

Getting to Smarter Coordinated Entry for Youth

Analyzing vulnerability and making better decisions with limited resources

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Eric Rice, Matthew Morton, Hsun-Ta Hsu, Megan Blondin & Melissa Kull

The number of youth experiencing homelessness each year in this nation far exceeds our current resources to house them. As a result, it is imperative that communities are able to make smart decisions with their current resources to achieve greater impact on the overall challenge.

To inform system and policy responses to youth homelessness, we analyzed the largest national data set combining vulnerability assessments (based on the TAY-VI-SPDAT: Next Step Tool for Homeless Youth) with homelessness systems data. The analysis sought to understand how risk assessment scores related to different types of services offered in communities. It also looked at which youth were most likely to remain homeless without support and which were most likely to return to homelessness systems after exiting.

This is a first step. More and better data are needed to fill key knowledge gaps. Yet, with this analysis, we now better understand how communities use this tool; how they can sharpen assessment, prioritization, and service delivery; and how policy actions can help communities end youth homelessness.

This one-pager shares emerging findings for discussion. In the coming months, the full brief on this analysis will speak to the evidence drawn from this national data set and implications for practice. It will also highlight how communities can improve their data and monitoring systems to increase ongoing learning and to help end youth homelessness.

Finding 1: Risk scores predict higher likelihood of continued homelessness without intervention.

The tool largely achieves its aim. Youth with high risk assessment scores had very little chance of escaping homelessness without formal housing assistance and services (see graph).

Finding 2: Most youth participating in housing programs do not reenter homelessness systems within a year.

More than 4 out of 5 youth placed in rapid rehousing or supportive housing programs remained out of the local homelessness system after at least a year of starting those programs.

Finding 3: Strategies are needed for many youth who remain pending or unknown to the homelessness systems.

Higher risk scores predicted lower likelihood of exiting homelessness without formal housing programs. Still, even 1 in 3 low-scoring youth remained pending or unknown to homelessness systems. These youth need more or different support.

Finding 4: Young people face long and harmful wait times for critical services.

Half of the youth experiencing homelessness who received scarce housing program placements had to wait about 4 months or longer before getting placed. Further, longer waits were related to higher odds of returning to homelessness after housed.

Finding 5: Racial and ethnic differences point to needs for addressing equity in homelessness response.

Black and Hispanic youth were more likely to remain pending in homelessness systems, and had lower likelihood of success with family exits from homelessness systems, than did non-Hispanic White youth.

For more information, contact Matthew Morton at mmorton@chapinhall.org.

Youth who re-entered homelessness within 12+ months of self-resolve or family exit

