



Massachusetts Youth Count Survey 2017

This document provides survey information and best practices for participants, service providers, and volunteers involved in the Massachusetts Youth Count. Massachusetts Youth Count is a survey for youth and young adults, 24 years old or younger, who are unstably housed or experiencing homelessness.

Overview

From Monday, May 1st through Sunday, May 14, 2017, service providers and young adults across the state in coordination will support an effort to understand the scope and needs of youth and young adults through a survey for those who likely are unstably housed or experiencing homelessness. The survey will be available in public areas where youth congregate, drop-in centers and meal programs for youth and young adults, programs for youth experiencing homelessness, and other venues where young people may meet.

The goal of this effort is to gain a clearer understanding of the number of unaccompanied young people in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts without a stable place to live, and their experiences in trying to access housing and services. By enhancing the state and local communities' knowledge of this issue, we can further our efforts to create a Commonwealth where no youth or young adult is left without a place to call home.

What is the purpose of this survey?

Nationally and locally, there is limited information about youth and young adults who are experiencing homelessness and housing instability. The Massachusetts Youth Count seeks to gain a clearer understanding of the number of young people, their demographics and housing status, without a stable place to live in Massachusetts. The survey is targeted to unaccompanied youth and young adults under the age of 25, meaning young people who are outside the custody or care of a parent or guardian.

How will this data be used?

Survey data will provide a more accurate picture of the number of youth and young adults who are currently unstably housed or experiencing homelessness. This information will provide a foundation to support policy reform and new program designs and models. Annual survey data will also help Massachusetts providers offer better services and respond to changes in the needs and characteristics of youth and young adults who are unstably housed and experiencing homelessness youth.

How will we collect this data?

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, in collaboration with youth providers and Youth Ambassadors, will collect surveys from the unstably housed youth and young adult population between May 1-14, 2017. During

the two weeks of the event, each agency will determine the best way to reach the young people they serve, through regular programming, events, tabling, phone calls, and/or street outreach.

Does the collection of the information have to come from the surveys?

All agencies participating in this count will use the same approved and standardized surveys. Collection of consistent data will help provide precise and factual information about the current the population of youth and young adults who are experiencing homelessness and housing instability. It is important that surveys are given in a uniform manner, and completed correctly by all participants in order to ensure clear data. It is also important to note how information about the population varies by location, demographics, and services provided/used. Thus widespread and consistent/uniform data collection will help us to discern these differences and witness over time trends or changes in the population.

Are the surveys confidential?

All information collected from the survey will be confidential. Primarily, surveys will be completed anonymously using an online tool. However, some paper copies will be available. Please discourage participants from writing their name on the paper forms.

Will we have access to the survey data?

The initial data will be given to the Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth to process and analyze. Following analysis, the Commission will share results with all participating agencies and the Continuums of Care across the state. (This year's data reporting process will be streamlined and expedited.)

Thank you for your collaboration! For more information, please email Kelly Turley of the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless via massachusettsyouthcount@gmail.com.