



commonground

The Westside Community Center *Working Together to fight HIV*

HOMELESS YOUTH PEER EDUCATION PROGRAM (HYPE)

Young people are the fastest growing group at risk for HIV. Two teens are infected with HIV every hour in the United States. One in four new HIV cases in the US occurs in people under the age of 21. To compound this problem, homeless youth encounter health problems more often and more acutely as a result of restricted access to basic supports, including sexual reproductive health and clean needles for drug injecting youth.

Common Ground's HYPE Program provides a Drop-In Center and street-based health clinic to young people living on the streets or in other unstable environments. Last year, over 300 youth accessed the Drop-In Center. The majority of participants return to build relationships with staff.



Our commitment to harm reduction makes Common Ground the ideal organization to provide mental health, case management services and access to medical care to hard-to-reach homeless youth who are often restricted from or unwilling to utilize mainstream health and social services because of barriers including requirement of abstinence from substances, strict and time-sensitive enrollment procedures and stigmatization of mental health problems.

Through partnership with The Westside Family Health Center and the UCLA Dental team, youth are able to access primary medical care and dental care on a walk-in basis. On-site confidential HIV testing, referrals to needle exchange sites, access to condoms and harm reduction educational materials are available.

Mental health professionals are available during every shift to provide harm reduction based crisis intervention, suicide screening, ongoing individual therapy, couples intervention, and group work to assist young people in addressing the multiple levels of trauma they experience.

Youth may receive free legal services including referrals to The Homeless Court, clearing warrants for participants for quality of life infractions such as drinking in public and assistance with issues such as drug possession, child custody and assault.

Youth accessing our Drop-In Center may also opt to have basic needs addressed including receiving a hot meal, clothing and hygiene products. Participants are able to designate Common Ground as their primary address to receive mail and establish county residency leading to eligibility for other services. We provide on-going assistance with job searching and job prep including resume assistance, mock interviews, internet access for job searching, and references as well as weekly life skills workshops. The agency also offers an internship program for youth interested in social services and HIV education.

For more information about our HYPE Program, visit www.commongroundwestside.org