in and of itself or as an effective way to follow-up on the results of a Community Forum. It involves conducting workshops in which selected individuals are asked to discuss problems and share their views. This is an effective technique for eliciting many different and creative ideas from a group of people while insuring that all workshop participants have an opportunity to talk. For less experienced people, this method may be preferable to holding a Community Forum since this is a more formal, structured procedure.

Participants can include community leaders, agency directors, or potential clients. Small groups of 6 to 10 people work best for this method. Depending on financial and time constraints, a series of sessions can be planned to get broad participation.

A group leader skilled in the art of group decision-making is a necessary component of this technique. The group leader keeps the group focused on the task at hand by minimizing extraneous conversation and neutralizes the effects dominant group members might have on the discussion. Depending on the kind of results you would like to obtain, the task may require that group members be chosen from those who are knowledgeable about the issues and best able to articulate their ideas.

A short list of questions should be developed for participants to respond to. These questions might involve:

- perceptions of the needs of homeless and runaway youth
- which of those needs are unmet
- which populations are missed by the social service system
- what are the barriers to services

There are a number of possible ways of working in these small groups. They include:

1. Each person is asked to write his or her feelings about the questions and list possible solutions. After a period of individual work, each person is asked to present one of the points on his/her list, and this is entered on a large sheet of paper or a chalkboard. After each person has presented one point, each is then asked to present a second point, and so on, until all points have been recorded on a master sheet. A period of discussion follows during which new ideas can be presented and ideas combined or eliminated.

Group members then vote individually on the items which they feel are most important. The group leader tallies the votes and ranks the items accordingly.

2. Each question is considered by the whole group out loud. A list of responses is made by the recorder on large sheets of paper. After all ideas have been listed. The group then discusses the ideas and sets priorities through concensus opinion.

Some form of feedback subsequent to the workshop is desirable. This may be as simple as a letter thanking the participants or it may be a report indicating steps to be taken to implement the results of the Group Think Session.

Advantages and Disadvantages of These Methods

Advantages

- They provide a means of reaching groups or individuals who would not be heard from via other methods of needs assessment.

- They can help build a better relationship between your organization and the community.

- They can usually be organized in a short time.

- They allow for interaction between various groups which represent different viewpoints.

- They provide a means of soliciting volunteers to work with you. You can put out a sign up sheet.

- With Group Think Sessions, you can select your participants for their level of knowledge about the subject you want discussed.

Disadvantages

Most disadvantages of community forums can be avoided with
adequate planning, but these are pitfalls to be aware of:

● The success of the meeting depends entirely on the
persons who attend: what their experience has been with
homeless and runaway youth, how knowledgeable they are,
how articulate they are, and what particular issues
interest them. If an important community group is
missing, the results could be misleading. However, if
your chairperson knows the area, he or she will be aware
of which groups and opinions are not represented and
therefore can help counteract the skew in your
information.

● Unless there is an experienced moderator, groups can
get sidetracked and can be dominated by one opinion or
one vocal participant. The results are then skewed.

● Forums and Group Think Sessions can raise community
expectations about future services to unrealistic levels.

● If the forum is not well attended there is the
possibility of negative publicity about the importance of
your issue.

● The results of Forums are often very general because
the groups can be large and the allotted time too short
for an in-depth discussion of any one idea. The results
therefore lack the kind of detail that is most useful in
planning services.

● Unless there is a major organization sponsoring the
event, participations might be limited.

Planning Sheet for Community Forum ___ or Group Think ✓

Topic: The Needs of Homeless Youth in Riverside

Purpose: To determine what kinds of services would best fill the gaps and reach the kids. And to recruit volunteers to help necessary program development.

Questions for Discussion (if relevant):

① What are the 3 most needed services?

② Taking these 3 services, what methods can be used to ensure that homeless youth use the service once it's available?

③ In what ways can the social service community & the neighborhood groups work together to make the above happen?

Method for Publicizing: Invite 30 specific individuals by mail – people who work with the homeless, with youth and from the neighborhood associations. Include response card.

Groundrules or Method for Involving Participants:
Divide into groups of 5 plus one member of our staff (who will clarify questions and record) Questions will be written on large sheets of paper around the room. Groups will brainstorm & then set priorities. Hotline Director will open meeting with a few comments & explain process. At the end, she will sum up.

How speakers will be selected: N/A
Time alotted per speaker or per topic: 1/2 hour per question

Materials Needed: Large paper, markers, pads and pens
Coffee, milk, sugar, cookies, cups, napkins

Chairperson: Director of Hotline   Date: Sept 15 Time: 6-8 pm

Location: Trinity Church Youth Center 480 Main Street

List the people who will be responsible for the following tasks:

Establishing Topic, Purpose, Questions, Groundrules
   All
Finding the Chairperson Harriet
Locating Space Lester and Marsha
Staffing the Event All + 2 other hotline volunteers, Al & Tracy
Recording Information All
Publicity Marsha
Locating Materials Anne and Marsha
Arranging Transportation N/A
Other

7

ANALYZING THE DATA

- Collating the Information
- Using Graphs and Charts
- What Is Your Data Telling You?

Now you've finished collecting information and you're sitting before a desk covered with questionnaires, statistics, tape recordings, observation forms, and newspaper clippings. How do you make order out of this collection of diverse facts and figures? What information should be given priority and what will have less bearing on your decision making?

The goals is to:

1. Summarize what you have learned.

2. Compare and analyze the various facts and opinions.

3. Draw conclusions about what is needed in your community based on what you have learned.

4. Develop recommendations.

5. Present this in a way that will be convincing and can be the basis for planning the new services, if any are needed.

6. Communicate the results to those necessary to help you proceed.

Collating the Information

Let's return to the circle diagram of the community, families within the community, youth at-risk, and homeless and runaway youth. Looking at the diagram, categorize each piece of information you've collected from every source. Keep track of the sources of the information (e.g., names of people or magazine articles) and the method by which you collected it (e.g., survey, observation). One the follwing page, we've divided the information into the four categories.

Community

Riverside is the 4th poorest
town in the state.(1980 Census)

45% of population is black;
35% white; 30% hispanic.
(1984 Chamber of Commerce).

Neighborhoods change suddenly
with very poor people and
wealthy living next door in
many cases. (Observation)
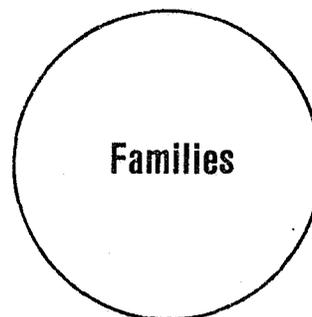
Families

Over 26% of the families live
live below the poverty level;
10% is the national average.
(1980 Census)

In 1983, 20.7% of children
6 to 17 were living only with
their mother; 2.3% with only
father; and, 3.1 with neither.
(Statistical Abstract of the
U.S. 1985)

"At-Risk" Youth
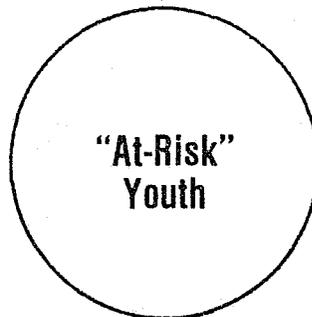
Youth unemployment reached
32% in 1983. The national
average was 21.4%. For
Black youth, the local rate
is 54%. (Bureau of Labor
Statistics).

On a given day 1/8 of the
public school students are
absent. (School Board
statistics)

Only one GED (General
Equivalency Diploma) program
exists and the waiting list
is long. (Interviews)

Homeless and Runaway Youth
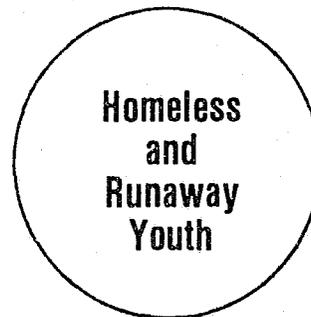
The juvenile squad of the Police
Dept. estimates 30 youths on the
streets each night. (Interview
with Police Chief).

The local hotline received 1,800
calls for assistance from home-
less young people in 1985.
(Hotline Statistics).

On Main Street and Broadway,
young people can be seen getting
in and out of cars which cicle
the block. (Observation).

Within the categories of homeless and runaway youth and "at risk"
youth, particularly, group the information according to subject
matter. We've provided a worksheet which you can copy and use to
collate your information.

Worksheet for Collating Information

Category (e.g., homeless and runaway youth) _homeless & runaway youth_
Subject (e.g., numbers of youth) _The major service needs._

Source	Information
Martha Ward, Dir Youth Emergency Shelter	For youth under 18, mental health services, both outpatient and inpatient and drug abuse prevention. For youth 18+, emergency housing, transitional living programs and job training.
Frank Quercio, Cpt Youth Bureau, P.D.	Emergency shelter and counselling especially for youths 16+. They see a lot of kids too old for the runaway shelter or who have been there & got kicked out and can't go back. Youth will not use the adult shelters. They stay on the street. Sometimes they get arrested.

After you've grouped each piece of information, examine the
various responses within each category. Look for similarities or
relationships between answers. In open-ended questions, look for
common answers; in community forum or group-think sessions,
consensus of opinion. Group similar responses to a question into
one category so that you can say how many people think a certain
way about homeless youth. Fixed response questions naturally lend
themselves to grouping, however, it is possible to group open-
ended questionns too. For example, on the subject, Extent of the
Problem, you might group your answers into either "no problem," "a
moderate problem," or "a big problem."

Using Graphs and Charts

As you are thinking about the information you have collected, it
is often helpful to look at it in pictorial form. Graphs and
charts visually represent the answers in a way that helps you
describe the results of your survey and highlights particular
points in written reports and presentations.

For example, focusing on the category of homeless and runaway
youth, we will illustrate the responses about the most immediate
needs of homeless youth. In our examples of survey questions, we
suggested the following question:

"What are the three most immediate needs of homeless
and runaway youth?"

_____ shelter
_____ food
_____ health care
_____ clothing
_____ counseling
_____ protection (from parents, peers, pimps, etc.)

In order to see what the consensus of opinion was, lets tabulate
sample results. Start by assigning a number to every answer:
shelter (1), food (2), health care (3), clothing (4), counseling
(5), and protection (6).

Now on a piece of graph paper draw the horizontal line and place
numbers 1 through 6 underneath, evenly spaced. Next draw a
vertical line stemming from point zero. It should be long enough
to record every response; that is, if you asked 20 people the
question about immediate needs, number the vertical axis 1 to 20.

The last step is to read through your answers. Every time someone
answers "shelter" you mark an X over number 1; "food" gets an X
over 2; "health care" over 3; and so on. When you are finished
you will be able to see from reading the number on the vertical
axis how many opinions you have for each category. The categories
with the highest opinions will need to be given priority when
developing a program.

```
        Immediate Needs of Homeless and Runaway Youth

                  10 | X
                   9 | X
                   8 | X                          Service Key
  Number of        7 | X      X                   1-Shelter
  Responses        6 | X      X                   2-Food
                   5 | X      X                   3-Health Care
                   4 | X  X   X                   4-Clothing
                   3 | X  X   X      X            5-Counseling
                   2 | X  X   X   X  X            6-Protection
                   1 | X  X   X   X  X   X
                   0 |_____
                     1  2   3   4  5   6
                            Services
```
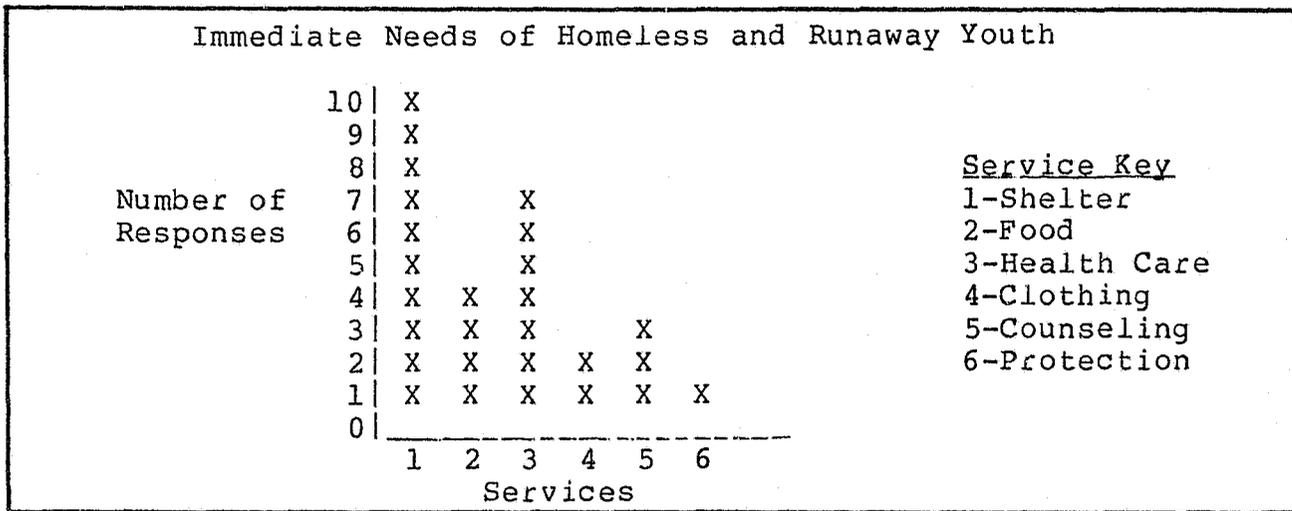
Examples of Demographics Charts

```
  Families Below Poverty Level              Youth Unemployment
        U.S. Census 1980              Bureau of Labor Statistics 1983

     40 |                               40 |          33% 34%
  P  35 |                            p  35 |       29%        30%
  e  30 |                            e  30 |
  r  25 |             26%            r  25 |  21%
  c  20 |         19%                c  20 |
  e  15 | 10% 10%        15%         e  15 |
  n  10 |                            n  10 |
  t   5 |_____          t   5 |_____
         1   2   3   4   5                  1   2   3   4   5
                Cities                             Cities
```
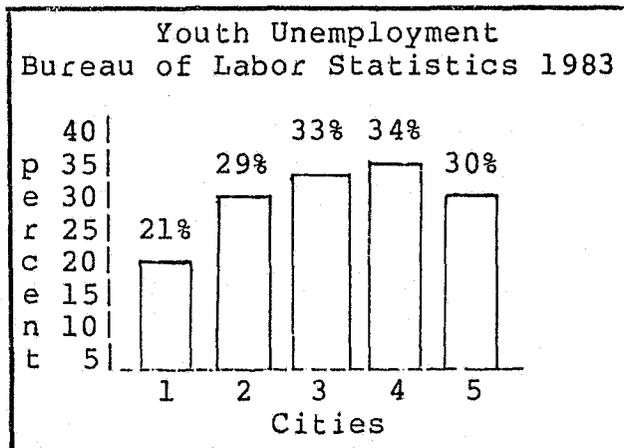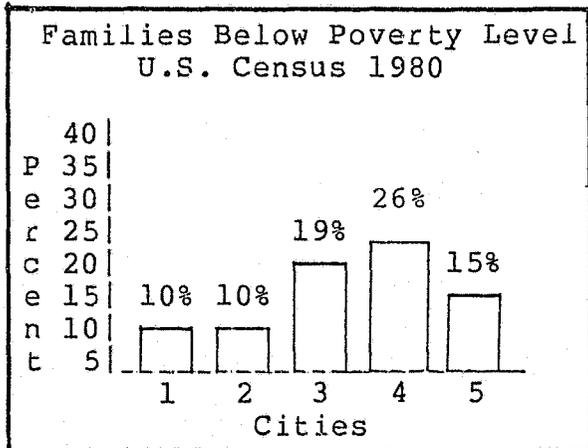
City Key: 1=National 2=Houston 3=N.Y.C. 4=Riverside 5=Urbandale

What Is Your Data Telling You?

Now that you have your data condensed into small, reasonable categories in order to interpret it better, what is it saying?

1. Within each category summarize the information and the points of view.

2. Go back to your initial questions and answer them based on your summaries. For example:

  • What are the characteristics of the homeless and runaway youth in your community?

  • Is a new program needed? What type of program? Is there a call for direct services such as a residential program, or indirect services such as a community education program?

  • Is a new program needed?

  • What evidence supports this?

3. Determine what questions remain unanswered and, with your work group, decide whether the information is needed **now** for you to make recommendations. For example, do you have enough evidence to indicate that there is a problem with homeless and runaway youth in your community? Decisions about what constitutes "enough" can be difficult to make. Use your work group and perhaps others who have not been involved in the project to help you evaluate this. Make an informal presentation, ask for questions and challenges, and discuss their impressions.

4. If you need more information, develop a plan to gather it.

5. If your information seems adequate, work with your group to develop recommendations based on the data obtained.

6. Plan your presentation of this information after determining who your audience is. Think about:

  • Can you mobilize community groups for support?

  • What are the courses of action are open to you?

8

Developing the Formal Report

The value of a needs assessment lies in its ability to assess the adequacy of existing services as well as to define the necessity for new services. Not all needs assessments will reveal the need for major changes in the delivery of services. They should, however, provide enough information about the target group and available services so that planners and decision-makers can identify where services are adequate and where improvements should be made.

This last step of the needs assessment involves communicating what you have learned and identifying the implications of the information in the final report so that others can understand what your needs assessment was all about. True, writing reports is difficult--everyone feels that way--but all you're really doing is presenting the story of your assessment:

- What made you decide to conduct one.

- How you did your research.

- What you learned from it.

- What should be done.

Six Steps to Your Written Report

1. A statement of the problem. Provide background information on why and how you became aware of the problem so it is clear why the problem was considered worth investigating, e.g., "A large number of homeless and runaway youth are congregating in Oceanview." Give figures, facts, dates, and examples. Your Focus Worksheet can provide some of this information.

2. State questions investigated. For example, are there services for homeless and runaway youth? Are these services being used? Again, the Focus Worksheet can be helpful.

3. The data-collection techniques. What methods did you use to learn the answers to your questions? What sources did you use? How many people did you speak to? What problems did you run into in collecting data? Include a discussion of the factors which might have skewed the data, e.g., if you were unable to talk to any youth, you are missing one important perspective on the issues. Here are some of the questions to answer in this section:

Basic Information

> Was any information about the Community, Families, At-Risk
>   Youth, and Homeless and Runaway Youth based on statistics
>   or other written documents?
> What sources did you use?
>
> Observation
>
> Was any information based on observation?
> What areas did you travel to? What hours? How often?
>
> Questionnaires
>
> What questions were asked? (Attach a copy of the
> questionnaire to the report)
> How many people were interviewed?
> Who was interviewed? (Attach list of interviewees whose
> names were not to remain confidential)
> How were they selected?
> Who did the interviewing?
> How were they trained for the survey?
>
> Community Forums and Group Think Sessions
>
> Was any information based on community forums or group think
>   sessions? (Attach a copy of the minutes of the meetings,
>   if available)
> Who attended the forums/sessions?
> What questions were discussed?
> Was a general consensus of opinion reached? If not, why not?
> What was the outcome of the meetings?

4. The results. Give all the results of your needs assessment. Outline the full report ahead of time to help you organize the different sections. Then, use the summaries you developed in analyzing your information to flesh out the report. You might need to rewrite them to conform to the format of the report or to read more smoothly.

Charts, tables and maps that compare data in a graphic way make the information easier to comprehend and digest. For planning purposes, some of the data may be presented simply in the form of number and percentage tables. These are easy to present but have the disadvantage of being cumbersome to read.

At this point, you will have to balance the need to present complete information which will allow your reader to draw his or her own conclusions with the need to provide your audience with information that can be read relatively quickly. Many people will not read through a 50 page document though they may be very commited to the cause. Again, use your group and as well as less involved readers to help you strike a balance.

5. Conclusions and recommendations. The reporting of data is not enough by itself to convey its meaning. Relate the data back to the problem of homeless and runaway youth and discuss the conclusions, recommendations and next steps that were determined by your work group.

6.The Executive Summary. Often, reports such as needs assessment are summarized in one or two pages at the beginning. This allows people who are interested in the topic to quickly get an idea of the content and ecide whether they would like to read on. In an Executive Summary, restate problem, questions, methodologies, findings, and the conclusions as concisely as possible.

On the following pages is an abridged version of a needs assessment that might be written by the group we have been following from Riverside. This will give you some ideas on how to present the information you learn in your needs assessment.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT
OF
RIVERSIDE'S HOMELESS AND RUNAWAY YOUTH POPULATION

Introduction

In March, 1986, the staff of the Crisis Intervention Hotline
(CIH), decided to assess the needs of homeless and runaway youth
in Riverside. This decision was based upon statistics collected
during the past two years at CIH and a general feeling among
staff that some specialized services seemed warranted for this
population. Indeed, our records indicated that homeless youth
were calling CIH in increasing numbers: 1000 calls in 1984 and
1800 in 1985. The hotline staff did not feel that appropriate
referrals for these youth and their families were available.
Many of us were aware that large numbers of youth were
congregating in downtown areas and that many people of all ages
were on the streets begging and sleeping in the local parks.

To focus our awareness and concern we developed a few key
questions that we hoped the needs assessment would answer:

    1)   Is there a homeless youth population for which new
          services are needed?
    2)   If yes, what are the characteristics of the youth?
    3)   What services are needed?
    4)   Which of these are feasible for us to provide or
          develop given our resources?

Methodology

With the CIH administration's full support, one day a week of a
paid staff member's time was donated to coordinate the needs
assessment research for a six month period. Four other
volunteers participated in this research which involved a variety
of methods. We first reviewed written materials including grant
proposals found in the agency files, newspaper articles,
directories of local social service agencies, information
obtained from the League of Women Voters, and census data from
the City Planning Department. These materials provided general
background and identified additional sources of information.

After compiling statistical data, we observed Riverside
neighborhoods where adolescents congregate. Informally, we spoke
with 10 street youth about their present situations. A
formalized questionnaire was then developed to poll knowledgeable
professionals about the characteristics of homeless youth,
present services for youth and the adequacy of these services to
meet the needs of those on the street. Before initiating the
survey, the questionnaire was tested and revised, and volunteer
interviewers were trained to use it in a manner which would
ensure the reliability of the responses. With this instrument,
we interviewed 50 representatives from 38 social service
agencies, government agencies and community services. (See list
in the appendix.)

At the point in the needs assessment when the problem of homeless
youth in Riverside had been well-documented, a group think
session was held. Twenty representatives from organizations and
community groups interested in the homeless attended and
discussed the best approach for responding to the problem. The
results from this meeting along with an analysis of the data
compiled provide the basis for our recommendations at the end of
this report.

General Background

As an industrial center, Riverside attracts many people of diverse ethnic backgrounds and traditions because of the job opportunities it provides. Unfortunately, the city's industry is failing at present. This has resulted in lay-offs and unforeseen difficulties for newcomers who come hoping to find jobs--a situation which contributes significantly to the city's homeless population. Statistics acquired from our research provide other important indicators regarding the community, its families and the youth-at-risk which may also bring about homelessness:

  - Of U.S. cities, Riverside is one of the poorest with 26.4%, of people living below the poverty level; one third of the poor are children.

  - The state has the third highest teen pregnancy rate in the country. One out of every eight girls between the ages of 15 and 19 becomes pregnant each year.

  - Reports to the police department of physical and sexual abuse and neglect almost doubled from the first 10 months of 1984 to the same period of time in 1985; in 1985, 80% of the claims that were made were legitimate.

  - In 1983, city unemployment for youth ages 16 - 19 was 34.4% where the national average was 21.4%.

```
Families Below Poverty Level
       U.S. Census 1980

   40|
P  35|
e  30|                26%
r  25|           19%
c  20|                      15%
e  15| 10%  10%
n  10|
t   5|
      1    2    3    4    5
             Cities
```

```
         Youth Unemployment
  Bureau of Labor Statistics 1983

   40|           33%  34%
p  35|      29%            30%
e  30|
r  25| 21%
c  20|
e  15|
n  10|
t   5|
      1    2    3    4    5
             Cities
```
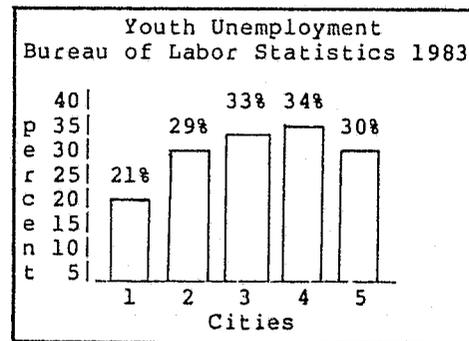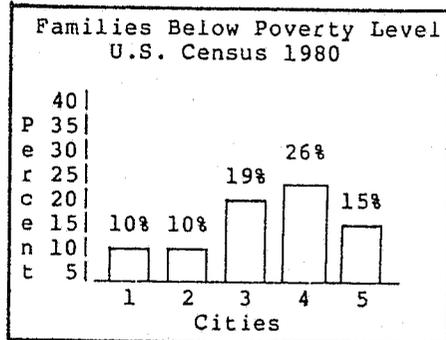
City Key: 1=National 2=Houston 3=N.Y.C. 4=Riverside 5=Urbandale

Homeless Youth: The Extent of the Problem

No study exists which definitively reports the number of homeless youth in the city. In 1980, a mayoral task force completed a comprehensive needs assessment which estimated there were 4,000 homeless people in the city. In 1985, agencies serving the homeless estimated that 5% of the 4000 homeless people are runaways (under the age of 18). In addition, the police department estimates that 10-15% of the 3,000-4,000 people in the city jail are 17-21; most are there for crimes such as loitering and sleeping in public.

Though difficult to count, direct observation of the city's neighborhoods offers concrete testimony to this population's presence. A number of subgroups of younger and older youth, girls and boys, black, white, gay and straight youth can be seen in downtown areas during the day and at night. We observed approximately 30 different youth who appeared to be under 21 during Observations. Of the ten youth to whom we spoke, seven were under 18. The majority of the young people were male, about half were white.

Stealing, drug dealing, and prostitution figured predominantly in respondents' descriptions of how these youth get by. Youth activity of this kind is most visible in the downtown area marked by Elm Street, Main Street, Broadway and Maywood Avenue. There are a number of abandoned building in the downtown area in which these youth sleep when the weather is mild. In cold weather, groups of youth rent motel rooms when they have the money; some sleep on the public transportation; other find refuge in the public library during the day.

In addition to this area, older male youth (18 - 21) can be found in the vicinity of Riverside's "skid row". This population consists primarily of youths who have come to the city looking for work. Given the present job market in Riverside, many remain unemployed. Amidst this group are a number of young people who may be alcoholic or mentally ill.

Services for Homeless Youth

There is considerable agreement among those interviewed in their assessments of existing services. Services were examined for their adequacy -- the legree to which there are enough services of a given type to meet the needs of homeless youths -- and their accessibility -- how easily a youth can make use of a service. The table below illustrates impressions of service adequacy.

SERVICES SEEN AS INADEQUATE TO MEET YOUTH NEEDS

Service	Percent of Respondents*
Emergency Shelter Care	93
Transitional Housing	82
Mental Health Services	74
Substance Abuse Services	68
Vocational Services	57
Alternative Education	52
Medical Services	50
Parenting and Pregnant Teen Services	37

*At least 50% of respondents expressed an opinion.

Residential Needs. Ninety-three percent of the informants who expressed an opinion about shelter care, felt that there is a need for more short-term, emergency shelter. Currently, there are 500 beds in the adult shelters. Though these beds are filled 95%-100% of the time; few are occupied by youth. A number of factors inhibit use by young people: the adults in the shelters do not welcome youth, one charges a fee, identification is required, the shelters are closed during the day, allow only brief stays and do not provide any of the social services critical in helping youngsters change lifestyles.

The runaway shelter, of which almost all respondents were aware, provides 12 emergency beds and support services to youth up to the age of 18. Though the beds are not always filled, licensing regulations do not allow the shelter to accept youth who are 18 and older. There are 60 beds in the battered women's shelters and family shelters which might accommodate a young mother and her children for a short period of time; there are long waiting lists for these programs.

Vocational Services. Although respondents felt the vocational training programs available were good, 57% of the respondents felt that there are not enough of them. In fact, a number of vocational-technical schools and apprenticeship and training programs do exist. These services appear to be under-utilized and they are not well publicized. Other services such as employment counseling and job readiness training were also available but not utilized. Employment opportunities, particularly for unskilled youth, are extremely limited.

(A formal report should include an in-depth analysis of each service identified. The two examples used above are relevant to the following section.)

SUMMARY

The needs assessment has succeeded in answering the questions originally outlined. Research indicated that there is a homeless youth population in Riverside. The lifestyle these young people lead is one of daily subsistence: aimless activity during the day; finding shelter in vacant cars, parks, and buildings, with friends or acquaintances at night. This lifestyle leaves this population, often already emotionally or psychologically disturbed, highly susceptible to being incarcerated, exploited, and to abusing drugs and alcohol. Clearly, a variety of services is needed to help this group.

From the assessment we learned of a number of agencies now serving youth. These services included substance abuse programs, vocational services, alternative education programs, pre-natal services and parenting programs. Respondents felt strongly that if these services were better coordinated and tailored to specifically meet the needs of homeless youth, they would ensure comprehensive planning for each youth. Respondents also thought that some services are under-utilized because youth do not know about them or do not use them because of location, cost or fear of institutions and authorities. Utilization could be increased by making aggressive outreach to homeless youth a part of these present programs.

Varying levels of agreement were reached regarding significant gaps in the existence and availability of services for homeless youth. Almost all respondents, however, agreed that there was inadequate short-term emergency shelter for youths 18-21 years of age. In addition, this group stressed the need for housing and transitional living programs to better prepare the subgroup of 18-21 year olds for independent living. Mental health programs, including in and out-patient care, for those adolescents whose problems were not severe enough to warrant hospitalization were identified as the next most pressing need. Finally, lack of medical care for homeless youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given these results, we recommend that CIH immediately begin to
utilize the existing youth agencies discovered from this
assessment in its referrals. We also recommend that one staff
member be designated the responsibility for establishing a
network with these agencies as well as planning an outreach
program to publicize their existence. CIH must then assess its
internal resources, i.e., finances, volunteers, levels of
expertise, to determine what further commitment it can make in
meeting the needs identified in this report.

If feasible, we suggest that CIH expand its services to aid the
homeless youth population 18-21 years old. This could be done by
opening a small residence (10-12 beds) for emergency and
transitional shelter near downtown on a public transportation
route. It is possible that a larger program will be needed;
however, given the difficulty in determining the size of the
population, we recommend expanding later if the need exists.
While in residence the youth could receive counseling, life
skills training and communication skills training from CIH staff.
As a consequence of the referral network mentioned above, youth
could be referred for educational, vocational, and job readiness
training. However, a component of the program should be the
development of entry level jobs opportunities.

Given the nature of the problem of homeless youth and its
connection to complex social and economic factors, it would be
unrealistic to think we can alleviate it or meet all of the needs
identified in this assessment. However, we do feel a residential
program would be a welcome addition to the present services
available to homeless youth; this, together with the expansion
and coordination of the above-mentioned services, could very
effectively help young people establish a lifestyle independent
of the streets.

9

GETTING STARTED

Studying the needs of homeless and runaway youth in your community demands a lot of work. But the hard work is so very worthwhile. It can result in great benefits for many youth and their families, and for your community.

The group from Riverside will present their needs assessment to the Director and the Board of Directors of CIH. The recommendations to enhance the referral system at CIH and to initiate a network of programs serving homeless and runaway youth are relatively easy and inexpensive to pursue. These will begin immediately. Developing a residence is a much larger task which requires additional research into funding sources and a lengthy debate over whether it is within the mission of CIH to expand their services in this way.

As you can see, completing a needs assessment is really a beginning: it's the first step in an effort to reach out and care for young people -- and their families. It is our hope that this manual will help you reach out in your community.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bell, Roger A., ed. _Assessing Health and Human Service Needs_. New York, NY: Human Science Press, 1983.

Biggs, Lucy. _Children's Services in the 80's: What Are They? How Can They Be Met?_ Manchester, NH: Paper presented at the Regional Conference of the New England Association for the Education of Young Children, April 1984.

Delbecq, A.L., A.H. Van de Ven, and D.H. Gustafson. _Group Techniques for Program Planning: A Guide to Nominal Group and Delphi Processes_. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1975

Fink, Arlene and Jacqueline Kosecoff. _How to Conduct Surveys: A Step-by-Step Guide_. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1985

Fitz-Gibbon, Carol Taylor and Lynn Lyons Morris. _How to Calculate Statistics_. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1978

Gordon, M.D., James S. _Caring for Youth: Essays on Alternative Services_. Rockville, MD: National Institute of Mental Health, 1978

Gordon, M.D., James S. and Margaret Beyer, eds. _Reaching Troubled Youth: Runaways and Community Mental Health_. Rockville, MD: National Institute of Mental Health, 1981

Massachusetts Commission for Children and Youth. _Needs Assessment Instructional Kit_. Boston, MA: The Commission, July 1976.

Minnesota State Planning Agency. _Needs Assessment: A Guide for Human Service Agencies_. St. Paul, MN: The Agency, January 1977.

National Institute of Mental Health. _Resource Materials for Community Mental Health Program Evaluation_. Rockville, MD: Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. 1977.

National Network of Runaway and Youth Services. _To Whom Do They Belong? A Profile of America's Homeless and Runaway Youth and the Programs That Help Them_. Washington, D.C.: The Network, July 1985.

Neuber, Keith. _Needs Assessment_. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1980.

Shaffer, David and Carol L.M. Caton. _Runaway and Homeless Youth in New York City_. New York, N.Y.: A Report to the Ittleson Foundation, January 1984.

Sellitz, Claire, Lawrence S. Wrightman, and Stuart W. Cook. _Research Methods in Social Relations_. 3rd ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976

Sereny, Gitta. The Invisible Children. New York, NY: Alfred Knopf, 1985.

Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research. Interviewer's Manual. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1976

United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Census Data for Community Action. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Rev., October 1978.

United States Department of Transportation. On the Run: A Guide for Helping Runaway Youth in Transportation Centers. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Transportation, 1980.

United Way of America. Needs Assessment: A Guide for Planners, Managers, and Funders of Health and Human Care Services. Alexandria, VA: United Way of America, November 1982.

Upshur, Carole C. How to Set Up and Operate a Non-Profit Organization. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1982.

Warheit, G.J., R.A. Bell, and J.J. Schwab. Needs Assessment Approaches: Concepts and Methods. Rockville, MD: National Institute of Mental Health, 1977.

Witkin, Belle Ruth. Assessing the Needs in Educational and Social Programs. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1984.

APPENDIX

THE FOCUS WORKSHEET

What question(s) do you hope to answer through this needs
assessment? (The issues or problems you want to research)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

==

What facts, impressions or feelings do you already have in answer
to the questions(s)?

	Fact	Feeling/ Impressn

```
===================================================================

What geographical area will you be studying?

__State_____    __Metro Area_____    __City_____

__County(ies)_____

__Neighborhood(s)_____

__Community Board/Districts_____

__Other_____



===================================================================

What special population, if any, will you be considering?
_____
_____


       _____ Teenage mothers/pregnant teens
       _____ Gay youth
       _____ Non-English-speaking youth
       _____ Older youth
       _____ Substance abusers
       _____ Sexually exploited
       _____ Abused (physically and sexually) and neglected
       _____ Juvenile offenders
       _____ Deinstitutionalized youth
       _____ Other_____
       _____ Other_____

Age range?  _____

===================================================================

What method(s) will work you use?

___Collecting Statistical Data
___Collecting Written Info        ___Mailed Questionnaires
___Observations                   ___Group Think Sessions
___Face-to-Face Interviews        ___Community Forums
___Telephone Interviews           ___Other_____

===================================================================
```

WHAT'S BEEN DONE

List the needs assessments or related documents that have been
written in your area on the topic of homeless and runaway youth or
related topics such as the homeless, youth and family needs or
human service needs in the state. Possible sources include:

- Mayor's Office
- City Planning Department
- State Planning Department
- Coalition for the Homeless
- United Way
- Volunteers of America
- Related Associations or Coalitions
- Agencies Working with Related Populations

==

Name of Document_____
Source_____
     (organization, address, phone, contact person);
In Library __Yes __No   Reviewed __Yes __No   Cost $_____
_____
_____

Name of Document_____
Source_____
     (organization, address, phone, contact person):
In Library __Yes __No   Reviewed __Yes __No   Cost $_____
_____
_____

Name of Document_____
Source_____
     (organization, address, phone, contact person)'
In Library __Yes __No   Reviewed __Yes __No   Cost $_____
_____
_____

Name of Document_____
Source_____
     (organization, address, phone, contact person):
In Library __Yes __No   Reviewed __Yes __No   Cost $_____
_____
_____

Name of Document_____
Source_____
     (organization, address, phone, contact person);
In Library __Yes __No   Reviewed __Yes __No   Cost $_____
_____
_____

STAFFING WORKSHEET

Who are you?

____an individual layperson
____a group of laypeople
____a non-profit organization starting up a new program
____an experienced agency looking to expand
____a group within an experienced agency
____other_____

==

Degree of Support

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Full Support					Tolerant					No Support

==

Your Work Group

Name,Address, Phone	Level of Expertise	# of Hrs/Wk	# of Weeks	Tasks Person Will Work On

==

Responsibility for Tasks

Data Collection and Research _____

Analyzing Data _____

Compiling the Final Report _____

NEEDS ASSESSMENT BUDGET WORKSHEET

Item	Cost	Sub-Total	Possible Donation
===			
Staffing		_____	
Staff Salary	_____		_____
Staff Salary	_____		_____
Staff Salary	_____		_____
Staff Salary	_____		_____
Fringe Benefits @ 20%	_____		_____
===			
Collecting Basic Information		_____	
Purchase of Census Materials	_____		_____
Purchase of Publications	_____		_____
Purchase of Social Service Directories	_____		_____
Photocopying	_____		_____
Transportation	_____		_____
Telephone Usage	_____		_____
Surveys		_____	
Office Supplies (paper,envelopes,pens,etc)	_____		_____
Mailed Questionnaire		_____	
Photocopying and Printing	_____		_____
Postage	_____		_____
Telephone Survey		_____	
Photocopying and Printing	_____		_____
Telephone Usage	_____		_____
Face-to-Face Interviews		_____	
Photocopying and Printing	_____		_____
Transportation	_____		_____
Postage	_____		_____
Telephone Usage	_____		_____
Community Forum or Group Think Session		_____	
Rental of Meeting Space	_____		_____
Photocopying and Printing	_____		_____
Transportation	_____		_____
Postage	_____		_____
Telephone Usage	_____		_____
Materials (easel, large pads)	_____		_____

Item	Cost	Sub-Total	Possible Donation
Childcare	_____		_____
Translator	_____		_____
Refreshments	_____		_____
Secretary/Typist	_____		_____
Publicity	_____		_____
Analyzing Data/Developing Report		_____	
Typist $ /pg	_____		_____
Photocopying and Printing	_____		_____
Postage	_____		_____
Other _____	_____	_____	_____
Other _____	_____	_____	_____
Other _____	_____	_____	_____
Other _____	_____	_____	_____
TOTAL			_____

Amount available from your organization _____

Other potential sources of funding
__Foundations _____
__Corporations_____
__Service Organizations_____
__Other_____

_____

TASKS AND TIME WORKSHEET

Tasks	Number of Hours/Days	Who	Start Date	End Date
Staffing the Project				
Setting Up Office/Purchase Supplies				
Planning				
Collecting Basic Information				
Collect and Review Census Material				
Collect Statistical Info				
Review Social Service Directories				
Complete Observations				
Other_____				
Surveys				
Develop Questionnaire				
Write Cover Letter				
Mail Questionnaires				
Select and Train Volunteers				
Arrange and Conduct Interviews				
Review Completed Questionnaires				
Follow up Contacts with Participants				
Other_____				
Community Forum or Group Think Session				
Determine Topic/Purpose/Questions				
Establish Groundrules				
Find Chairperson				
Locate Space				
Select/Train/Schedule Volunteers				
Publicize Event				
Arrange for Daycare				
Arrange Refreshments				
Follow up Contacts with Participants				
Other_____				
Analyzing Data/Developing Report				
Collating Basic Information				
Collating Mailed Questionnaires				
Collating Information from Interviews				
Collating Information from Forum				
Writing and Editing the Report				
Distributing Reports				
Planning Your Next Steps				
Other_____				
Other_____				
Other_____				
Other_____				

PLAN OF ACTION WORKSHEET

NEEDS ASSESSMENT PLAN								
				Month				
Tasks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								
o								

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Checklist of Possible Sources of Data

_____ Past Grant Proposals on Related Subjects
_____ Other Agency Files of Information
_____ Regional or Local Census Bureau
_____ Back Newspapers and Magazine Articles
_____ State and Local Departments of Social Services
_____ United Way
_____ Urban League
_____ City Hall or City Planning Department
_____ Local Catholic Charities, Federation of Jewish
          Agencies or Protestant Agencies
_____ Other Large Social Service Agencies
_____ Local University Sociology, Urban Planning,
          Geography Departments
_____ League of Women Voters
_____ Community Planning Boards

==

Information Source _____ Contact Person_____
Telephone_____   Address_____

Type of Info.
_____
_____

Information Source _____ Contact Person_____
Telephone_____   Address_____

Type of Info.
_____
_____

Information Source _____ Contact Person_____
Telephone_____   Address_____

Type of Info.
_____
_____

Information Source _____ Contact Person_____
Telephone_____   Address_____

Type of Info.
_____
_____

Information Source _____ Contact Person_____
Telephone_____   Address_____

Type of Info.
_____
_____

Information Source _____ Contact Person_____
Telephone_____ Address_____

Type of Info. _____
_____
_____

Information Source _____ Contact Person_____
Telephone_____ Address_____

Type of Info. _____
_____
_____

Information Source _____ Contact Person_____
Telephone_____ Address_____

Type of Info. _____
_____
_____

Information Source _____ Contact Person_____
Telephone_____ Address_____

Type of Info. _____
_____
_____

Information Source _____ Contact Person_____
Telephone_____ Address_____

Type of Info. _____
_____
_____

Information Source _____ Contact Person_____
Telephone_____ Address_____

Type of Info. _____
_____
_____

Information Source _____ Contact Person_____
Telephone_____ Address_____

Type of Info. _____
_____
_____

STATISTICS WORKSHEET

Item	Source	Nat'l	State	City	___	___	___
Total Population							
Youth Ages___							
Ages___							
Ethnic Breakdown							
Black							
White							
Hispanic							
Other___							
Median Income*							
% Poor Families							
% Poor Children							
Unemployment*							
Adult							
Youth (16-19)							
Education*							
Illiteracy Rate							
Dropout Rate							
Truancy Rate							
Crime Rate*							
Adult Index							
Youth Index							
# Runaway Report							
# Convictions							
Runaway Hotline							
Local							
National							
Child Abuse*							
Reports							
Findings							
Teen Pregnancy*							
Other							

OBSERVATION FORM

Time of day:_____ Day of the Week:_____

Level of street activity:

_____

deserted   few people   many people   crowded

Description of the People, Adults and Youth:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Description of the Area:

_____

_____

_____

Information learned:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

KEY INFORMANT WORKSHEET

CHECKLIST

_____ Staff of programs for homeless and runaway youth
_____ Staff of programs for homeless adults
_____ Staff of battered women's shelters
_____ Employment counselors and vocational educators
_____ Staff of community centers
_____ Police department and units that deal with youth
_____ Juvenile court judges
_____ High school principals and teachers
_____ High school counselors and social workers
_____ The Mayor
_____ Clergy
_____ Staff of drug or alcohol abuse programs
_____ Salvation Army
_____ Child protection workers
_____ Juvenile probation officers
_____ Leaders of youth advocacy groups
_____ Staff at welfare programs
_____ Public health professionals
_____ Youths themselves
_____ Owners of businesses in areas where youth congregate

Name and Title	Agency	Address	Phone

Name and Title	Agency	Address	Phone

Planning Sheet for Community Forum __ or Group Think __

Topic:_____

Purpose: _____
_____
_____

Questions for Discussion (if relevant):
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Method for Publicizing :_____
_____
_____

Groundrules or Method for Involving Participants:
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

   How speakers will be selected:_____
   Time alotted per speaker or per topic:_____

Materials Needed:_____
_____

Chairperson:_____ Date:_____ Time:_____

Location:_____

List the people who will be responsible for the following tasks:

   Establishing Topic, Purpose, Questions, Groundrules
   _____
   Finding the Chairperson_____
   Locating Space_____
   Staffing the Event_____
   Recording Information_____
   Publicity_____
   Locating Materials_____
   Arranging Transportation_____
   Other_____

WORKSHEET FOR COLLATING INFORMATION

Category (e.g., homeless and runaway youth)|_____ _____

Subject (e.g., numbers of youth)|_____

Source	Information