

# Homeless Liaison Committee: Homeless Representatives Meeting

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## Date and Time

Thursday, February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2013 3:00-4:00PM

## Location

Child and Family Services' Teen Resource Center, 99 Hanover St., Manchester

## Attendance

10 youth-aged, 18-22

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## What Services do you use?

- + YWCA
- +CHS (Teen Health Clinic)
- +New Horizons
- +Homeless Services Center
- +Orange St drop-in
- +DHHS (food stamps and Medicaid)
- +CFS drop-in (a.k.a. “the 404”)

## Difficulties that youth encounter accessing medical care:

- Waiting for welfare (60 days)
- There are certain services needed Medicaid won't cover
- Waiting for disability (90 days)
- Getting paperwork together
- Hard to afford insurance, feel like we can't get care without it
- Finding a doctor that takes Medicaid can be hard

## What youth like most about current services:

- Use of computers and phones
- Clothes and food
- Mental health care and medical care at the shelter

## What youth like least about services:

- Feels so hard to access the help you need
- Feel like they are being ignored/ not paid attention to (“just a number” at DHHS)
- Get the “constant run around”
- Wish we could get tents more often as they get ruined or raided often

## How should service providers approach youth to offer help?

- Ask first “what have you already done”!
- Smile
- Be nice
- Attitude is important- we know when someone is just in it for the pay check
- Greet us/ respect us
- Appearance is really important (literally clothing as well as body posture)

- Don't dress like a cop or in a uniform
- Don't posture
- Don't approach us as "the authority"
- Outreach outfits can be intimidating

### **How should service providers approach youth to offer help with drug/alcohol addiction?**

- Don't give us your opinions (telling us marijuana is bad won't work)
- Smile
- If I'm a person of color and you ask me about drugs, I feel targeted like you assume I do drugs because I'm black
- Ask us: do you want to drink anymore? And/or do you want to do drugs anymore?
- We want to talk to you if you've been there, but we don't want to hear that you know all the answers and that it's easy because it's not
- If you can't relate then f\*\*\* off
- You need to sink down to our level
- Don't use religion
- Need to be able to identify and explain to us the difference between habit and addiction

### **What trends are you seeing in drug use among youth in Manchester?**

- Easiest to access and most use by peers is heroin
  - Easy to get because everyone is doing it
  - It takes so little to get high
  - It costs \$40 for a ½ gram which will get you high all day if you have no tolerance
- Tied with heroin is prescription pills (Klonopin (for seizures and panic disorders) and Percocet (acetaminophen and oxycodone), and Vicodin (acetaminophen and hydrocodone))
  - An entire month prescription of Klonopins costs only \$30
  - Easy to get from friends and homeless adults who have other addictions
- Marijuana and spice are also very popular (spice is dangerous because people are unaware of their tolerance levels so they smoke too much and get really sick)

### **What does the community need to know most about youth who are homeless in Manchester?**

- We're still youth, treat us like we're adults, but remember that we're young
- People need to know it's not our choice, some of us have to make the choice to be homeless rather than with family, but many of us have no place
- We're not that terrible
- There are many reasons why we're homeless
- There are youth who come hang out with us just to get high or drunk and they give us a bad reputation
- We need our own place for shelter, like for 16-21 year olds, we feel uncomfortable and scared to go to the adult shelter
- People always make assumptions about us because we're homeless (i.e. we get food thrown at us, treated like dogs by passersby and police, are told "get a job")
- Police are always stopping us and "herding us"
- Community needs to know that they shouldn't assume things (like that we are "crap" that we are "druggies"), they should just ask us more questions- we're willing to talk instead of being judged
- The shelter is really scary
- It's easier to trust people who are in my situation (like other homeless youth and adults)

- Getting a job is not easy for us, and when we use the address that other homeless people use (like 99 Hanover St) we think it interferes with our job opportunities

**What do youth who are homeless need the most?**

- Job opportunities
- Safe place to talk about problems
- Safe place to sleep
- Support groups (kind of like this focus group but ongoing)

**When the drop-in (99 Hanover St.) isn't open, what do you do with your time?**

- Some youth have nowhere to go on the holidays
- We really need a place to go, especially over the weekend
- Get high
- We wish there was a Boys and Girls Club for older youth (hangout, basketball, resources, cant' also be office space because sometimes we're distracting)
- Library
- Spend time with other homeless youth
- Wish there was a central spot like the drop-in that was open more often
- Some churches are good to go to but many of us don't go

**Minutes Prepared By:**

**Jennifer Comeau, Child and Family Services  
& Jay Mattia, Manchester School District**