

Toward a System Response to Ending Youth Homelessness

New evidence to help communities strengthen coordinated entry, assessment, and support for youth

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Communities across the country are beginning to move toward coordinated, system-level responses to youth homelessness. To support communities' efforts, we analyzed the largest national data set combining youth risk assessments (based on the TAY-VI-SPDAT: Next Step Tool for Homeless Youth [NST]) with homelessness systems data. The analysis examined how risk assessment scores for young people, ages 15 to 24, were associated with services received. This is a first step. More and better data are needed to fill key knowledge gaps. This analysis helps us better understand how communities can use data to improve coordinated responses to end youth homelessness.

Finding 1. Risk assessment scores successfully predict likelihood of continued housing instability

Youth with high risk assessment scores had very little chance of escaping homelessness without formal housing assistance and services.

Finding 2. Most youth participating in housing programs remain out of homelessness systems for at least a year after starting those programs

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

Finding 3. Strategies are needed for many youth who await placements

Higher risk scores predicted lower likelihood of exiting homelessness without formal housing programs. Still, 1 in 3 low-scoring youth remained "pending" (awaiting placements) or become "unknown" (lost to, or disconnected from, the system before having their situations resolved).

Finding 4. Youth face long wait times for critical services

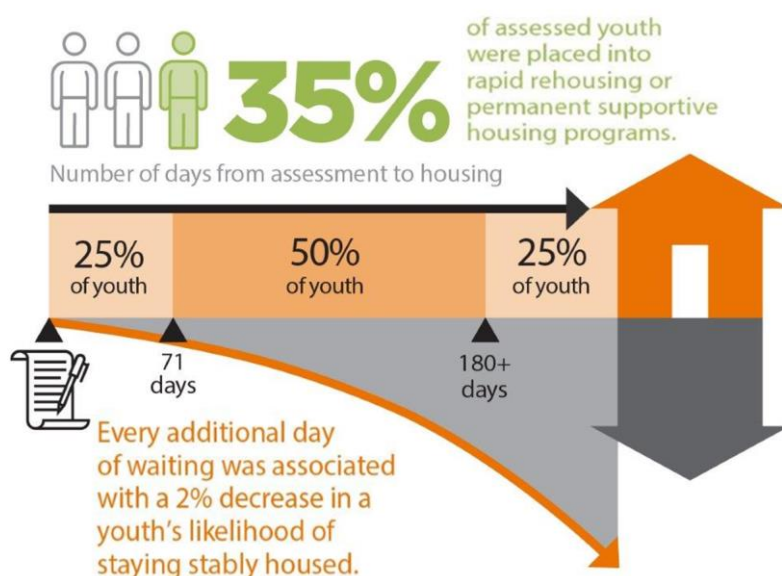
Most youth experiencing homelessness who received scarce housing program placements had to wait 4+ months between being assessed to getting placed. Further, longer waits appeared to be harmful (see Figure 1).

Finding 5. Racial and ethnic disproportionalities point to the need to address inequities in homelessness responses

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.

Communities should take action by conducting similar analytics with their data and strengthening and evaluating coordinated response models. Reach out to us for support: Dr. Matthew Morton, email: mmorton@chapinhall.org.

Figure 1. Many youth face long and harmful waits for housing



Key actions for communities and funders

- Use research-based youth risk assessment and local data to inform coordinated housing decisions.
- Increase housing and services for youth, and collect longer-term outcomes data.
- Develop and evaluate early intervention strategies, including non-housing interventions, for all young people who come into homelessness systems.
- Avoid forcing youth into long waiting periods for housing programs by providing interim housing options and creative non-housing supports.
- Invest into homelessness prevention efforts across public systems.
- Collect and use data on racial and ethnic disparities to address inequities in access to services and outcomes.