

Teen Homelessness: An Unfortunate Occurrence

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Teenage years should be for learning, growing, and exploring one's identity. Many people do not realize that all teenagers are not magically handed this opportunity. And on top of that, most do not recognize that the very concept of "teenage years" is and forever will be unknown to many children. This epidemic of destroyed childhoods and dismal situations is the fault of none other than homelessness. Although the overall topic of homelessness is widely talked about in the media and sympathized for by the general population, many fail to recognize a specific group of homeless who lose more than just a place to sleep. This group is homeless teens.

The concept of youth homelessness is difficult to fathom because the people involved are still changing and adapting to the ways of the world. They are still growing up and should not be expected to immediately take comfort to their situation or even learn how to handle all of the changes going on - inside and out. Additionally, teenagers are also more susceptible to in-home problems, which may prompt homelessness. For example, youth.gov supports this idea by stating, "Youth run away or are homeless for a range of reasons, but involvement in the juvenile justice or child welfare systems, abuse, neglect, abandonment, and severe family conflict have all been found to be associated with youth becoming homeless." These problems and more give evidence as to why this issue is so difficult for many children to grasp.

Another difficulty that comes with teenage homelessness is the vulnerability. Although all homeless are in some ways vulnerable by living famished and without proper protection, youth homeless may not be as physically fit or sound as most older homeless people. *Safeplace.org* is a national foundation that assures the homeless population, focused on teens, that they are loved and supported all around the world. Their article about homeless youth explains this vulnerability associated with living on the streets at such a young age. They explain how, "Homeless youth are at an increased risk of harm in comparison to other youth their age. They are more likely to experience mental illness, suffer poor health, drop out of school, and become involved with or become victims of criminal activity." This sad statistic sheds light onto the dismal reality that is teenage homelessness. Without proper education or guidance, homeless youth are easily influenced or, prone to shady decision-making.

On another note, although there are many obvious problems and unfortunate characteristics associated with teenage homelessness, the subject should be one of optimism - not the other way around. Especially because youth are young and their brains are still impressionable, they still have time to learn things properly (if they have not already) and thrive into prospering citizens. *Safeplace.org* lends a helping hand out to these troubled youth by sympathizing with them and their hardships. They explain how, "Homeless youth are different from homeless adults because they often have not learned the essential life skills needed to live on their own, like how to drive or ride a bus, get a job, or pay bills." By explaining the differences between

adult homeless people and teenage homeless people, *Safeplace.org* gives insight into the various plights faced by that young community and even more evidence why they should be helped. It is important to remember that there is more than one homeless story and not everyone is to blame for his/her situation - especially homeless youth.

Resources

<https://www.nationalsafeplace.org/homeless-youth>

<https://youth.gov/youth-topics/runaway-and-homeless-youth>