



NEW AVENUES FOR YOUTH

The Economic Benefits Of Helping Homeless Youth

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Preface	2
II. Executive Summary	3
III. The Report	5
1. Prevention and early intervention	8
2. Engaging homeless youth and moving them toward stability	9
3. Getting homeless youth off the streets	13
4. Fostering self-sufficiency through education and training	15
IV. Conclusion	21
V. Appendix	22

I. PREFACE



New Avenues for Youth is committed to developing high quality, cost-effective programs that assist homeless youth to exit street life permanently. We are also driven by an outcome-based philosophy that emphasizes financial accountability and results.

To this end, the Board of Directors formed a committee of business leaders and charged them with determining what financial impact New Avenues programs have on Portland and society at large. This committee initiated an in-depth evaluation of the economic impact of our programs by weighing program expenditures against downstream social service and juvenile justice costs.

The committee was ably assisted by an independent consultant, Kristina Smock, Ph.D., who gathered and analyzed the available data from nationwide studies and examined the costs of homelessness. Experts from the academic, social service and justice system communities were consulted, as well as the staff of New Avenues who spent numerous hours compiling data.

The New Avenues Board of Directors initiated this study because of our on-going commitment to good stewardship of the funds we receive from our supporters and our dedication to helping homeless youth transition to independent lives. Moreover, we will continue our efforts to achieve the best possible outcomes with finite resources.

I would like to give special thanks to the hard work and dedication of the committee members, Pete Nickerson, Jerry Rowe, Mitch Hornecker, and Ray Mathis, whose time and effort will continue to serve New Avenues and our community long after the committee's work is completed. Lastly, a special thanks to our Executive Director, Ken Cowdery, Associate Director, Daniel Pitasky, and Development Director, Amy Smith, for their guidance and expertise in moving this project to a successful conclusion.

Stephen Gomez
Chairperson, New Avenues for Youth

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



outh homelessness costs the general public millions of dollars each year as a result of homeless youth cycling in and out of the juvenile justice system, incarceration, emergency room medical care, foster care placement, and school system costs associated with delayed learning and inter-school movement.

If not properly addressed, these costs can become permanent social liabilities and spiral out of control as homeless youth become homeless adults with negative effects and costs to our public and private care systems.

Until now, little work has been done to examine the economic benefits of investing in services specifically designed to break the cycle of youth homelessness. This prompted New Avenues for Youth to conduct this study to assess the impact of such investments resulting from its existing outcome-based programs.

The findings of the study reflect substantial savings from the investments. **Every \$1.00 invested in the programs of New Avenues for Youth saves \$4.12 in costs to society.** This report examines how we have arrived at this conclusion.

Despite the burden of difficult life experiences, with the right help homeless youth are able to permanently transform their lives and end their homelessness. Throughout our ten year history, homeless young people have shown us repeatedly that they are resilient and able to make lasting changes. Instead of sleeping on the streets, young people are able to find permanent homes. Instead of panhandling, they are able to get and keep good jobs. Instead of addiction and substance abuse, young people can choose and maintain health and well-being.

Economic benefits of New Avenues' programs:

PROGRAM AREA	PROGRAM COST	COST SAVINGS	BENEFIT RATIO
1. Prevention and early intervention	\$195,203	\$984,672	\$5.04 saved for every \$1 spent
2. Engaging homeless youth and moving them toward stability	\$448,277	\$3,197,020	\$7.13 saved for every \$1 spent
3. Getting homeless youth off the streets	\$783,680	\$5,842,238	\$7.45 saved for every \$1 spent
4. Fostering self-sufficiency through education and training	\$759,121	\$1,374,702	\$1.81 saved for every \$1 spent
Total*	\$2,764,541	\$11,398,632	\$4.12 saved for every \$1 spent

*Program costs total includes all expenditures of New Avenues For Youth, including administration and fund raising.

New Avenues for Youth is part of Portland's homeless youth system, which includes Outside In and Janus Youth Programs. The three organizations also partner with DePaul Treatment Centers and Cascadia Mental Health, among many others service providers. Major financial support for the homeless youth system comes from Multnomah County, the City of Portland, Portland Public Schools, and WorkSystems, Inc.

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III. THE REPORT



At New Avenues, we work hard to measure the effectiveness of our work with homeless youth – and at ensuring the lasting impact of our efforts. We are continually seeking new ways to be more accountable to our donors and to the wider Portland community. This study, which uses cost-benefit analysis to evaluate the impact of our services, demonstrates the value of their contributions. We have combined large-scale national research studies on homeless and at-risk youth with New Avenues’ outcome data. The utilization and application of data from reputable and respected sources enable the reader to draw clear and valuable conclusions about New Avenues’ work. New Avenues saves our community the equivalent of \$4.12 for every \$1 it spends – a substantial return on the public’s investment.

This report is organized into four program areas:

- 1. Prevention and early intervention services.** Assistance is provided 24-hours, seven days a week to reunite troubled youths with their families, or refer them to mental health, addiction programs, and other appropriate community-based programs. **This saves the costs of housing youth in juvenile detention facilities and is a first line of defense in keeping at-risk youth from becoming homeless youth.**
- 2. Engagement services.** Services are offered in a positive and safe environment where youth can access meals, health care, hot showers, clothing and other basic necessities. **These services provide a first step toward helping homeless youth leave street life.**
- 3. Moving homeless youth off the streets.** This program involves counseling provided by highly trained case managers, family reunification if possible, drug and alcohol treatment referrals, transitional housing and, when appropriate, supervised first apartments. **A young person’s life needs to be stabilized before they are able to move towards self-sufficiency.**
- 4. Fostering self-sufficiency through education and job training.** Services include educational remediation and General Education Diploma (GED) instruction, college preparation, vocational training, and partnering with the private sector to secure living wage jobs. **A solid education coupled with job training helps formerly homeless youth become productive, contributing members of their community.**

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NEW AVENUES SERVED 1,948 HOMELESS AND AT-RISK YOUTH IN 2004-2005.

We examined the outcomes of each of these program areas and the broader impact of these outcomes on the community at large. All figures in the report refer to fiscal year 2004-05 unless otherwise stated.

The effectiveness of New Avenues' model is reflected in its track record. In 2004-2005, New Avenues:

Served **1,948** homeless and at-risk youth

Prevented **182** runaway youth from becoming homeless

Helped **104** homeless youth exit street life

Placed **99** homeless youth in jobs, and provided an additional **46** with training or work experience

Helped **32** homeless youth get their General Educational Development (GED) certificate, and **25** enroll in post-secondary education

Provided **444** homeless youth with essential services; **180** of these youth committed to case management

For the purposes of this report, we have divided the costs of case management between two program areas, based on estimates of the percentage of case management time devoted to each outcome. Twenty-five percent of the case management budget has been incorporated into the cost calculations for Section 2: "Engaging homeless youth and moving them toward stability", with the remaining seventy-five percent incorporated into the cost calculations for Section 3: "Getting homeless youth off the streets."

New Avenues' administrative and development costs are essential to its successful outcomes. Because these costs are spread out across the entire organization, we have incorporated them into the total aggregate benefit ratio.

1. Prevention and early intervention: Reception Center

The Reception Center is a unique collaboration by New Avenues for Youth, Janus Youth Programs, the Portland Police Bureau, and the Multnomah County Department of Community Justice designed to provide clinical intervention to prevent unnecessary youth incarceration. Youth who are picked up by the police for non-violent acts, such as truancy, runaway behavior, shoplifting or curfew violation are taken to the Reception Center, where they meet with a trained counselor. These counselors work with the youth and families to develop a service plan to address the youth's immediate needs and identify long-term strategies for keeping the youth connected to family, out of the juvenile justice system, and off the streets of Portland.

The Reception Center began as a pilot program in 1998, funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, to provide creative alternatives to juvenile incarceration. After only six months of operation, this model proved itself to be an innovative, successful formula for preventing youth incarceration. In fact, it has been so successful that it has been actively studied and replicated nationally.

Program cost: \$195,203

Key program outcomes:

1,392: Number of youth diverted from the Juvenile Justice system

955: Number of youth reunited with parents or guardians

456: Number of runaway youth served

BY DIVERTING 1,392 YOUTH FROM THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM AND PREVENTING 182 RUNAWAY YOUTH FROM BECOMING HOMELESS, THE RECEPTION CENTER SAVED THE BROADER COMMUNITY \$984,672 IN PUBLIC COSTS LAST YEAR.

Public cost savings: In the past, most of the 1,392 youth that were served by the Reception Center would have ended up in juvenile detention. National studies indicate that 40% of youth who leave home do not return, and once a youth becomes homeless, they tend to remain homeless for an average of four months if staying in shelters, or three years if staying on the streets (Moore 2005; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1995).

\$508,080: Cost of intake screening through juvenile detention system for 1392 youth (\$365 x 1392)

\$200,448: Cost of professional screening, assessment, referral, family and individual counseling through New Avenues (\$144 x 1392)

\$307,632: Total cost savings for our community

\$62: Average daily cost of providing shelter/basic services to a homeless youth

50%: Average percentage of homeless youth accessing shelter/basic services

4 months: Average number of months homeless youth access shelter/basic services

\$677,040: Estimated cost savings of youth prevented from becoming homeless

(456 runaway youth x 40%=182 x 50%=91 youth x \$62 x 120 days)

\$984,672: Total cost savings

By diverting 1,392 youth from the Juvenile Justice system and preventing 182 runaway youth from becoming homeless, New Avenues' Reception Center saved the broader community a total of \$984,672 in public costs last year. **With annual expenditures of \$195,203, this translates to a cost savings of \$5.04 for every dollar that New Avenues spends on this program area.**

2. Engaging homeless youth and moving them toward stability: Day Services Center and Case Management

Studies show that homeless youth cannot permanently leave the streets until they are stable - meaning they are engaged in counseling, accessing support services, taking care of their physical and mental health issues and developing educational and employment skills.

New Avenues focuses on providing youth with positive adult relationships as they begin the process of exiting street life.

The top priority for our clinical case management team is working with youth to stabilize their lives. Whether this means reunifying with family, drug and alcohol counseling, or referral into appropriate transitional housing or independent living programs, our counselors are committed to working with each youth to develop an individualized service plan to exit street life. Experienced chemical dependency counselors provide counseling, referral for detoxification and inpatient treatment as needed.

Case managers and youth work together to develop an individualized service plan, which identifies the specific needs of the youth, and may include education, housing, mental health, and employment. Service plans are designed to help youth meet their goals and prepare them for independence. Case managers provide ongoing individual counseling, family counseling, advocacy and the support necessary to help youth exit street life.

Program costs: \$448,277

Includes:

Engagement Services : \$363,113

Case Management: \$85,164

Key program outcomes:

444: Youth served by Day Services Center

180: Youth accessing Day Services Center who committed to case management

Public cost savings: By engaging street youth in the homeless services system, and by connecting them with case management and the tools for long-term stabilization, the Day Services Center puts homeless youth on the path to independence. **Studies of at-risk and delinquent youth have found that the development of a supportive relationship, such as with a concerned counselor, is the key factor enabling youth to turn their lives around** (Chung et. al., 2005). Homeless youth who do not make a commitment to exit street life, and who do not have the support of a case manager, are likely to remain homeless.

Although the Day Services Center is critical as a first step to establishing a trusting relationship with homeless youth, its economic impact is difficult to measure. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the center has a significant impact on the broader community. By offering a safe place to go during the day, the center protects homeless youth from victimization and reduces the physical stress of being outside. The center also mitigates the impact of Portland's homeless youth problem on the local business climate by reducing the number of youth hanging out downtown. The center's health clinic and health education programs reduce the strain on local emergency rooms and hospitals. Unique programs such as a music studio and art therapy classes motivate youth to complete their education and pursue a productive future. Unfortunately, many of these impacts are impossible to quantify. For the purpose of this analysis, we will focus on a few examples of the Day Services Center's impacts that are possible to calculate based on the available data.

45: Estimated number of homeless youth engaging in case management at Day Services Center with diagnosable mental health problems (based on national data)

\$40,449: Average annual public cost of chronically mentally ill homeless person (emergency rooms, hospital stays, jail time, crisis intervention)

10%: Assumed percentage of mentally ill homeless youth to become chronically mentally ill homeless adults

\$182,020: Cost savings (45 x 10% x \$40,449)

45: Estimated number of homeless youth engaging in case management at Day Services Center with diagnosable substance abuse problems (based on national data)

\$670,000: Average lifetime cost of a serious drug user (including medical costs, reduced workplace productivity, criminal justice system costs, etc)

10%: Assumed percentage of homeless youth with substance abuse disorders becoming chronic adult drug abusers

\$3,015,000: Cost savings (45 x 10% x \$670,000)

\$3,197,020: Total cost savings**

By engaging homeless youth in case management and mental health and addiction services, New Avenues interrupts the cycle of substance abuse, mental illness, and chronic homelessness. Based on the above figures, we can estimate that New Avenues saves our community \$3,197,020 through its Day Services Center and case management programs - **a cost savings of \$7.13 for every \$1 invested in this program.**

***This figure doesn't capture a wide range of other cost savings achieved by the Day Services Center's programs, such as the reduction in emergency room costs by providing youth with a health clinic and preventive care; the reduction in victimization costs by providing youth with a safe place to be during the day; and the reduction in vandalism and crime by keeping youth busy and off the streets. The next section gives an indication of the magnitude of some of these potential cost savings.*



BY CONNECTING STREET YOUTH WITH THE TOOLS THEY NEED FOR LONG-TERM STABILIZATION, THE DAY SERVICES CENTER PUTS HOMELESS YOUTH ON THE PATH TO INDEPENDENCE.

3. Getting homeless youth off the streets: Case Management and Transitional Housing

Once New Avenues has successfully engaged youth in case management, the primary objective is to get them off the streets and into a safe and stable living situation. Case managers work with youth to reunite them with their families, when appropriate, or to move them towards self-sufficiency. When reunification is not possible, case managers help to connect youth with stable housing and, in some cases, with group homes or treatment facilities.

For many of these youth, New Avenues' 24-bed transitional housing facility and independent living program help to ease the transition to self-sufficiency by offering dormitories and apartments along with instruction in independent living skills.

A key element of the transitional housing program is to promote structure as a daily practice. For many youth, this is their first stable living environment. Learning to maintain a clean living space, open a checking account, set and attain healthy goals, show respect for oneself and others and to operate within a structured environment are vital to their ability to live independent lives.

The independent living program offers subsidized permanent housing options for homeless and at-risk youth. Youth have access to sliding scale rent and utility assistance. They may also get help with moving costs, and receive assistance acquiring furniture or other household items. Assistance is based upon income levels and is adjusted monthly to increase financial responsibility in controlled increments.

Ninety percent of the youth in these programs remain stable and off the streets one year after leaving the program. A stable home coupled with New Avenues' continuum of services is a powerful combination that has been proven effective with successful outcomes.

Program cost: \$783,680

Includes:

Transitional Housing and Independent Living Program: \$528,188

Case Management: \$255,492

Key program outcomes:

104: Youth who successfully exited street life

Public cost savings: National studies indicate that youth who live on the streets experience high rates of victimization. Half of all homeless youth in one study had been robbed, and half had been attacked or beaten up in the past twelve months (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1995). National studies also show high rates of criminal activity and involvement with the criminal justice system among youth living on the streets. For example, in one study four-fifths of street youth surveyed had committed theft-related crimes, and two-fifths had engaged in assault-related crimes (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1995).

Robbery & Assault Cost Savings:

50%: Estimated percentage of youth robbed while on the streets

50%: Estimated percentage of youth assaulted while on the streets

\$15,600: Estimated victimization cost per incident of robbery (includes medical costs, risk of death, lost productivity and loss of quality of life)

\$40,700: Estimated victimization cost per incident of assault (includes medical costs, risk of death, lost productivity and loss of quality of life)

\$811,200: Cost savings, robbery (52 youth x \$15,600)

\$2,116,400: Cost savings, assault (52 youth x \$40,700)

\$2,927,600: Total cost savings, robbery and assault

Crime Reduction Cost Savings:

80%: Estimated percentage of youth diverted from theft related crimes

40%: Estimated percentage of youth diverted from assault related crimes

16%: Estimated percentage of assaults resulting in conviction

\$8,625: Estimated victim costs, theft related crimes

\$40,700: Estimated victim costs: assault related crimes

\$69,909: Estimated annual cost of youth incarceration

\$715,875: Cost savings, theft related crimes (83 youth x \$8,625)

\$1,709,400: Cost savings, assault related crimes (42 youth x \$40,700)

\$489,363: Cost savings, youth incarceration (7 youth x \$69,909)

\$2,914,638: Total cost savings, theft, assault & youth incarceration

Based on the above figures, we can estimate that New Avenues saves our community \$5,842,238 through its Transitional Housing and Case Management programs - **a cost savings of \$7.45 for every \$1 invested in this program.**

4. Fostering self-sufficiency through education and training

New Avenues recognizes that in order to build long-term self-sufficiency, getting youth off the streets is only the first step. Given that up to three-quarters of older homeless youth are high school drop-outs (Moore, 2005), providing them with education and job training is essential to their long-term success.

The New Avenues school is based on a student-centered approach to learning, which assists students moving from academic uncertainty towards a meaningful educational experience. Students attend classes that help prepare and motivate them to become contributing members of a larger community. New Avenues' masters level teachers offer a range of classes, tutoring, computer training and assistance in preparing youth for the GED, re-entry into high school, college placement and preparation, and post-secondary financial aid. Classroom curriculums are woven into project-based learning activities, field trips, community service, film and literature review, writing classes, math, and physical education.

Pursuing Avenues to Employment (PAVE), New Avenues' highly regarded job training program, prepares and places homeless and at-risk youth into internships and jobs. All of the program's training curricula are designed in partnership with private sector employer advisory committees to meet the needs of local businesses. The job training program has achieved remarkable success in placing youth into jobs because of its strong partnerships with over 75 employers who often participate in classroom training.

Program costs: \$759,121

Includes Education and PAVE

Key program outcomes:

32: Youth receiving GEDs

25: Youth enrolled in post-secondary education

99: Youth obtaining employment

46: Youth in internships, vocational training or work experience

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Public cost savings: In today's economy, high school completion is the minimum credential necessary for most jobs with any potential for growth. Young adults ages 17-24 with less than a high school degree are three times as likely to be unemployed, underemployed, or working for very low wages than those with a college degree (Wald and Martinez 2003, Annie E. Casey Foundation 2004).

This data suggests that connecting at-risk youth to education is essential to their future success. But in today's economy, education alone is not enough. Recent research demonstrates that a career-based approach that emphasizes on-the-job experience is the most effective strategy (Lerman, 1996). By offering a unique combination of alternative education and job-based learning, New Avenues' education and training programs effectively build the skills and credentials of homeless youth, strengthening their chances at self-sufficiency.

Increased public revenue from education:

57: Total number of youth receiving GED and/or entering post-secondary education

\$10,400: Amount by which the earnings of a worker with a high school degree or GED exceeds the earnings of a high school drop-out per year (annual income of \$26,364)

\$13,744: Amount by which the earnings of a worker with some college exceeds the earnings of a high school drop-out per year (annual income of \$30,108)

\$202,464: Estimated future tax contributions for youth receiving GED (based on Oregon tax incidence model) per year (\$6,327 taxes x 32)

\$224,900: Estimated future tax contributions for youth enrolled in college (based on Oregon tax incidence model) per year (\$8,996 taxes x 25)

\$427,364: Total annual public revenue

By increasing the earning potential of 57 homeless youth, New Avenues' education program will generate an estimated \$427,364 per year in additional public revenues (based on current tax rates).

BY OFFERING A COMBINATION OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION AND JOB-BASED LEARNING, NEW AVENUES EFFECTIVELY BUILD THE SKILLS AND CREDENTIALS OF HOMELESS YOUTH, STRENGTHENING THEIR CHANCES AT SELF-SUFFICIENCY.

Increased public revenue from job training:

\$20,294: Average annual income for youth placed into full time employment

\$4,465: Average annual taxes paid by youth placed into full time employment

\$7,382: Average annual income for youth placed into part-time employment

\$1,478: Average annual taxes paid by youth in part-time employment

\$285,760: Annual taxes from full time job placements ($\$4,465 \times 34$)

\$51,730: Annual taxes from part-time job placements ($\$1,478 \times 65$)

\$337,490: Total annual taxes from job training program

Reduction of public contribution to maintenance of safety net for homeless youth:

By enabling many of the youth to achieve self-sufficiency, the employment program reduces the public costs for these services. The cost to maintain the safety net of shelter and basic services for homeless youth is substantial. Even those youth who do not earn enough to become fully self-supporting are likely to reduce their reliance on social services and the public safety net as their incomes increase. If a modest 50% of the youths' earnings net of taxes -- an average of \$6,160 per youth -- went towards off-setting the costs of public services that would otherwise be subsidizing their survival, this would translate into a cost savings of \$609,848 in the first year alone, with comparable annual cost savings for each year of future employment.

\$6,160: Average of 50% of earnings net of taxes of homeless youth placed into employment ($\$15,829$ for full time x 64 youth = $\$1,013,056$ plus $\$5,904$ for part-timers x 35 youth = $\$206,640/99$ x 50% = $\$6,160$)

\$609,848: Total savings in reduction of public benefits ($\$6,160$ x 99 = $\$609,848$)

By empowering homeless and at-risk youth to become productive, contributing members of society, New Avenues' employment program saves our community $\$1,374,702$ through a combination of increased tax contributions and a reduction in public services, **a savings of $\$1.81$ for every $\$1.00$ contributed to the program.**

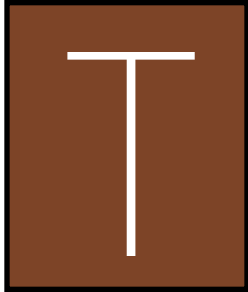
The employment program also contributes to a reduction in juvenile delinquency and long-term homelessness. Studies show a strong connection between youth employment and lower rates of criminal justice system involvement (Cohen, 1998). One in-depth study of homeless youth found that employment was the critical factor enabling the youth to reject the criminal sub-culture of the streets and start stabilizing their lives (Hagan and McCarthy, 1998).

BY EMPOWERING HOMELESS AND AT-RISK YOUTH
TO BECOME PRODUCTIVE, CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS OF
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IV. CONCLUSION



This report demonstrates that the costs of homeless youth are exceedingly high, both to the homeless youth and to the society in which they live. On a purely financial basis, the monetary costs of dealing with homelessness, as documented in the national studies cited in this report, merit our attention and call for a reasoned and appropriate response. The non-monetary costs may be even greater, if not quantifiable.

New Avenues For Youth presents a complete outcome based program for addressing, dealing with, and resolving youth homelessness: early intervention to prevent youth from becoming homeless, basic services to provide outreach to existing homeless youth, case management and stability in planning a return to society, and the necessary education, training and housing to reunite homeless youth with society.

New Avenues has demonstrated that it makes maximum use of its monetary support in addressing in a practical and effective manner many of the needs of the homeless youth whom we serve. New Avenues' supporters can rest assured that their support is generating essential, significant, effective and measurable results in dealing with the challenges of homeless youth.

V. APPENDIX

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