Missed Opportunities:
Education Among Youth Experiencing Homelessness in America

November 2019

This report is ninth in a series of Research-to-Impact briefs by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago on understanding and addressing youth homelessness. This brief highlights the intersection between youth homelessness and educational disruption and provides recommendations for school systems, higher education systems, and homelessness systems.

This relationship intersection necessitates addressing educational pursuits and housing stability together.

The relationship between educational attainment and homelessness is bidirectional.

Low educational attainment is a risk factor for homelessness*....

Young adults with less than a high school diploma or GED were

4.5x

more likely to report experiencing homelessness than their peers who completed high school.

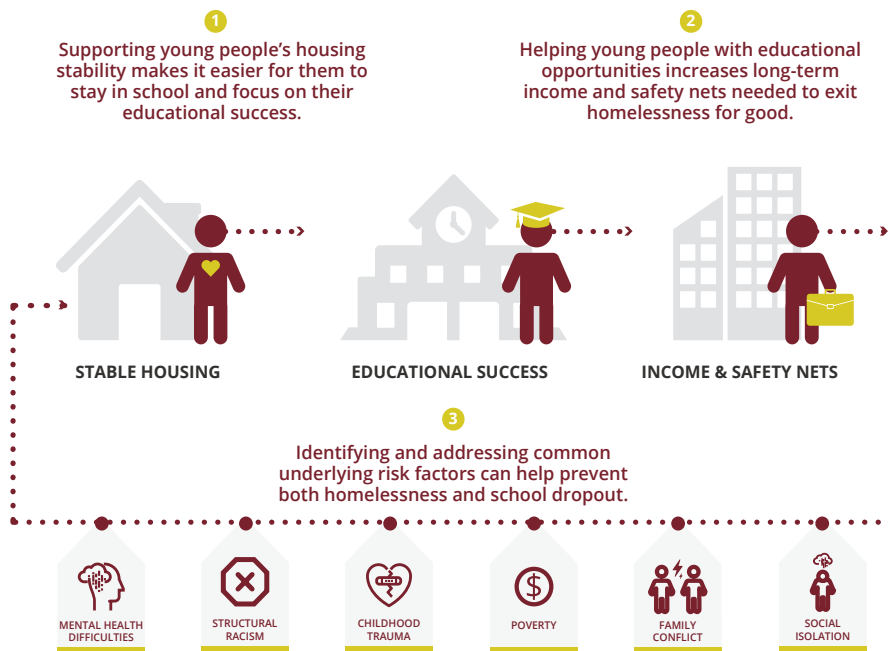...and homelessness is a risk factor for lower educational attainment.

Young adults who experienced homelessness were less than

1/3

as likely to be enrolled in four-year college as stably housed peers.

We need systemic solutions that address education and homelessness together

1 Supporting young people's housing stability makes it easier for them to stay in school and focus on their educational success.

2 Helping young people with educational opportunities increases long-term income and safety nets needed to exit homelessness for good.

STABLE HOUSING | EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS | INCOME & SAFETY NETS

3 Identifying and addressing common underlying risk factors can help prevent both homelessness and school dropout.

MENTAL HEALTH DIFFICULTIES | STRUCTURAL RACISM | CHILDHOOD TRAUMA | POVERTY | FAMILY CONFLICT | SOCIAL ISOLATION

Citation: Kull, M.A., Morton, M.H., Patel, S., Curry, S. & Carreon, E. (2019). Missed opportunities: Education among youth and young adults experiencing homelessness in America. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

Recommendations

For primary and secondary schools:

❧ Help schools identify youth who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness earlier

❧ Strengthen coordination among school support staff, local service providers, and others to provide timely support to students and families.

❧ Build partnerships to foster better record sharing among school districts to minimize educational disruption.

For institutions of higher education:

❧ Collect information on the housing situations of applicants and students so that institutions can make resources available.

❧ Create a single point of contact for students experiencing homelessness.

For homelessness systems:

❧ Issue federal joint guidance on collaborations among local providers and schools to promote coordination of resources and services.

❧ Help advance young people's educational aspirations by supplying youth with information about educational opportunities.

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