All of our nation’s young people, regardless of where they live, deserve the best possible start in life. Every day of housing instability and the associated stress represents a missed opportunity to support healthy development and transitions to adulthood. Voices of Youth Count gives voice to young people across America who lack the support they need to achieve independence and pursue their full potential.

**Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in Rural America**

*Foundational evidence for understanding the scale, scope and urgency of homelessness among youth in rural America*

Rates of youth experiencing homelessness were similar in rural and nonrural areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth 13-17</th>
<th>Young Adults 18-25</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household prevalence in urban counties</td>
<td>Population prevalence in urban counties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household prevalence in rural counties</td>
<td>Population prevalence in rural counties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: VoYC National Survey)

**Recommendations**

1. Reexamine federal programs and funding to ensure that young people in every part of the country have access, within a reasonable distance, to youth-specific homelessness services and supports.

2. Establish ongoing grant programs and technical assistance to address youth homelessness in rural communities. These efforts can be designed by considering examples in other sectors, such as federal programs to improve rural health care service delivery.

3. Engage tribal nations, organizations, and young people to devise concrete, culturally sensitive federal policy strategies for both rural and urban communities to address the high risk for homelessness among American Indian and Alaska Native youth.

4. Supplement shelter- and street-based counts, especially in rural areas and small towns, with creative methods to identify and count the full range of youth experiencing homelessness.

5. Add a priority focus for youth experiencing homelessness to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Youth Development Grant program and Rural Community Development Initiative.

6. Develop trauma-informed toolkits for rural youth through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

7. Engage rural school systems and broader youth-serving organizations (e.g., after-school, mentoring, and faith-based programs not specific to homelessness) as leaders and partners in helping to avert young people from homelessness.

8. Provide funding to support innovation and rigorous evaluation for tailored housing and service delivery models for youth in rural and small-town communities.

(Source: VoYC Brief Youth Survey)