spectrum's student sleep out

UNITING IN SOLIDARITY WITH HOMELESS YOUTH

Student Organizer Toolkit 2019

"Thank you for helping young people just asking for a chance."

The Student Sleep Out is an annual one-night event in which students of all ages, all across Chittenden County, sleep outside in solidarity with youth facing homelessness. **Thank you for being a part of the Sleep Out**—you are helping to change the lives of Vermont youth.

This Toolkit is designed to give you all the ideas, tips, and resources you'll need for a successful Sleep Out.

What's Inside

1. Getting Started
2. Event Checklist
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5. Resources
   - About Spectrum Youth & Family Services
   - Facts & Figures- Homelessness in Burlington
   - Activity Ideas, Suggested Posts/Emails, & Downloads
6. 'For Participants'

Questions?

We're here to help! Please contact Charlotte Steverson at events@spectrumvt.org or (802) 864-7423 x330.

Getting Started

Create Your Team

Register yourself and your team by visiting www.spectrumsleepout.org and clicking "Form a Team". If your team has participated in the past, you'll be able to search for your team and become the captain.

Customize your team page and invite others to join your team. Each participant will need to sign up on the Sleep Out website. Then you can start fundraising!

After registering online, be sure to connect with Charlotte by email or phone to review the plan for your Sleep Out.

When to Start Planning

The Sleep Out website is live, so create your team page soon! We recommend selecting a date and location by the end of January so you can start publicizing in February. The most successful Sleep Outs actively recruit participants and donations as early as the end of February. Be sure to take school breaks or holidays in to account and.

Event Checklist

- ☐ Select the date of your Sleep Out and get it on your organization's/school's calendar.
- ☐ Choose a safe location to host your event and make an extreme weather plan. This could include an alternate, indoor location or a snow date. Students under the age of 18 should have an adult leader to help coordinate and make sure there is proper supervision, parental permissions and emergency contacts in place.
- ☐ Decide on your fundraising minimum, if applicable. We suggest a $25 minimum donation per person, which then entitles them to a Sleep Out hat (provided by Spectrum)!
- ☐ Coordinate all site details, such as:
    - Setting up (tables, chairs, audio/visual set-up etc.)
    - Access to restrooms, etc.
    - Clean up and trash removal
    - Decide if you will be serving any food or drinks
- ☐ Recruit other volunteers from your organization or family and friends to attend your event and to help you plan it!
- ☐ Plan activities and obtain any materials ahead of time for games, crafts, or other things you schedule for the night. See the "Activity Ideas" page for suggestions.
- ☐ Publicize your efforts using social media, posters, and school announcements, assemblies, or newsletters.
- ☐ After your Sleep Out, be sure to share your experience with others, including us! Share photos and reflections on the night by emailing them to Charlotte at events@spectrumvt.org.

Fundraising Tips

- ☐ People want to know WHY you are sleeping out—tell your story on your fundraising page and when you ask someone to support you. Something simple but meaningful can be very effective, such as "I'm sleeping out so that others don't have to."
- ☐ Send an email out to friends and relatives, and ask your parents if they're willing to send one, too. You can send this kind of message out on your own, or through your 'Participant Center' once you're logged in to your Sleep Out page. See sample text online or in this Toolkit under "Resources".
- ☐ Send out a link to your personal or team page on social media, and/or ask your parents to post for you. Post more frequently as the event approaches.
- ☐ Most importantly, **thank everyone** who gives and tell them they are helping teens and young adults in Vermont turn their lives around! *Note: All donations are tax-deductible. Spectrum will send receipts to everyone for whom we have email or postal addresses.*

FAQs

Why sleep out?

The Sleep Out provides a unique opportunity to understand the serious problem of youth homelessness. By asking friends and family to support their efforts with monetary donations, participants make a difference in the lives of the 2,000+ homeless and at-risk youth served by Spectrum each year.

We want Sleeper-outers to leave with a better understanding of:

- ☐ what it means to be homeless and why it's important to care for youth facing homelessness;
- ☐ the impact of homelessness in Vermont (specifically the Burlington area); and
- ☐ the basic programs and services that Spectrum provides.

Who sleeps out?

Anyone can sleep out! In the past we've had: Boy Scouts, swim teams, public schools, youth groups, college clubs and even groups of friends or families. Individuals are welcome, too!

When do we sleep out?

The Student Sleep Out will be held the weekend of Thursday, March 28 through Sunday, March 30 —you pick the night that is best for you. If these nights do not work, please contact Charlotte at events@spectrumvt.org to schedule a different night for your group.

Where do we sleep out?

A backyard, a school yard or wherever you can sleep out safely. The goal is to create an impactful experience so ideally the location should not be full of creature comforts.

Will we freeze?

This event is likely to be cold and/or wet, but safety comes first! If the weather is predicted to be especially cold, please use your discretion in cancelling, rescheduling, or moving your Sleep Out indoors.

Resources

About Spectrum Youth & Family Services

Our hope is that your participants go home with a better understanding of what we do at Spectrum. The following links are great resources; please contact Charlotte if you need more information on Spectrum's services.

- This illustrated video is a great introduction to Spectrum.
- The "Spectrum Voices" video was created by a group of students at Champlain College, and tells the story of some of our youth—in their own words.
- This Parent.co video entitled "Resilient"
- This Fact Sheet is a one-page run down: Spectrum in a nutshell.
- Visit www.spectrumvt.org and click on "What We Do" to select what programs you want to learn more about.

Facts & Figures

Please keep in mind: *It is difficult to determine accurate counts of homeless youth due to lack of a standard methodology and the frequent moving around of youth who are homeless. In Vermont, an estimated 1,000 youth are homeless each year.*

Spectrum by the numbers (2017)

Basic Needs & Stable Homes
Drop-In Center: 500 served
The Landing (our shelter): 21 served
Transitional Housing: 29 served

Life & Survival Skills
Youth Development Program: 157 served
Jump on Board for Success: 115 served
Multicultural Youth Program: 283 served
Detail Works: 10 served

Prevention & Intervention
Counseling: 266 served
Mentoring: 101 served
Pearl Street Youth Clinic*: 878
**a program of Community Health Centers of Burlington*

National Statistics
The following links are great references and may provide great discussion points for your group.

Homeless and Runaway Youth
Covenant House
Article on homeless youth statistics (Jan 2018)

Activity Ideas

We recommend having a least a few group presentations or activities to keep your participants engaged and interested. This also helps to reinforce the message of why the Sleep Out is important. Keep the age of your participants in mind as many of these activities are not good for all ages.

Presentations & Speakers

1. Spectrum Representative
   We make an effort to send at least one staff person to each Sleep Out, but if you have any requests, just let us know.
2. Spectrum Client
   This is often the most memorable and meaningful part of the event, however we don't always have clients who are available or willing to speak. Please let Charlotte know early on if you'd like a youth speaker.
3. Other community members: police officer, teacher or professor
4. Read aloud stories and letters from Spectrum's youth (provided by Spectrum)
5. Poetry or short story reading about a relevant topic
6. Dance or music performance

Video

1. Show excerpts from movies, documentaries
2. Show "Voices of Spectrum" video, or any of the videos suggested earlier

Hands-on

1. Create posters or flyers for display after the event on campus/ at school
   - Make posters where students share one thing they learned from the Sleep Out
   - Make posters/signs with messages about helping the homeless
2. Create a mural, quilt, or other group-creation that can be a commemoration of the Sleep Out
3. Build a shelter out of cardboard
4. Drawing what "home" means to you

Group Participation

1. Facts & Figures Quiz or Q&A on homelessness
2. SPENT: A Game with Purpose
3. Candlelight vigil and/or walk
4. Organize small group discussions about homelessness
5. Brainstorm about all the challenges homeless youth face
6. Brainstorm about the different ways we can help homeless youth in the community

Volunteerism & Service

1. Put together care packages for homeless youth
2. Do a food donation collection at the event
3. Make cards for Spectrum youth

Suggested Posts and Email Wording

Facebook:

There are two options for fundraising on Facebook. (Ask Charlotte if you need help!)

1. **Connect your Facebook account** to your personal Sleep Out page. You can do this by signing in at spectrumsleepout.org and going to your Participant Center. Click on "Fundraise on Facebook" and follow the prompts to link your pages. This allows any donations made on Facebook to count directly towards your goal on your Sleep Out page.

2. **Don't connect your Facebook account** and use a link to your personal Sleep Out page instead. Create your post on Facebook, but **DO NOT add Facebook's donation button**, otherwise the donations will not count towards your goal.

- I'm sleeping out in solidarity with homeless youth on *[date]*. Help me ensure our young people never have to sleep in the cold by supporting my Sleep Out: *[personal page link*

- No young person should go without a safe place to sleep at night. You can ensure youth in our community have a safe, warm place to sleep by supporting my Sleep Out: *[personal page link]*.

Twitter:

- Donate here: *[personal page link]* to ensure youth have a warm, safe place to sleep every night. #SpectrumSleepOut

- I'm sleeping outside in the cold On *[date]* in solidarity with homeless youth. Give at *[personal page link].* #SpectrumSleepOut

- Together we can give homeless youth a safe, warm place to sleep. Make a difference. Donate: *[personal page link]*. #SpectrumSleepOut

Instagram:

Below are image ideas and possible captions. Edit your profile by adding your personal Sleep Out page link in the "website" section.

- *Selfie/photo of you with your "I'm sleeping out because…" poster.*
  I'm sleeping out because *[fill in your reason]*. Donate using the link in my profile to ensure every youth has a warm, safe place to sleep. #SpectrumSleepOut
- *Photo of the wintery landscape.*
  Days like today make me think of all the young people without a warm and safe place to sleep. Together we can ensure they have a warm bed waiting for them. Donate at the link in my profile. #SpectrumSleepOut
- *Selfie/picture of you cuddled up on the couch or in your winter gear.*
  I'm grateful every winter night for my cozy bed. Let's make sure all youth have a safe, warm place to sleep this year. You can help by donating to the #SpectrumSleepOut at the link in my profile.

Sample Email:

Note: additional email templates can be found in your 'Participant Center' after you log in to spectrumsleepout.org.

Dear Friends and Family,

On *[date]* I'm sleeping outside overnight in solidarity with at-risk and homeless teenagers and young adults as part of Spectrum's Sleep Out.

The Sleep Out raises funds for homeless youth in Vermont. The money we raise funds the services struggling youth need to turn their lives around.

I'm sleeping out because I want all youth to know that someone's here to help. I'm sleeping out because I believe all teenagers and young adults deserve to have someone to lend a hand when the going gets tough.

You can help! Please donate to my sleep out by visiting my personal page at *[insert link to your personal page].* The money you give goes directly to helping youth in Vermont.

Together, we can make sure every young person has a safe place to call home.

Thank you!

[your name]

Downloads

I'm Sleeping Out- Square

"I'm Sleeping Out Because…" Poster

I'm Sleeping Out- Facebook Banner

Spectrum's Student Sleep Out 2019- Logo

'For Participants' One-Pager