

Lane County Community Resilience Toolkit: Unhoused Populations and Unaccompanied Youth Executive Summary



Introduction:

The Unhoused Populations and Unaccompanied Youth Teams consist of representatives from community-based and governmental organizations, including primary care and behavioral health providers, community advocacy organizations, local Coordinated Care Organizations, Eugene Police Department, Bethel and Eugene 4J School Districts, Oregon Department of Human Services, and Lane County Health & Human Services. The Team identified both strengths and needs associated with recovery from COVID-19 and the resulting economic downturn, as well as resources and recommended practices. The Team also identified the stresses and loss points that most affect this population. The work of the Team will continue with periodic updates and additional material added to the Toolkit as the pandemic continues.

Major Conclusions:

1. The COVID-19 pandemic and 2020 economic downturn have affected unhoused individuals in a variety of ways, both highlighting their needs and resulting in appropriate community responses for temporary shelters, but essentially leaving them without permanent housing solutions.
2. Those with the fewest resources and most disabilities have the greatest need for services and assistance including basic needs for food, safety, hygiene, housing and medical care.
3. Technology resource disparities increase the challenges for these populations, and the need for smart phones and connectivity to broadband are very high.
4. The pressures of quarantine, social distancing, closed social programs and limited behavioral health services have negatively impacted these populations.
5. Racial tensions for unhoused people of color have been highlighted by the social justice movement that occurred simultaneously with the pandemic.
6. Youth living independently without family support have been especially negatively affected by closures of schools, libraries and other safe places to congregate.

Identified Stress/Loss Points for Unhoused and Unaccompanied Youth Populations:

- Basic needs for food, shelter, utilities, and healthcare are not met
- Social isolation and loneliness due to quarantine are difficult to address
- Oregon's Stay at Home order cannot be met due to not having a home
- School closures at every level including middle/high school and college
- Income reduction/loss, especially for gig economy workers
- Physical touch decreased due to social distancing

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- Loss of school social mentoring and peer-to-peer services for Unaccompanied Youth
- Libraries, stores, malls, recreation centers, social services closed
- Family Resource Centers closed
- Racism and oppression affect these populations in myriad ways
- Police responses and protests in the streets affect these populations
- Trauma may be experienced in many different ways, including numbness to emotional stress
- Insecurity and lack of safety
- Loss of identity—no income/job; family losses; feeling adrift
- Trauma associated with being pushed out of families may be severe for youth
- LGBTQ youth often pushed out of homes due to family intolerance
- Inability to shelter in place as there are no shelter options
- DMV closures—individuals cannot get identification which might help them secure resources
- Community Court closed for diversion cases
- Isolation leading to some people becoming disconnected from needed resources
- Loss of shelter sites and shelter capacity following resolution of initial pandemic sites
- Dusk to Dawn camp sites reduced
- Eugene Mission reduced beds for emergency shelter
- Stimulus check redirection and family fraud are common for unhoused individuals without secure addresses
- Social distancing is not maintained and masks are not always worn, potentially increasing vulnerability to the COVID virus.