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October 4, 2017

We request your assistance to better support homeless and unstably housed young people in Western New York by partnering with us in a housing survey. There is a youth pilot demonstration grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development that gives us an opportunity to create such programs, but the application must be supported by data to justify the need and expense. The Homeless Alliance of WNY facilitates dialog and strategic action to end homelessness.

As you are aware, housing instability is disruptive to a young person's educational pursuits and emotional well-being (a literature review can be found in Cutuli et al). This effect is well documented. With that said, and even with McKinney-Vento reporting requirements, it's not clear how many young people in our community are experiencing housing instability. It's believed by the US Department of Health and Human services that McKinney-Vento eligible students are underreported, and formerly or currently homeless students in locally-head focus groups convened by community service providers reported that they did not inform their school about their housing status. This gap in information is hindering our efforts to create programs to assist young people who become homeless or to prevent the circumstance from happening.

With our partners Compass House and the Western New York Coalition for the Homeless, the Homeless Alliance of Western New York is launching its second annual Be Counted! effort. This is a housing survey administered in the same fashion as the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Point-in-Time counts: an effort to identify everyone who is experiencing homelessness on a particular day. Every January, this agency leads such a count of all homeless people to report to HUD. HUD expects us to do a similar census for youth experiencing homelessness, broadly speaking. Our first effort included a media outreach effort, a pizza party in downtown Buffalo, peer outreach to parks and recreation centers, and a social media event. **This year's count will be October 27, 2017.**

We had the most success with the Niagara Falls City School District, who distributed the attached survey to all of their high school and prep school students in home room. We provide the surveys and we score them, destroying them when we are done. We do not share the raw data with anyone and the age information is only used to de-duplicate data. Please feel free to reach out to me with any and all questions. My email is mkosinski@wnyhomeless.org and my phone number is (716) 853-1101.

Best,

Mary Frances Kosinski
Program Coordinator – Niagara County

Cutuli, J. J. et al. "Academic Achievement Trajectories of Homeless and Highly Mobile Students: Resilience in the Context of Chronic and Acute Risk." *Child development* 84.3 (2013): 10.1111/cdev.12013. PMC. Web. 7 Sept. 2017.