

Sliding into Homelessness: A Student Essay and Teaching Resources

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This article describes a collaborative relationship between the New York Times and Youth Communication, who publishes a magazine for and by foster youth titled 'Represent'. The writer illustrates the significance of homelessness with this population after five collaborators on the Youth Communication staff became homeless. The first-hand experience documented gaps in the system. Specifically, the youth experienced delays in government support (such as receiving SSI checks), delays in communication or effective timeline expectations from housing programs, restrictions around income contributions, agency direction to return to toxic living situations, and unsafe conditions at shelters. Additionally, the youth describes the impact of unstable housing on the ability to attend working hours due to set hours of others offering rooms or set hours of shelters.

Information at a Glance:

At the time of this article, the New York Times reported:

- 85% of former foster youth were making under \$25,000 per year, with 29% reporting being unable to pay rent in the past year.
- Half of those who "aged out" at 18 had jobs in their mid-20's.
- 3 in 4 women were receiving public assistance, both with and without children.

Proposed Program Solutions:

Supporting other research in this area, the link between providing a foundation for stable housing begins with programs offering safe, reliable, "home" style living, combined support in finance management, and flexibility to attend working roles. An important aspect mentioned by

the youth in this article is also the impact of "freedom" built into programs aiming to support youth.

While creating structure for financial savings and guidance is identified as helpful by providers and several studies, creating a way for the youth to take ownership is suggested. As noted by the youth in the article, having a housing program "take" half of wages earned and placing it into a savings (to be given back upon exit) communicated that the youth are not capable of doing it themselves.

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