

## Skid Row life made meaner

### Kids punished instead of aided by schools, police, study says

By Troy Anderson  
Staff Writer

Hundreds of children living on downtown's Skid Row regularly witness violence and death, are easy targets for drug dealers and sexual predators and live on the streets or in tiny single-room hotel rooms, according to a survey to be released today.

The survey faulted the level of help provided by authorities, noting that police and school officials often send the children home from school for wearing "inappropriate" clothes or cite them for jaywalking or loitering, the survey found.

The survey of 96 youths,

conducted by Skid Row youths and carried out under the auspices of the United Coalition East Prevention Project, found 43 percent had been given some sort of tickets.

Coalition organizer Leslie Croom said schools, police and local government agencies should be a "lifeline" for the children. "Instead, what they get is real punitive treatment," Croom said.

Often unable to pay the tickets — which double or triple in value when left unpaid — some youths have been unable to join the Job Corps or go to trade colleges.

Most respondents said they attend school regularly and half

said they have been punished at school for not having a proper uniform.

The survey found about 700 children live on Skid Row in downtown Los Angeles.

More than 70 percent of the youths have lived on Skid Row for more than a year, and 30 percent have lived there four or more years.

The survey also found nearly half of the children have seen people die on Skid Row.

More than a quarter of the children have been in foster care and 18 percent have been in a Juvenile Hall or California Youth Authority facility.

Dorothy Williams, 20, a

homeless woman who lives at a Skid Row hotel with her mother-in-law who pays the rent with welfare benefits, said the living conditions are terrible.

"It has roaches, broken windows and doors and paint coming off the walls," Williams said. "Spiders bite us. The bathrooms are messy and the toilets stop up. We have no kitchen. ... The electricity and the water keeps going on and off. You have to get up in the middle of the night and go to the bathroom in the hallway. You don't know who is out there. You're scared."

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