Training and Preparation for Youth Counts: Involving Youth, Universities and Volunteers

Peter Connery| Applied Survey Research · December 6, 2012

55 Brennan St.
Watsonville, CA 95076
(831) 728-1356

991 W. Hedding St., Suite 102
San Jose, CA 95126
(408) 247-8319

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AGENDA

- Introduction – Transition Aged Youth (TAY)
- Planning
- Recruitment
- Training
- Compensation
- Deployment
- Survey
- Rural Communities
- Wrap-up, final questions & comments

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Homeless Youth Counts

- ASR recommends an observation count only effort followed by a sample based survey effort

- Youth count is a separate PIT count process that is supplemental to the general homeless count....different time and different people

- 2013 focus on *new* 18-24 age group and more targeted strategies to enumerate all under 24 year olds (<18 too) one person households (new HUD definitions)

- TAY homeless do not typically co-mingle with other homeless strata. Special youth count logistics are required to be successful

- Youth advocate and TAY homeless youth involvement is essential

- Time of day selected for the youth count is a critical success factor

Define Your Target Population

- What homeless youth groups will be included?

• HUD PIT Count	• "Couch Surfers"
• HUD McKinney-Vento COE	• Motel/hotel
• Shelter (HIC, non-HIC)	• Other Precarious/unstable

- Different logistics required for different groups

- What are the critical research questions for your community?

- Data for PIT and data for planning and programming

- Duplication issues?; eliminate possible double counting from different data sources

Key Partnerships

- Homeless youth service providers (group)
- TAY homeless and previously homeless youth
- Non-profits/Government agencies
  - RHYTTAC, CASA, Youth Services, LGBT, Universities, etc.
- County Office of Educ. & school districts – McKinney Vento Liaisons
- Advocacy networks
- Health service providers
- Informal networks of support
  - Faith community
  - Community youth advocates
  - Youth sanctuary locations

Planning

Step 1: Create a working group with community partners

Step 2: Develop data collection sources and materials

Step 3: Determine process for ensuring youth safety and protection

Step 4: Identify methods to avoid count duplication – maps, routes, etc.

Step 5: Develop outreach plans and connections to Homeless TAY

Step 6: Conduct formal and focus groups with Homeless TAY

> Determine times and locations for the youth count

> Determine the number of teams needed to canvas those areas

> Determine resources needed (# of youth, drivers, materials, cost of payment, etc)

Step 7: Develop data collection plan with M-V Education Liaison

Step 8: Keep the youth engaged in the process- incentives

Step 9: Prepare for training and deployment

Step 10: Recruit quality participants – respect, support, supervise

Recruitment

- Recruit through both formal and informal service networks
- Acknowledge & plan for diversity of the TAY population
  - Rural/urban
  - Ethnic
  - Age
  - LGBT
  - School – secondary and college
  - Vehicles
- Youth advocates carefully select youth guide participants
- Two person teams paid $10/hr for 2-4 hours work
- Oversight provided by service provider outreach staff or equivalent

Recruitment Continued

- Selection Criteria
  - Must have current street youth knowledge
  - Must be able to discern homeless youth from general youth
  - Must be able to follow count rules, be literate & trustworthy
  - Attend mandatory 1hr training – emphasize trust and data integrity
  - Should match the peer characteristics of your community
  - Provide supervision, support (transportation, food, etc.) &check results
  - Provide incentives for participation - compensation
  - Assure confidentiality and respect their time and effort; emphasize that privacy and exact locations will be private
- Determine number of youth necessary to cover youth count route areas (2 person teams on 2-4 hour routes; route length determined by local geography and guide knowledge)

Training – Youth Count

- Establish training dates at youth count deployment sites, usually 1-2 weeks before the count

- Training session affirms commitment & data quality

- Conduct trainings at times and locations convenient to participants

- Explain project purpose and background; promote integrity

- Review protocols and compensation (stressing that it is a job)

- Review requirement that a Hold Harmless Form will be signed

- Review data collection process (census forms)

- Discuss safety and courtesy protocols – *Not safe-Don't do it*!

- At conclusion of training, give youth guides a Certificate of Achievement for training completion

Compensation – Youth Count

- Critical for quality data & respect for the work

- Participation cannot be viewed as punishment

- ASR recommends cash for youth count work

- Alternatives include gift cards (fast food, supermarkets, drug stores, bus passes, coffee shops)

- Payment should be immediately after count; training compensation is only paid if youth works on the project

Census Deployment

- Trained youth meet at a provider location prior to going on route
- Several deployment sites per agency can be used
- All targeted areas are assigned to teams ensuring no duplication
- Every route should have an optimal time of day determined
- Youth advocate supervisors briefly review rules and dispatch teams
- Transportation to route area provided by supervisors
- Route coverage and transportation pickup is arranged; rural areas may require dedicated transportation with a volunteer
- Youth team returns to deployment after route for debriefing and data quality review.
- Youth are paid per compensation arrangement

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Youth Count Survey

- Youth count census provides *number* of TAY youth – Youth Survey provides qualitative sub-population data for TAY youth

- Survey starts the day or so after the Youth Count

- Quota based sample should be followed; quotas criteria include sheltered, unsheltered, geographic, gender, etc.

- ASR recommends administering general survey + youth count supplemental survey

- Youth count supplemental survey should include locally relevant survey questions

Youth Count Survey continued

- A subset of the Youth Count guides should be recruited based on their ability to administer surveys to the overall PIT quota
- Youth agencies assign a survey coordinator to oversee survey process and manage the quota and guides
- Survey coordinator trains recruited guides to survey standards
- Guide interviewers are paid $5 per completed survey/ 5 at a time
- Youth survey every third to fifth person they see and identify to increase randomness. Interviewers go to areas identified in Count.
- Survey respondents are given response incentives (gift card, socks)
- Surveys are reviewed by the supervisor and a trained survey administrator to ensure quality and consistency
- Survey data quality is reviewed and analyzed internally

Protection

- Review and determine appropriate methods to ensure safety and privacy concerns are addressed during data collection, especially TAY homeless under 18.

- Go through an IRB

- ASR process includes the following steps:

  - Informed consent required for participants under age 18
  - Provided information to respondents on local hotlines in case they have questions or concerns about the survey content
  - Provide a self-administered option
    - Submit completed surveys in sealed envelopes
      - Respect confidentiality
      - Reduce influences of peer pressure

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Rural Communities

- Special Challenges in rural communities
  - No youth services
  - No youth shelters
  - Big areas to cover
  - Youth in very remote areas
  - Elusive migrant TAY homeless
- Special strategies needed
  - Identify informal community support networks
  - Direct outreach to TAY homeless leaders
  - Emphasize trust, confidentiality and desire to develop new services
  - Offer money to participants – TAY homeless and community members who have access to them

Critical Success Factors

- Important to have youth involved in every step of the process
- Continually build and maintain connections to diverse TAY networks and contacts
- Always review the potential for duplicate counting
- Utilize incentives for PIT participation, survey interviewers and respondents
- Recognize TAY diversity and build flexibility into recruitment and data collection process
- Choose optimal times to identify unsheltered youth
- Recruitment of interviewers and deployment to locations identified in the Youth Count is key to obtaining diverse sample

For more information

PETER CONNERY

SAMANTHA GREEN

connery@appliedsurveyresearch.org

samantha@appliedsurveyresearch.org
(877) 728-4545

www.appliedsurveyresearch.org

Agenda

An Overview
From The Streets To Stability: A Study of Homeless Youth

Cultivating Partnerships and Volunteers

Ensuring a Youth Voice

Lessons Learned

From the Streets to Stability:
A Study of Youth Homelessness
in the District of Columbia

Homeless Youth Study Context

Our Methodology

The Power of Partnerships

Universities

Community and Government Partners

Research Expertise and Resource Access

Volunteer Recruitment and Study Execution

Participant Recruitment

Youth Voice

Cultivating Partners

Creating Mutual Benefit

Extensive, Yet Targeted Outreach

Finding Key Gatekeepers

Universities as a Resource

Dual University Asks

Research Expertise and Institutional Review Board

Volunteer Recruitment

Community Organizations and Government Agency Partners

Building off University Outreach

Community Partners

Volunteer Coordination

Volunteer Engagement and Training

Training Sessions

When

Who

What

Volunteer Deployment

Hub Sites

Street Outreach

Involving Those Most Affected

Ensuring a Meaningful Youth Voice

Insights from a formerly homeless youth
And lessons learned in youth engagement

DCAYA

Why I Joined the Project

- Being given an internship opportunity
- Being treated as a equal member of the team
- Appreciating my knowledge and experiences
- Playing an important role through various steps

What Made It Successful

- Working with established non-profits
- The entire process was carefully planned and coordinated
- A great amount of time was given to the project
- Volunteers were given a detailed orientation

How to Make a Safe Space

- Diverse volunteers from various backgrounds
- Explaining to volunteers the demographics of homeless youth
- Role playing scenarios
- Including homeless youth in trainings and strategy
- Allowing homeless youth to express themselves without being interrupted

What Could Have Been Improved

- Involving currently and formerly homeless youth in the statistical analysis and final report
- Building capacity for a yearly effort
- Creating a longer process for recruiting more volunteers

The DC Alliance of Youth Advocates
Building a Youth Friendly District of Columbia

1012 14th St. NW
Suite 610
Washington, D.C. 20001
www.dc-aya.org
maggie@dc-aya.org

Additional Youth Count! Resources

❑ **Webinars & resources**

  ❑ Other RHYTTAC Youth Count! Webinars www.rhyttac.net

  ❑ National Alliance to End Homelessness http://www.endhomelessness.org/pages/youthcount)

  ❑ Family and Youth Services Bureau/ACYF/HHS: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/resource-library

❑ **HUD PIT guidance**: http://hudhre.info/index.cfm?do=viewResource&ResourceID=4697

❑ **National Center on Homeless Education guidance on Federal Data Collection for Homeless Youth**: http://center.serve.org/nche/ibt/sc_data.php

Webinar Contact Details

Caryn Blitz, Ph.D., Policy Advisor
Office of the Commissioner
caryn.blitz@acf.hhs.gov

Peter Connery, Applied Survey Research
connery@appliedsurveyresearch.org

Maggie Riden, Executive Director
DC Alliance of Youth Advocates
maggie@dc-aya.org