



Office of the Mayor

CONSENT CALENDAR

March 21, 2006

Date: March 13, 2006
To: Members of the City Council
From: Mayor Tom Bates
Subject: Budget Referral for Homeless Youth Funding

RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council 1) direct the City Manager to keep the Youth Emergency Assistance Hostel (YEAH) open through May 2006 by re-directing one-time real estate transfer tax funds; 2) direct the City Manager to develop options for expanding homeless youth services; and 3) refer any potential additional funding for homeless youth services to the budget process for FY2007.

BACKGROUND:

Due to new restrictions and cutbacks in federal funding administered by HUD, Berkeley has lost its only day-time youth drop in center formerly run by the Berkeley Ecumenical Chaplaincy for the Homeless and funded by HUD.

In addition, YEAH is scheduled to close April 6, 2006. YEAH is serving between 35-50 youth a night. When the shelter closes, these young people are left to fend for themselves on the streets of Berkeley. Currently, YEAH is the only safe place that transition age homeless youth have available at night. At YEAH homeless youth can receive a healthy meal, a shower, clean clothes and a warm welcoming place to sleep. Youth can talk with a counselor and can be referred to other services. YEAH recently received a mentoring grant designed to match youth with adult mentors that will begin to help create stable trusting relationships that will lead the young person into a healthier lifestyle. All of this happens between the hours of 8:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. at the Lutheran Church of the Cross.

YEAH is now one of the only programs dedicated to providing culturally appropriate services for homeless youth. At this point YEAH is funded to operate an emergency shelter during the winter months –providing basic services of food and shelter. Due to dedicated staff and volunteers, YEAH has been able to bring in mental health services and a new mentoring program to the youth. However, YEAH's ability to help youth become stable and able to access

permanent supportive housing is seriously hampered by their temporary and emergency level of service.

Alameda County and the City of Berkeley offer a small array of homeless services designed for the adult and family population, but few resources exist for transition age youth (18-25 year olds). While transition age youth are significantly under-counted in the 2004 Alameda Countywide Shelter and Services Survey (ACSSS), the need for services for this age group is apparent on the streets of Berkeley. According to the 2004 ACSSS, there are approximately 355 homeless youth in the County, yet in the winter of 2004-05, Berkeley's Youth Emergency Assistance Hostel (YEAH) served 271 youth (unduplicated count). So far this year's intake is on a similar track. YEAH does an exhaustive intake with youth who enter the shelter. While they do not represent the entire picture of homeless youth in Berkeley, they have the best information available to us.

Last year, 36% of the youth at the YEAH shelter self-reported that they were in the foster care system prior to age 18. This statistic is mirrored in the countywide data in the 2004 ACSSS

When compiling the intake data for 271 youth served by YEAH last year:

- 50% youth report not to have a high school diploma;
- 36% had a mental health diagnosis (four top diagnosis depression, bi-polar, schizophrenia and ADHD); and,
- 73% self report using substance use on a daily to weekly basis and 6% reported to be in recovery.

When the young people at YEAH were asked where they considered "home", they self-reported the following:

- 35% living on the streets of Berkeley and the East Bay;
- 8% squatting in Berkeley;
- 16% couch surfing in Berkeley;
- 4% staying with family in Berkeley;
- 7% living in a car in Berkeley;
- .05% lost an apartment.
- 6% came from Bay Area Shelters
- 4% out of the Bay Area Californians
- 8% from out of State
- 3% from San Francisco

In 2004-2005, the YEAH population was 40% minority and 25% female. This year, to date, 60% of the youth are minority and there appears to be less females.

Ending chronic homelessness starts with preventing it. Of YEAH's population last year, the average age in which the youth reported becoming homeless was 15.5 years with an average length of homelessness already reaching 2.7 years. We have to reach these kids before they become the 40-year old chronically homeless persons. These young people need housing, supportive services such as mental health and substance abuse, access to educational services and

a new start on life. This is not easy, but we must look at what extra resources we might have engage this young people during the day and provide them safety during the night.

Three areas for potential expansion of service are 1) expansion of the Homeward Bound program that currently provides coordination and transportation funding for homeless youth to return to their home when a caring adult is there to accept and support them; 2) expansion of the YEAH shelter to include a year-around night program – and possibly a day-time drop-in component since we have lost the HomePlate program; and 3) establish an on-going Homeless Youth Connect Project that provides an on-the-spot service center that connects homeless youth with age and culturally- responsive resources and services. The Homeless Youth Connect could operate four to six times a year, providing immediate support services and access points for youth to engage in longer-term transition to stable living situations.

FISCAL IMPACTS: Up to \$32,000 in FY 2006 to continue the YEAH shelter operations. Any other future expenditures would require Council approval.

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