

**HSOC Ad Hoc Youth Committee Meeting**  
**November 22, 2013, 10:00-11:00am**  
**DSS, 3433 S. Higuera, SLO, Room 358**

**1. Welcomes and Introductions:**

Jessica Thomas (SLOCOE), Laurel Weir (DSS), Martin Meltz (Community Volunteer), Bill Watt (ECHO), Linda Belch (DSS), Jeff Hamm (County Health), Jennifer Kirn (Cuesta College Youth One-Stop), Anita Shower (Volunteer, 5CHC), Janna Nichols (5CHC), Elise Roberts (CWS), Jessica Mezzapesa (DSS, intern), Rebecca Turner (Justice Summit), Dee Torres (CAPSLO)

Jessica Thomas announced Rebecca Turner, who took part in a Justice Summit for human trafficking and reported that the youth population is regularly exploited in SLO.

Dee Torres asked if trafficking was prevalent in our County. Elise Roberts added that runaways from group homes frequently report that the way they survived on the street was by trading favors, (ie. Sexual exploitation in exchange for rides or housing). There is a current shift from criminalization to seeing this youth as victims taking place. Recently the PD broke up a Prostitution ring and when that happens there are usually minors left over with nowhere to go. Jessica Thomas also added that because SLO is directly on the corridor from LA to SF it is a hot bed for this kind of activity and that there are actually websites where you can order underage girls here in SLO. Elise Roberts said this is also common among adult developmentally disabled. Dee Torres said all homeless women have trafficked at some point to survive. Elise Roberts added men too, and that it is an epidemic in CA.

Dee Torres asked if DSS is taking on the trafficking issue. Elise Roberts said they try very hard not to send children to group homes for this reason.

**2. Review NAEHCY youth and adult surveys**

Jessica Thomas stated that in the last meeting they discussed needs of homeless youth and agreed that youth who are couch surfing are two different populations than those who are truly without homes, and the latter is the more critical population.

Laurel Weir said that the HUD definition of homelessness for youth includes couch surfing youth and there is a special provision for unaccompanied minors age 18-24 called "transitional aged youth" or TAY. This population is of special interest to HUD because they typically do not access the same services as other homeless due to their difference in background. Most of them, for example, have previously been in foster care. More services are available to youth after they turn 18 but because the rates of things, such as Schizophrenia, go up in teenage years it is better to find them at that age.

Jessica Thomas asked how they get these surveys from youth if they are done online. Jennifer Kirn also stated that literacy and computer access were an issue. Laurel Weir answered that youth surveyors did PIT questions on hard copies and then entered them into a computer data system. Martin Meltz suggested giving youth peers iPads.

Elise Roberts encouraged getting input from the Youth, because every time they have tried to implement a program for Youth without their input in past it has failed. She emphasized addressing the kids that aren't talking to anyone.

### **3. Identifying existing resources that are accessible for youth**

Janna Nichols asked how do we find these youth? Laurel Weir stated there are two different populations transitional youth age 18-24 you may find in shelters and unaccompanied youth (minors) this survey would be good for. Jennifer Kirn said the transitional youth do come into one-stops like hers and that they can administer the surveys there. Laurel Weir stated some questions may need to be added for this population.

Jeff Hamm stated that high school counselors will see these youth as well, but it will take longer to collect information from them.

Janna Nichols asked what the representative sample number would be. Jessica Thomas said there are 35K students in schools and that we don't really know how many are homeless but we know it increases every year. 31 were counted using a narrower definition than HUD's this year. Laurel Weir said this does not include the unsheltered and there will be additional youth meeting HUD's definition. Janna Nichols said that most of them are not in school.

Dee Torres said that she works with the Rangers and the youth here are traveling in groups with adults, she said it is mostly the 17 year olds who don't get any attention. The youth did not show up in the enumeration either. She asked if the Family Care Network sees them. Elise Roberts answered that they do not because they only deal with those in court-ordered Foster Care, which is a small group.

Elise Roberts suggested contacting Robert Reyes at Probation who handles truancy and ward-ship. Laurel Weir stated that she spoke with Robert Reyes but he only sees them if parents report them as a runaway.

Linda Belch suggested looking up truancy reports in schools, Jeff Hamm said they are hard to find.

Dee Torres suggested contacting Ranger Doug and CAT Officers Jim and Jeremy, all of whom are very involved with the homeless. Martin Meltz said in Morro Bay there is an officer specifically assigned to the homeless and suggested recruiting people to keep the survey with them.

Jennifer Kirn said that they target the transitional age youth and saw 43 of them from July to September in South County. Laurel Weir added that HMIS data from 2012 revealed 275 transitional aged youth were receiving services in County.

Martin Meltz asked if ERs would have info and if they could have survey available. Jennifer Kirn say a lot go to the ER, and Laurel Weir added a lot of times they sleep there. Jennifer Kirn said there is a sign in Paso ER.

Bill Watt said that if a teen's family is in a shelter, teens sometimes don't want to stay there. Instead they sleep in creeks or their cars and several kids have overdosed on heroin in Atascadero and Paso. He said there are at least five kids at Twin Cities, Pine Mountain and encampments every month to do drugs with older adults. Some don't want to be with homeless parents, some got kicked out and some have gone to live with the adult population. He stated that the Chief of Police has data and the Police are very active in educations, giving information to homeless on services available and doing surveys.

Elise Roberts mentioned the bike officers in downtown SLO.

Jeff Hamm asked how we get the survey out into the field. He suggested distributing it to law enforcement outreach teams and to anyone willing to administer it.

Bill Watt said homeless kids also hang out in the skate parks.

Jessica Mezzamesa asked if the goal of the committee was to present to HSOC the gaps in reaching homeless youth and a timeline to get survey ready to go and out before end of school year.

#### **4. Create action items for next steps**

Jennifer Kirn said she was willing to administer survey to the TAY she sees at the One Stop. Elise Roberts also suggested soup kitchens.

Elise Roberts suggested adding a question to the youth survey asking if they have other homeless friends and how to reach them. Rebecca Turner said she was willing to look for businesses willing to donate gift cards to kids that come forward and answer the survey.

Linda Belch said teachers in schools should know who is coming in and out infrequently and who is looking haggard and possibly homeless.

Martin Meltz suggested meeting the last week of January 2014 or February to discuss rolling out the survey if they are trying to disseminate by end of January.

Jennifer Kirn said her one stop may be able to provide some funding for this as well. Jessica Thomas said she can provide incentives to community school students. Elise Roberts said she and Laurel Weir can work together to see if DSS can help.

The next meeting date was set for December 19, 2013 from 9-10am.