



CITY OF CHICAGO
DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND SUPPORT SERVICES

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"When you hear of "homeless" you think of ... stuff like sleeping under the bridges....I'm homeless and that's none of me at all. I'm more like the homeless person no one knows about unless I told them." - Chicago Youth, 2015 Pilot Interview

Chicago Joins Twenty-two Communities Across the Country Join *Voices of Youth Count* *Linking Evidence and Action to End Youth Homelessness*

Chicago, IL. Chicago joins twenty-two communities from across the United States will work with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago in partnership on *Voices of Youth Count*, a first-of-its-kind national effort aimed at ending youth homelessness.

Communities will work hand-in-hand with Chapin Hall's *Voices of Youth Count* to carry out youth-led counts and surveys of young people and providers. Common data collection methods across sites will allow first-ever site-to-site comparisons and scalable findings, enabling national estimates. A subset of sites will conduct in-depth youth interviews. Communities are actively engaged in planning activities.

"Chapin Hall has a long history of partnership with the City of Chicago, its strong network of community-based providers, and active philanthropic community in seeking better ways to serve children and youth across the city. We are delighted that Chicago, along with all our partner communities, has joined this effort," said Bryan Samuels, Executive Director of Chapin Hall. "By working collectively – and by using new ways to count and to listen to youth – we will build knowledge about how to end the cycle of youth homelessness."

Voices of Youth Count comes at a critical time for communities and Congress. Reliable data, new strategies and direct engagement have accelerated the nation's progress in preventing and ending veterans' homelessness in many communities, but efforts to end homelessness among young people, whose circumstances and needs are very different from homeless adults, have lacked coordination across communities and the focus that strong data can bring.

The Chicago *Voices of Youth Count* will be led by the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) and the Chicago Task Force on Homeless Youth. The Chicago Task Force on Homeless Youth is comprised of service providers, community and organizations including local government agencies.

"Getting accurate information is crucial for guiding services and policy," said Chicago Department of Family Services Commissioner Lisa Morrison Butler. "That is why we thought it was so important for the City of Chicago to collaborate with Chapin Hall in these efforts. The more information we have the better we can address youth homelessness."

The City of Chicago conducts an annual Point-In-Time count in January to assess the city's homeless population. Each year, the count estimates how many homeless residents reside in shelter and in public spaces on any given night. PIT provides valuable information for planning the delivery of homeless services, while

raising awareness of homelessness in Chicago. While the point-in-time count has included youth since 2013, this is the first time the City will be collaborating with a national youth count allowing for comparable data. This count is also unique, because it will take place in the summer when youth are out of school and will include a different methodology.

Since taking office in 2011, Mayor Emanuel has increased funding for homeless services by more than 10 percent and invested in new programs targeting veterans, youth, families, victims of domestic violence and the chronically homeless. In addition to securing permanent housing for more than 1,500 homeless veterans, Chicago has produced more than 2,300 units of affordable housing and has designated 800 vouchers to serve homeless residents. In 2012, Mayor Emanuel invested \$2 million to increase shelter beds dedicated to homeless youth by 33% citywide and to create three regional drop-in centers that serve 1,400 homeless youth annually.

As findings emerge, Chapin Hall researchers will place data and evidence in local and national context, make purposeful connections between existing and new knowledge and policy, and provide decision makers at national and local levels with actionable information.

“It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of youth are homeless for a week or longer, and many more experience at least one night of homelessness per year,” said Senator Susan Collins (R-ME), chair of the Senate Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development Appropriations Subcommittee. “No child should be burdened with not knowing where they are going to sleep at night. Research initiatives like *Voices of Youth Count*, which survey runaway and homeless youth, can help policymakers address this complex issue by providing accurate, youth-specific data.”

“Children and youth experiencing homelessness face so many barriers to getting a quality education, which is why I’ve been leading efforts in the Senate to make sure these students get the support they need to learn, grow, and thrive in the classroom and later in life,” said Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), the ranking member on the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. “It is vital to continue to learn more about how children and youth become homeless and the specific challenges they face. Thanks to *Voices for Youth Count’s* data collection, we will help make progress in tackling youth homelessness through a comprehensive, coordinated response.”

Voices of Youth Count is funded by a growing group of investors dedicated to the creation, dissemination and use of rigorous knowledge to prevent and end youth homelessness. The funding effort is grounded in a catalytic approach, shared vision, and dual focus on national and local solutions. Members include Ballmer Group Philanthropy, Champion Foundation, Casey Family Programs, Chapin Hall, Elton John AIDS Foundation, Melville Charitable Trust, and Raikes Foundation.

Chapin Hall’s Director Bryan Samuels announced the partnership with the twenty-two communities at the National Network for Youth Conference in Washington, D.C. Chapin Hall selected and recruited *Voices of Youth Count* communities using a rigorous sampling methodology aimed at ensuring diversity of region, population density, and the availability of services for homeless youth.

The *Voices of Youth Count* partner communities:

Ada County, ID	Denver County, CO (Denver)
Alameda County, CA (Oakland)	Hennepin County, MN (Minneapolis)
Boyd County, KY	Kennebec County, ME
Cecil County, MD	King County, WA (Seattle)
Cleveland County, OK	Livingston County, MO
Cook County, IL (Chicago)	Mariposa County, CA
Davidson County, TN (Nashville)	Orange County, FL (Orlando)
Delaware County, OH	Orleans Parish, LA (New Orleans)

Philadelphia County, PA (Philadelphia)
San Diego County, CA (San Diego)
Suffolk County, MA (Boston)

Travis County, TX (Austin)
Walla Walla County, WA
Wayne County, MI (Detroit)

For more information on the Voices for Youth Count, please visit www.voicesofyouthcount.org .

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Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago is a policy research center that provides public and private decision-makers with rigorous data analysis and achievable solutions to support them in improving the lives of society's most vulnerable children, youth and families. www.chapinhall.org