



Another threat for street kids is prostitution. The risks from this activity include violence, diseases and even death.

Many kids engage in survival sex to get food, drugs, clothing or a place to stay. Favor has found that more boys than girls engage in prostitution.

Street kids talk about being bothered by authority figures because of who they are. The police, Chantel says, are especially problematic. "I got ID'd three times in a row last night," she complains.

She and Stephanie say the police follow and search them often. "It seems they are trying to get us out of downtown," Chantel says.

Portland has a number of services designed to take the edge off being homeless and to help kids get off the streets. What is unique about this city is the existence of emergency drop-in services for homeless youth.

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"In many other cities, we see programs targeting at-risk youth, minority youth, youth in gangs, those in the juvenile justice system, but not homeless youth," Duke explains. "They aren't targeted because they are invisible; they don't look homeless."

In such cities, homeless youth won't go to places with adult services, Duke adds. "So, they are only seen by police or the emergency room."

Chantel says, "It's easy living on the streets because of the availability of resources." These programs include youth shelters and services located in and near downtown Portland. They offer counseling, housing, job placement services, health clinics and places to sleep and socialize.

Duke estimates about 2,000 street youth use the services of the Homeless Youth Continuum, which is composed of New Avenues for Youth, Janus Youth Services, Salvation Army's Greenhouse and Outside In. The staff from all four work closely together.

Homeless youth first arrive at the Greenhouse. There they are referred to case managers such as Favor at Outside In.

"The first thing for a kid on the street is to get to a shelter," she says. "It's a big step forward to come inside with showers, food."

Greenhouse is a drop-in center for homeless youth. It offers meals, a medical clinic, showers, laundry facilities, crisis counseling and a place to rest and socialize. During the days and evenings, homeless kids straggle in and out of the building for their needs. Chantel, Brandy and Stephanie rely on Greenhouse for their basic needs as well as emotional support from staff. "I know I wouldn't be alive if it wasn't for the Greenhouse staff helping me through some stuff," Chantel says.

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