



SLEEP OUT PROGRAM

Why have a program?

Sleep Out is not a night of pretend. It is a chance to raise awareness and critical funds that will shelter and care for youth facing homelessness.

It is also an opportunity to learn about what causes homelessness, advocate for change, and destigmatize what it means to be homeless (not so fun fact: nearly 1 in 10 young people in the United States will face homelessness, which means you probably know someone who has or will be unstably housed in their lifetime).

Sample Schedule

Customize the sample program below to create a meaningful Sleep Out experience for your group.

8:00pm | Check-in and dinner

- In keeping with the spirit of a night without extra luxuries or comfort items, we suggest a no-frills dinner. Consider passing out brown bag meals with sandwiches (maybe PB&J, like the ones always available at Covenant House), a piece of fruit, and a bottle of water, similar to the lunches that our [street outreach teams](#) deliver to youth on the streets.

8:30pm | Program begins

- Welcome message from event organizer and/or group leader
- Share a bit about Covenant House
- Read more [here](#), find out about your local shelter [here](#), or share a video from [this library](#)
- Share a bit about Sleep Out (what it is, what it isn't)
- Read more [here](#)
- Fundraising recognition
- Thank and celebrate your top fundraisers! In addition to those at the top of the leaderboard, consider recognizing the person who received the highest number of donations (rather than amount), or any creative fundraising tactics
- Share 1-2 stories from people who have faced homelessness
- Find video stories [here](#)
- Find written stories [here](#) (consider asking participants to read one aloud)
- Sharing these stories after fundraising recognition is a good way to remind your group why fundraising is important and what the funds they raised make possible

*Instead of creating a custom program, you can opt to play this one for your group



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9:15pm | Interactive activity

- Select 1-2 activities from the Resource Center (or create your own!)
- The goal is to get people talking with each other, building community, learning, challenging their ideas of homelessness

10:00pm | Sleep Out

- It's time to settle in for the night! Remember the following:
- You should only sleep somewhere that is safe and legal
- You should not bring any luxury bedding items (air beds, pillows, etc); we suggest only a sleeping bag and something to lay it on (a trash bag, yoga mat, picnic blanket)
- Dress for the weather -- if it is cold, wear layers!
- Remind people to set an alarm for your morning reflection
- Identify an indoor area where people can come in from the cold or use the bathroom if needed. Consider having a volunteer in that area all night, in case people have questions or want someone to talk to (it can be an emotional experience!)

7:00am | Breakfast & morning reflections

- Allow people to come in from outside slowly -- they will be groggy!
- Breakfast can be light (e.g. coffee and granola bars) or hearty to mirror the warmth and relief youth feel when they find shelter
- Ask 1-2 volunteers to lead morning reflections using the guide in the Resource Center
- Be sure to create time and space for these! Morning reflections are often people's experience

8:00am | Departure

- Either before they go or in an email later that day, remind participants to thank their donors and share their experience with friends and family