

A 'choose-your-own' activity

EXPLORING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Facilitator Guide

What You'll Need

- To organize your full group into small groups of 4-6 people – mix participants up so groups are not single-gender or entirely composed of close friends
- The activity packets (at least one copy of the activity for each small group)
- Dice (enough for one for each small group)
- Scratch paper and pens for each small group
- Any additional resources or information you want to hand out
- About an hour to work with (25-30 minutes for the activity, plus debrief and next steps)
- Some familiarity with the activity packet
- Consider including a Catholic Charities speaker to contextualize the activity

Activity Logistics

1. Begin by framing the activity briefly. Introduce the activity by connecting the reality of 4,000 youth experiencing homelessness every night in MN to your context (social justice awareness event, academic or confirmation class, service opportunity, leadership training, retreat, team building, etc.) See resource list at the end of this facilitator guide for ideas on some resources that can be used.
2. Break the large group into small groups of 4-6 and hand out packets, dice, and scratch paper.
3. Have each small group assign roles: reader(s), die-roller, note taker, and “representative individual.” The “representative individual” is the person the group will imagine representing their character in the story; for example, if an option requires you to have a bus pass, the group may only choose it if the representative individual has a bus pass with them at the time of the activity.
4. Briefly outline the rules for the activity (found on the third page of the packet). Emphasize that the goal of the activity is for participants to place themselves into the story and make decisions as if their “representative individual” is the one in the situations.
5. As groups work through the activity, monitor their progress and try to move them along at a fairly even pace. Some groups tend to get stuck in the first ten pages; encourage everyone to move through these quickly, and nudge specific groups if they seem to be spending too much time there.
6. After 25-30 minutes you will need to tell everyone to wrap up and move to the discussion questions at the end of the packet; very few groups will make it to the “end” of the activity because of built-in loops. Give groups a couple minutes to discuss the debrief questions on their own before moving into a large-group debrief.

Activity Debrief

Debriefing with the group after the activity is key to the activity's impact. This is where participants can unpack the feelings and experiences they've just had, making connections to the broader issue of youth homelessness and beginning to think about their own role in doing something about it. Using the questions at the end of the activity packet for inspiration, move the large group through a discussion with three main stages:

1. **A feeling(s) question:** "In one word, summarize how you are feeling in this moment."
2. **Objective sharing about the story's scenarios:** Having groups share some of the scenarios they encountered is a good way to get the group talking, and helps illustrate the range of possible experiences. "What were some of the different starting points for groups in this activity?" "Talk about some of the scenarios your group encountered. Did any surprise or shock you?"
3. **Deeper, analysis questions:** Help the group start thinking more deeply about their experience and making connections to bigger themes. "What factors influenced your decisions? What does this tell you about the experience of homeless youth?" "What do you think you learned from this activity that you would not have learned from a PowerPoint on youth homelessness?"

Additional Resources

Consider some of the following resources to help bring context to the "choose-your-own" activity, at the beginning or end of your session or both. Contact the Office for Social Justice for more details about these resources or to access them for your workshop.

- Opening and/or closing prayers related to youth homelessness
- Handouts on Catholic Social Teaching
- A Prezi presentation aimed at youth, situating the activity in the idea that youth have powerful voices that can create change, and touching on themes of advocacy, storytelling, and our faith's call to action
- PowerPoint slides with data and statistics about poverty and homelessness in Minnesota and the Twin Cities metro area
- A Catholic Charities speaker or video about our work

Plan for follow up action opportunities to engage activity participants:

- Advocacy materials related to the Homeless Youth Act along with blank advocacy letters and templates for participants to write to their elected officials
- Fliers/invitations to related upcoming events
- Charity and/or direct service follow up programs to support homeless youth.
- Information about getting involved as a volunteer at Catholic Charities

Good luck in your facilitation journey! If you have additional questions, or suggestions, about this activity please contact the Office for Social Justice at osj@cctwincities.org.