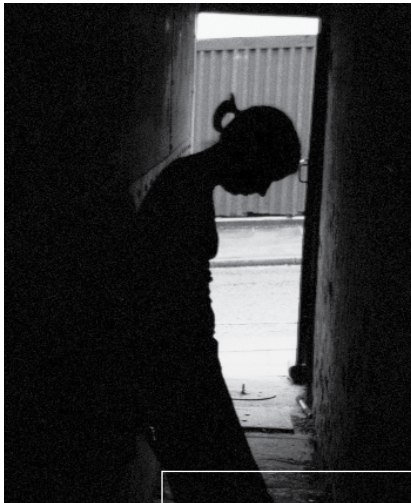


# Disconnected Youth in San Francisco



A Roadmap to Improve the Life Chances of  
San Francisco's Most Vulnerable Young Adults

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MAYOR'S TRANSITIONAL YOUTH TASK FORCE

2007

There are currently 80,000 youth ages 16 through 24 living in San Francisco. The majority of these youth will make a successful transition to adulthood. They will complete high school, find jobs, maintain stable housing, manage their finances, and develop meaningful family and social relationships. Unfortunately, an estimated five to ten percent of young people will not make a successful transition. These youth are at risk for a number of negative outcomes including substantial periods of unemployment, homelessness, involvement with the criminal justice system and poverty. Helping these youth become productive and emotionally stable would produce enormous social benefits for society at large, as well as for youth themselves.

# The Mayor's Task Force on Transitional Youth

In recognition of this problem, Mayor Gavin Newsom established the [Mayor's Task Force on Transitional Youth](#) in March 2006. He charged the Task Force with developing a set of policy recommendations to improve outcomes for the City's most vulnerable youth ages 16 through 24. Committees and working groups of the Task Force met on more than 60 occasions to review information and data, come to agreement on priorities, and hash out recommendations.

## A number of key findings emerged from this process:

- The Task Force identified the following **priority populations** as having a particularly difficult time making the transition to adulthood – youth who are transitioning out of public systems; have dropped out of high school; are homeless; have a disability or other special need; or are young unmarried parents.
- Focusing on these priority groups, the Task Force estimates that **up to ten percent of young adults ages 16-24**, or five to eight thousand individuals, are disconnected from education, employment, and social support systems.
- There is **no comprehensive, citywide policy direction** regarding budget and programmatic priorities with respect to this population. While many City departments and community-based organizations provide services to this population, too often they do so in isolation from each other and without accountability to a clearly articulated set of desired results across systems and programs.
- While the City dedicates substantial resources to a range of programs and services for transitional age youth, these **resources need to be better coordinated and aligned**. Funding is disbursed across a large number of City departments and community partners.
- Many **youth and service providers are unaware of existing programs and services**.
- There is a **lack of continuity of services** as high-risk youth transition from child to adult systems.
- The **quality and capacity of service agencies varies tremendously**. In many cases, programs lack trained and well supported staff. Most existing services are not comprehensive enough to meet the needs of this population.
- Existing **data and information systems are insufficient** to assess the needs and status of young people as well as the effectiveness of current services.

# Recommendations

The recommendations of the Task Force are designed to address the problem of the current fragmented policies and programs, with a comprehensive, integrated approach towards disconnected transitional age youth. The 16 recommendations are organized into four areas:

A. Making disconnected transitional age youth a priority

B. Enhancing service coordination

C. Improving quality of service delivery

D. Increasing system capacity



## A. Making disconnected transitional age youth a priority in San Francisco

To improve outcomes among San Francisco's most vulnerable young adults, there needs to be a specific focus on this population as a target group and the development of an overall strategy for meeting the needs of these youth, much as the City does with other target populations such as children 0-5. Incorporating the voices and perspectives of youth and young adults in City policy-making and programming is critical to making this happen.

1. **Issue Mayoral Policy Declaration.** The Mayor should declare that it is City policy to help disconnected youth achieve a successful transition to adulthood and into the work force.
2. **Issue Mayoral Executive Order.** The Mayor should issue an Executive Order requiring City departments serving transitional age youth to include youth in decision-making.

## **B. Enhancing service coordination**

There is no City department or planning body vested with overall responsibility for disconnected transitional age youth. To achieve significant change, the City will have to put structures in place and allocate resources differently and in a coordinated manner.

3. **Create an Interagency Council on Transitional Youth.** The Mayor should work in close consultation with the Superintendent of the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) and the Chancellor of City College of San Francisco (CCSF) in creating an Interagency Council focused solely on transitional age youth.
4. **Strengthen partnerships to promote access to, and effectiveness of, education programs serving disconnected youth.** The City, San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), the San Francisco Community College District (CCSF), and San Francisco State University (SFSU) should work together to accomplish these goals.
5. **Reconstitute the San Francisco Workforce Investment Board Youth Council.** The Youth Council, which is a mandated committee of the San Francisco Workforce Investment Board, should be revitalized to serve as the coordinating body for citywide funding and policy development relating to transitional age workforce development.
6. **Improve management information systems related to transitional age youth.** The City should develop an integrated information system and require all City departments to collect and report data on transitional age youth.

## **C. Improving quality of service delivery**

To be effective, services must be of the highest quality, based on promising and best practices in the field, reflective of the cultural and developmental needs of this age group, and focused on results. They must include sufficient support for high-risk youth transitioning from child to adult systems and be linked to other supports and resources relevant to youth. Finally, services need to be of sufficient duration and intensity in order to meet the multi-faceted needs of disconnected transitional age youth.

7. **Develop minimum quality standards for programs serving disconnected transitional age youth.** The City should build on research and best practices to develop minimum quality standards that all City-funded programs are required to meet.
8. **Improve transition planning.** The City should ensure that youth involved in public systems receive individualized support to prepare them for transition out of or among service systems.
9. **Increase outreach and awareness efforts.** The City should improve efforts to provide disconnected transitional age youth with information about existing services.

## D. Increasing system capacity

While a lot can be accomplished by better coordinating and aligning existing services and by focusing on a clear set of priorities and desired results, there are a number of critical service gaps—specifically in the areas of employment assistance and support, housing, health care and mental health—that can only be addressed through a commitment to increase the capacity of the service system to meet the needs of disconnected transitional age youth.

10. **Develop comprehensive neighborhood-based multi-service centers for disconnected youth.** The City should develop four comprehensive neighborhood-based service centers to provide high quality services for disconnected transitional age youth.
11. **Increase access to training and employment opportunities.** The City should improve access to high quality training and paid employment opportunities for disconnected transitional age youth.
12. **Expand housing opportunities for homeless or marginally housed youth.** The Mayor should charge his Office of Housing, the Human Services Agency and the Department of Public Health (DPH) to develop a plan for expanding housing to homeless and marginally housed transitional age youth.
13. **Develop a residential treatment program for youth with significant mental health issues.** The Department of Public Health (DPH) should develop a first ever residential treatment program for transitional age youth with significant mental health issues.
14. **Improve access to health insurance coverage.** The City should promote universal health insurance through age 24.
15. **Increase the capacity of the public health safety net to meet the health care needs of transitional age youth.** The Mayor should direct the Department of Public Health (DPH) to expand primary care youth clinic services in San Francisco's Southeast neighborhoods.
16. **Expand the availability of safe recreational and social activities for transitional age youth.** The Mayor should direct the Recreation and Park Department to expand recreational and social activities.

It will not be easy to implement the bold agenda presented here. Disconnected youth are a challenging population to serve and the City has not for the most part had clear policies or a focus of services for this population. However, the Task Force believes that real change is possible. Taken together, implementation of these recommendations would constitute a major step in making the Mayor's vision a reality and in making a significant difference in the lives of these youth and the well-being of the entire city of San Francisco.

Please visit [www.dcyf.org](http://www.dcyf.org) for more information.

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