



The District's Dime

Going Beyond the Budget Book

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Bringing District Youth Home

By Kate Coventry

Most of us are heading home today and tomorrow to give thanks with friends and family for our good fortune over the past year. But for many youth who are homeless and disconnected from their families, going home is not a realistic option.

The good news is that a number of organizations have come together out of a commitment to end youth homelessness in DC. They have designed an initiative to ensure that all District youth have a home and the stability needed for future success. These groups are ready to go, and they are now looking to the District to provide leadership and financial support.

Youth become homeless for a variety of reasons. Many run away from abuse and neglect, or because they don't want to be a financial burden while their family is struggling to make ends meet. Some are lured into leaving their homes through false promises made by adults intending to exploit them. Others are thrown out when families break down, emotionally or financially.

The new initiative, [*A Bold Strategy to End Youth Homelessness in the District of Columbia*](#), recognizes that these youth need access to a variety of services, tailored to their unique needs. Under the plan, street outreach efforts would be expanded so that service providers can build relationships with homeless youth, letting them know help is available. Shelter beds and host homes--families who volunteer to house youth for short periods of time--would meet the youth's immediate need for a place to stay. Family reunification services would attempt to reconnect youth with their families. These services include providing support to the youth and family in resolving the current conflict and by equipping them with the skills to manage normal family conflict in a healthy and productive way. In situations where family reunification is not a healthy option, youth would be placed into transitional housing programs to get the time and safe space to learn the skills they need to live independently.

A \$10 million investment to support this strategy would ensure that all youth have a home for the holidays. DCFPI urges the mayor and DC Council to make this critical investment in our youth and in our city's future.