



# Homeless Youth with Food Insecurities

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# Population: Homeless/Runaway Adolescents

500,000-2.8  
million  
homeless/runa  
way youth per  
year in the U.S.

Injustice:  
Food  
Insecurity



# Historical/Current approaches

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- 1912- Federal establishment of the Children's Bureau
- 1933- Federal Transient Bureau provides aid for homeless children and youth
- 1950- Social Security Act
- 1999- Runaway and Homeless Youth Act
- 2003- Runaway, Homeless and Missing Children Protection Act
- 1987- United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH)
- 1987- McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act
- 2008- Chaffee Foster Care Act



# Historical/Current approaches (contd.)

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- Each year 4.2 million young adults and youth undergo homelessness with approximately 700,000 as unaccompanied minors (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019).
- Over 24,000 students in the state of Arizona are homeless while 3,371 are unaccompanied.



# Economic Impact

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## **Reasons for homelessness due to financial disparity;**

- ❖ Housing affordability
- ❖ The average wage in the US is \$15/ hour.
- ❖ The change of politics for mothers with children and welfare benefits

## **Other reasons;**

- ❖ Mental illness
- ❖ Youth on the streets are being victimized, turn to crime for survival
- ❖ Veterans with both physical and mental illnesses from war

# Stakeholders

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- Flagstaff, Arizona organizations that have been working to address the crisis of food insecurities in the homeless population:
  - *Northland Family Help Center (Youth Center)*
    - 501(c)3 non-profit organization
    - Gender inclusive
    - Focuses on children & youth who are between the ages of 0-18
    - Open 24 hours a day and 365 days a year.

# Stakeholders



- *Flagstaff Family Food Center*
  - Free hot dinners to the homeless population of Flagstaff daily between 4-5:50pm
- *Sunshine Rescue Mission Inc*
  - Serves 3 meals a day (breakfast at 7am, lunch at 12pm & dinner at 6pm).
  - Between the hours of 4:30pm - 5:30pm on Monday - Friday, Food & Clothing boxes are distributed to the community

\*Only the *Northland Family Help Center (Youth Center)* has services specifically directed at addressing food insecurities in the homeless youth.



# High Risk Individuals

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- Family Conflict:
  - Physically and sexual abuse
  - Abandonment
  - Violence between guardians
  - Becoming orphaned
  - Substance abuse/alcoholism at home
  - Financial crises (poverty and residential instability/affordable housing)
- LGBTQ population
- Minors in foster system and juvenile system



# High Risk Individuals

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Effects of being high risk:

- More participation in high risk behaviors:
  - Substance abuse
  - Sexual exploitation
  - Physical victimization
- Suicide is the leading cause of death among unaccompanied youth
  - Lack of proper treatment (physical and mental)
  - Lack of food/shelter





# Intervention

Packed leftover high school lunch program

# National Lunch Program: Packed Cafeteria Leftovers

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- USDA's National School Lunch Program
  - Assisted 7.4 children during its first year
  - Now serving 30.4 million children
- About 5 million dollars wasted a day in edible food
  - Estimated 1.2 billion dollars every year
- Objective: Combat the amount of money wasted on edible portions of food and assisting the homeless youth with food insecurities.



***Proposed Intervention: Sending students home with pre-packaged meals***

# Implementation of Program

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- Pioneering Program: Woodland Elementary School
  - Woodland Elementary and Cultivate Culinary, a non-profit group, have collectively joined to create a meal program.
- Cultivate Culinary gathers food from partnering cafeterias to make pre-packaged meals to send students home with.
  - Eight pre-packaged meals per student, sent home in insulated lunch boxes.



# Potential Roadblocks

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- School meal costs
  - USDA National School Lunch Program
    - Free lunch: household income  $\leq$  130% of poverty level
    - Reduced lunch: household income 130-185% of poverty level
  - \$10.9 million in unpaid meal debt was reported for 2017/2018 school year

# Potential Roadblocks

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- Additional labor and materials to pack and freeze leftover food
  - Cultivate provided packaging, trained volunteers, and insulated backpacks
  - Can be a challenge for schools with tight budgets



# Conclusion



Homeless youth of America face many challenges in their lives and daily routines. One of these issues hits at the most fundamental attributes for sustaining healthy and holistic wellbeing, and that is access to food. Through making use of the left-over meals in the school system, there is a potential to provide meals to the homeless, even when they are not in school.



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