

Measuring Up:

Youth-level Outcomes and Measures for System Responses to Youth Homelessness

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Disclaimer

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Executive Summary

In the work to end youth homelessness, there is general agreement that young people need stable housing, permanent connections, education and/or employment, and an overall sense of well-being to succeed and thrive—and to make sure they never experience homelessness again. Indeed, to receive federal funding through the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, community-based grantees must measure and report on outcomes in these core areas. To date, however, there has been limited federal guidance on how this should be done. What to measure—and how to measure it—remains a glaring gap. As a result, providers and systems struggle to independently identify these measures, and there is wide inconsistency nationally.

Based on a rigorous background review of existing evidence and measures, and focus group discussions and consultations with a wide range of stakeholders, this report outlines a set of outcomes and measures ([see Table 1](#)) associated with the core outcome areas for youth experiencing homelessness elevated by the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) Framework to End Youth Homelessness. Through this initiative, communities now have access to a set of metrics that can help facilitate consistent data collection related to core outcomes for youth experiencing homelessness across programs and organizations, regardless of their funding source.

This is a starting point rather than an endpoint. We need to collectively continue to improve experience, evidence, and tools for youth outcomes measurement. Yet, this is also an important step forward. As communities and funders adopt these outcome measures, we expect to see the following impacts nationally:

- **More consistent measures**, providing the ability to cross-learn within communities and across programs nationally;
- **More common expectations across multiple funders**, fostering the use of valid and reliable measures and reducing the reporting burden on youth and service providers;
- **Use of measures to support an effective mix of services and supports in communities**, and increasing the focus on tracking performance against core, strengths-based outcomes by using the same outcome measures at (or around) intake, program/system exit, and follow up; and
- **Actionable data to shape more tailored**, evidence-based recommendations for policy and practice improvements.

The work to build outcomes-driven systems and services is not easy, **but it is worth the effort and investment.**



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Outcome	Measure	“Core” or “going further”*	Items
Stable housing			
Current housing situation/expected destination	Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) data standard (adapted)	Core	1
Recent housing instability	Team-developed	Core	4
Degree of housing instability	Residential Time-Line Follow-Back Inventory	Going further	N/A**
Permanent connections			
Social connections	Youth Thrive™ Survey	Core	17
Youth connections	Youth Connections Scale	Going further	43
Education			
Enrollment and attendance	Team-developed	Core	1
Educational attainment	American Community Survey (adapted)	Core	1
Chronic absenteeism - school systems ***	U.S. Department of Education	Going further	N/A
Employment			
Income	HMIS data standard (adapted)	Core	1
Employment status	American Community Survey (adapted)	Core	8
Disconnected - “Not in Education, Employment, or Training” (NEET) ***	Various (e.g., The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and U.S. Department of Education)	Core	N/A
Social-emotional well-being			
Mental health	Mental Health Continuum-Short Form	Core	14
Youth resilience	Youth Thrive™ Survey	Core	10
Psychological distress	Kessler-6	Going further	6
Thriving	Youth Thrive™ Survey (full instrument)	Going further	66
Life skills	Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (or Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment: Youth Short Assessment)	Going further	113 (20)
All Outcome Areas			
Example instrument for core measures	Full set of core measures		

* “Core” measures are those recommended at this stage for general uptake across programs and organizations. “Going further” measures are suggested for going deeper into a particular topic area, but they were not prioritized as a “core” measure, often because of the length of the instrument or because it was not prioritized as high as the core measures in the project consultations.

** The Residential Time-Line Follow-Back Inventory involves more of an interview than a scale with items.

***The chronic absenteeism and disconnected measures involve indicators derived from other core measures and therefore do not require additional items.

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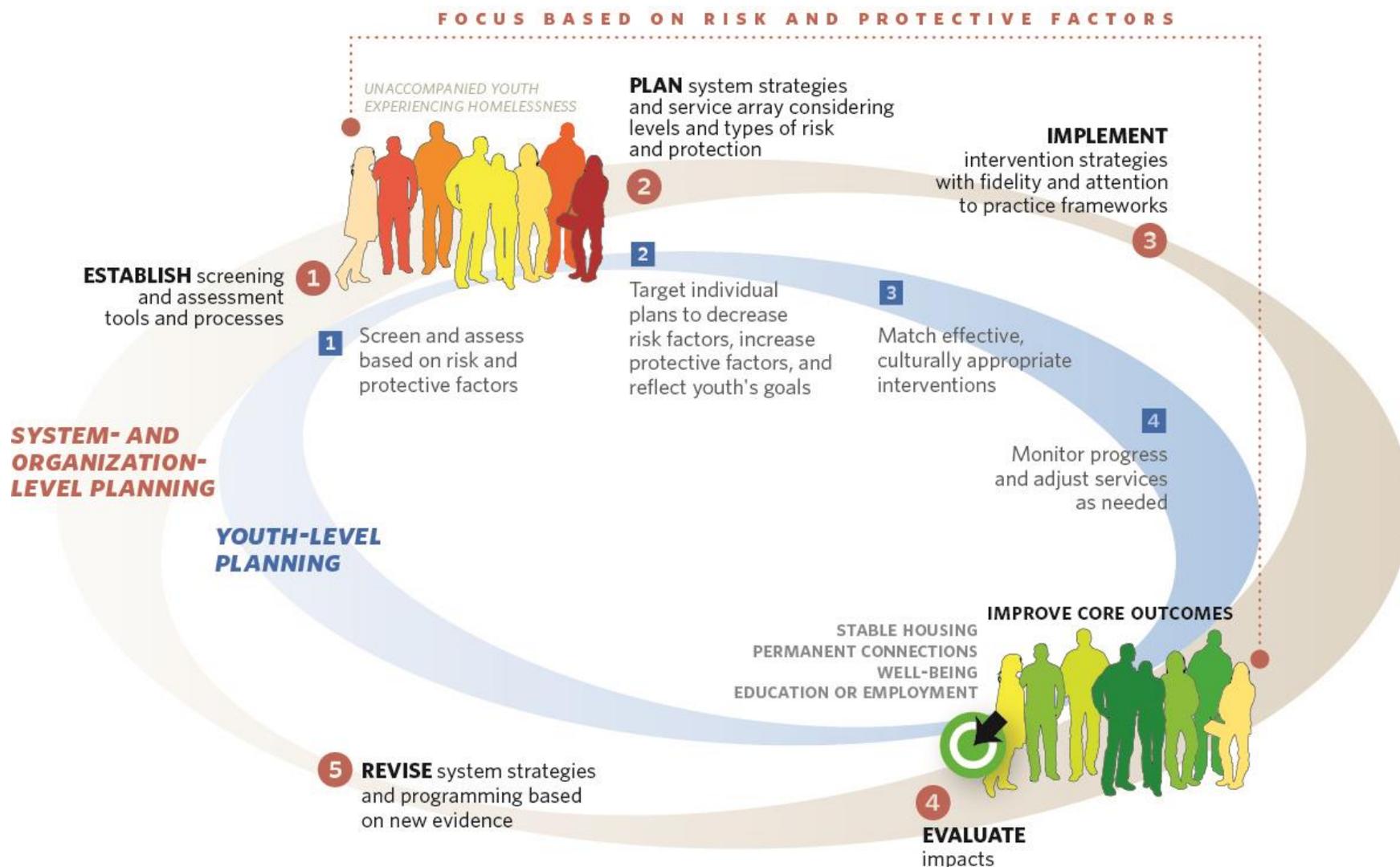
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The field of youth homelessness-related systems and services lacks guidance or consensus on which youth outcomes to measure and how to measure them. This makes it very difficult to compare “apples to apples” across programs and organizations, which in turn hinders the possibility of system level learning and action focused on outcomes.

The lack of guidance and consensus on outcomes and outcome measurement complicates the process of assessing youth needs, matching services, and monitoring progress over time. In order to achieve a systemic response to the national challenge of youth homelessness, identifying common, valid, and feasible outcome measures is necessary.

Federal agencies and national organizations have recognized this challenge as an important step. In 2011, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), in collaboration with multiple federal agencies, developed a systematic framework for ending youth homelessness, which incorporated four core outcome areas ([see Figure 1](#)). The framework includes stable housing as a core outcome area, but, by also including permanent connections, social-emotional well-being, and education and employment as core outcome areas, the framework underscores the reality that preventing and ending youth homelessness require more than housing alone. [Table 2](#) includes descriptions of the four core outcome areas.

The challenge, however, is that there is little consensus or common guidance on what and how to measure within these four broad core outcome areas. **The Youth Outcomes Project (YOP) aims to address that challenge.** This report and set of recommended outcomes and measures represent the key deliverables of the YOP.



It is important to note that the USICH Framework elevates a system level response to youth homelessness, including the measurement of, and impact on, the four core outcome areas. This implies an approach over and above program-level measurement and program-specific performance measures. It involves screening and assessing young people experiencing homelessness with common outcome measures through whatever program or entry point they come into in a community continuum. It identifies their strengths and needs holistically, connects them with the supports and services they need in accordance with outcomes assessment and youth preferences, and tracks progress in young people's core outcomes over time.

How to use these measures?

We hope the systems and organizations serving youth experiencing homelessness will incorporate the outcome measures recommended in this report in a process that reflects the USICH Framework depicted in [Figure 1](#).

If systems and organizations integrate these measures into regularized intake assessments, assessments at program exits, and follow-up assessments, they will be able to use these outcomes to inform youth-level service planning, progress monitoring, and service delivery adjustments that might be needed over time. In decision-making, information about youth outcomes should always be considered along with practitioner expertise and especially the voiced aspirations and preferences of the youth themselves.

Further, if systems and organizations share, aggregate, and analyze youth outcomes data, they can examine what's working, and what's not, at the system level, and whether results are equitable. Such analytics can inform system level improvements to serve youth more effectively.

Specific programs like basic center programs, transitional living programs, counseling interventions, rapid rehousing, or permanent supportive housing programs may still have very program-specific measures and indicators, which should contribute to the achievement of the four core outcome areas. The core set of outcome measures included in this report, however, would be used in addition to any other program-specific measures to understand and address young people's needs.

Questions your community system or organization could discuss to help consider how to integrate these measures include the following:

- Are there current intake processes that assessment of the core outcomes could be integrated into? If not, how could standardized intake and assessment processes be created?
- Are there current processes and procedures to have assessed outcomes inform casework or service planning conversations with young people? If not, how could these be established?

- Are outcomes tracking or management information systems currently used that could be leveraged to enter and monitor youth outcomes data based on these measures? If not, how could such data systems be established to allow for routine outcomes analysis and tracking?
- Are there processes and procedures for repeatedly collecting youth outcomes information upon program exits, and at follow-up periods after exits, that these core outcome measures could be integrated into? If not, how could these be created, and what actions and resources would be needed for meaningful follow-up assessments to occur?
- Is there a team or person responsible for analyzing data who could conduct regularized analytics on data from these outcome measures to inform more effective and equitable service delivery models over time? If not, how could such a team or person be identified and supported?
- Are there opportunities to get different programs and service providers to better align around this set of core measures for more comparable, system level learning and monitoring?

Common outcomes measurement across a community continuum is an essential component to moving toward an outcomes-driven, system level approach to youth homelessness rather than a programs-driven response.

Notably, terms like outcomes, measures, and indicators are used to mean different things by different people and across various settings. [Figure 2](#) provides a summary of what we mean by these terms.

For example, you could consider “education and employment” an *outcome area* or *domain*; “current employment status” an *outcome*; the “percentage of youth employed upon exit” from a program an *indicator*; and the specific survey questions, tool, or criteria used to assess current employment status the *measure*.

Table 2. Core outcome area definitions

Core Outcome Areas Definitions
Stable housing <i>includes a safe and reliable place to call home.</i>
Permanent connections <i>include ongoing attachments to families (as defined by youth), schools, communities, and other positive social networks.</i>
Education or employment <i>includes high performance in and completion of educational and training activities, especially for younger youth, and starting and maintaining adequate and stable employment, particularly for older youth.</i>
Social-emotional well-being <i>refers to the social and emotional functioning of homeless youth. This area includes the development of key competencies, attitudes, and behaviors that equip a young person experiencing homelessness to avoid unhealthy risks and to succeed across multiple domains of daily life, including school, work, relationships, and community.</i>

Figure 2. Key terms

Core Outcome Area (or Domain): Broad thematic area including multiple related outcomes
Outcome: A construct that can be measured and that interventions can influence
Indicator: Evidence that an outcome has or has not been achieved
Measure: Specific data collection tool (e.g. scale, survey, observation protocol)

With outcomes, we are looking at measures of change in aspects of housing status, well-being, skills, and behavior. This differs from outputs, such as number of trainings or activities delivered or number of people served. Youth-level outcomes should be trackable and changeable over time with the right interventions.

Additionally, any effort to identify, measure, analyze, and improve outcomes has to account for the stark disproportionalities that characterize youth homelessness in the United States.¹ Young people experiencing homelessness are far more likely to identify as American Indian or Alaska Native; Black; Hispanic; and lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) than their stably housed peers. As such, when focused on youth homelessness, it is particularly important to consider these inequities with respect to outcomes measurement. Broadly, accounting for inequities in outcomes measurement involves at least two dimensions.

First, ideally, outcomes and measures should be culturally valid for, and normed with, youth of color and LGBTQ youth. When we reviewed potential measures, we included a review of whether there is evidence of validity with these populations, and we indicate when such evidence is available or lacking. In many cases, cultural validity with these subpopulations is lacking and constitutes a critical area for future measurement research.

Second, and going beyond the scope of this Youth Outcomes Project, these inequities also need to be accounted for in analyzing outcomes data to assess whether and how outcomes for service planning, or in response to intervention, vary by race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Such analysis should drive attention and action centering equity in system level responses to improve youth outcomes.

Selecting a proposed set of common outcomes and measures to be used across communities and systems nationally is not an easy task. All potential outcome measures involve trade-offs and limitations, and the evidence base to inform prioritization is far from perfect. Further, different people involved in ending youth homelessness have different views on which outcomes are most important and under which circumstances. Still, the alternative—a lack of common outcomes and measures and a related lack of system level focus on outcomes—is a much greater challenge for the movement to end youth homelessness.

This report describes recommendations based on the current evidence base, the measures available today, and the wisdom garnered from a broad base of diverse experts and stakeholders from across the country. We expect that the recommendations in this report will need to be updated over time as measures, evidence, and experience evolve.

Our approach involved three main stages:

1. Background review and measure appraisals
2. Expert consultations
3. Consolidation and guidance

Background review

The background review represented the first stage of this project. It involved a systematic stocktaking of outcomes and measures that would be candidates for prioritizing for systems, programs, and evaluations addressing youth homelessness.

The background review drew on three main sources:

- **Evidence review:** A systematic review of evaluations of interventions to prevent and address youth homelessness. Out of nearly 4,000 potentially relevant studies identified, the review included 62 effectiveness studies that met the review’s criteria. This evidence review was primarily implemented to synthesize the state of the evidence on programs and practices to address youth homelessness, but it also provided an ideal source of outcomes and measures from the evaluation literature to support this project.
- **FYSB proposals:** A review of 106 recently funded proposals (2016-2017) to implement street outreach programs, basic center programs, and transitional living programs/maternity group homes by runaway and homeless youth-serving agencies to the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) in the US Department of Health & Human Services (HHS).
- **Rapid survey:** A rapid online survey of other youth homelessness service providers, particularly those implementing rapid rehousing and supportive housing programs for youth (which are not funded by FYSB) and US Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) funded Youth Homelessness Demonstration Projects (YHDP). Twenty-six surveys were

completed by agencies serving youth experiencing homelessness in 14 states.

Altogether, these three sources yielded 188 evaluations, proposals, or completed surveys on which this background review relied.

Outcomes and measures that emerged from any of these three sources were excluded through initial screening for any of the following reasons:

- The outcome did not clearly fall within the USICH Framework’s core outcome areas
- The measure did not capture an outcome (i.e., a measurable aspect of well-being, behavior, or attitudes that could be changed with intervention)
- The outcome was not adequately described or defined and there was insufficient information provided on the measure
- The tool was proprietary/involved a cost and could not be openly accessed and used in the public domain
- The tool was exceedingly lengthy for broad use by systems and services (automatically excluded with 40+ items and rated as low feasibility if more than 20 items)

All outcomes and measures were appraised by team researchers and rated according to the dimensions outlined in [Table 3](#).

Table 3. Appraisal categories

Dimension	Description
Domain	The outcome is clearly defined and clearly fits in a USICH core outcome area. Lower ratings went to ambiguously defined outcomes or those that did not clearly fit or only partially fit within a particular outcome area.
Relevance	Evidence supports the importance of the outcome for ending youth homelessness. Higher ratings went to outcomes with more empirical research demonstrating a relationship with youth homelessness, especially if from evaluative or longitudinal research.
Measurability	The outcome has clear measurement tool(s)/criteria. Lower ratings went to measures that essentially involved simple reporting requirements without tools, criteria, or guidance for how to address it and leaving greater room for subjectivity or bias.
Validity & Reliability ²	Prior evidence supporting the validity and reliability of the measure exists. Higher ratings went to measures with more evidence and pertaining to youth.
Feasibility	The measure is clear, brief, and easily implementable by systems and services. Lower ratings went to measures that were lengthy, complex, involved special qualifications, and were less transferable across program types and populations.

These appraisals were not meant by themselves to rank and determine which outcomes and measures are prioritized. They were meant to provide structure around the review of outcomes and measures by experts in the field to inform discussions and prioritization.

Expert consultations

We gained rich quantitative and qualitative insights through brief online surveys followed by focus group discussions. **We conducted 16 focus groups comprised of the following expert groups:**

- Youth and young adults with lived experience of homelessness
- Runaway and homeless youth (RHY) providers serving unaccompanied minors
- RHY providers serving young adults
- RHY-FYSB grantee data leads

- Continuum of Care (CoC)/Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) leads
- Federal agency data officers
- State-Level homeless system leaders

Focus groups were asked to prioritize the outcomes generated from the appraisal and an advance online survey. During the discussion, focus group participants were asked what should be considered when measuring both project and system level outcomes. They were also asked what practical factors need to be considered in deciding and integrating measures into specific programs and systems. Additionally, focus groups discussed the challenges related to measuring and collecting reliable data on these outcomes after youth have exited, as well as possible solutions to overcome these challenges.

For youth and young adult focus groups, discussions focused on which outcomes youth and young adults feel are the most important to moving youth out of homelessness, as well as what it means for a young person to be successful in each domain. Additionally, youth and young adults discussed ways to reach youth post-exit to complete follow-up surveys.

All qualitative data were professionally transcribed, coded, and analyzed to identify themes and divergent points of view.

Consolidation and guidance

Finally, taking all of the information into account from both the background review and the expert surveys and focus groups, the team organized the information and made decisions regarding which outcomes and measures were most important and feasible to recommend for community and system level standardization and tracking. These recommendations were presented to the project’s Steering Committee, a group of diverse national experts, for feedback and guidance before finalizing.

For each core outcome area in this report, we provide brief context on the importance of the outcome area and the nature of discussion regarding the outcome area. We then provide up to two recommendations of core outcomes that we suggest be tracked commonly across communities in system level efforts to end youth homelessness, along with corresponding best-available measures that we had identified.

We also present suggested options and resources for communities and programs that want to “go further” in youth outcomes measurement for each domain. This is with the understanding that we provide recommended outcomes and measures for more universal uptake as the floor, not the ceiling, for communities and organizations’ progress toward more outcome-driven systems. Every system, community, program, evaluation, and study will have unique characteristics and aims that will warrant additional data collection in outcomes and other areas that are specific to those aims.

A lack of housing stability directly characterizes the problem of youth homelessness. As such, safe and stable housing is generally the primary outcome area for efforts aimed at ending youth homelessness. Yet, housing stability can be measured in many different ways. For example, it can be measured by assessing a young person’s housing situation at a snapshot in time or over a period of time. It can focus narrowly on experiencing “literal homelessness” (i.e., sleeping on the streets or in a shelter), or it can include broader aspects of housing instability, such as staying with others due to a lack of a permanent residence (e.g., couch surfing or doubling up), or having multiple moves within a short period of time because of difficulties retaining housing.

There are a couple of challenges to consider when identifying appropriate measures of stable housing for youth. First, sometimes young people move around or stay in temporary arrangements under okay circumstances. For instance, some young people couch surf recreationally or as an inexpensive way to travel, rather than because they have to because they have nowhere else to live. Young people might also have multiple moves for ordinary reasons, such as pursuing educational or career opportunities, changes in relationship status, or cycling through different roommate arrangements. So, the circumstances of young people’s housing situations are important to account for. It is important to understand and measure those circumstances before classifying a situation as homelessness or housing instability—i.e., as a negative outcome.

Second, young people’s experiences of homelessness and housing instability are often characterized by a high degree of fluidity. Young people may go in and out of homelessness and shift between different types of sleeping arrangements. This separates their experiences from those of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness, which come to mind for many in the public when they think of “homelessness.”

If one measures the housing situation of someone who is chronically homeless, it is less likely to matter when that measurement takes place; their situation will be similar. For young people, however, their situation can change much more dynamically, so it is especially important to assess their housing stability over a broader time horizon whenever possible. It can also be important to capture a broader range of types of homelessness and housing instability given young people’s common fluidity between different types of sleeping arrangements while unstably housed (e.g., street homelessness, shelter homelessness, and staying with others while lacking a permanent place to stay).

With these considerations in mind, we recommend consistency around two types of outcomes: housing situation at a specific time (particularly at program exit) and any homelessness or housing instability over the last 30 days. These were also rated as the most important to measure in the pre-discussion surveys with expert consultation participants (see [Figure 3](#)). Unfortunately, like most housing-related measures, there has never been any research to assess validity or reliability of these measures or which approaches for collecting this information work best. This an important area for future research and guidance.

Outcome: Current housing situation or expected destination

Many programs and systems collect information about the type of housing situation into which a young person might exit from a program or system. For example, Runaway and Homeless Youth-Homelessness Management Information System (RHY-MIS) data standards require that FYSB and HUD funded projects capture the “destination” where the client is expected to stay after exiting a project for

“I think it’s important to measure [stable housing] over time, over a specific period of time. But I think if we are gonna move in that direction, we also want to make sure to continue to measure it at the point in time of exit, because there are so many difficulties to getting good feedback or data on youth who have left.”

– Stakeholder consultation

purposes of tracking and outcome measurement. The RHY-HMIS data standards manual provides a set of “destination” options, and the person entering data is asked to select the response category that most closely matches where the client will be staying after exiting the project. The response categories include temporary situations (e.g., place not meant for habitation, emergency shelter, staying with friends or family with temporary tenure, etc.), permanent situations (e.g., rental by client with or without subsidies, permanent supportive housing, etc.), and other situations (e.g., deceased, no exit interview completed, etc.).

This type of routine data collection on “destination” type should continue, and a wider range of programs serving youth homelessness—in addition to those funded by HUD and FYSB—should also capture such information upon exit for better consistency and tracking at the system level. However, we recommend that the response options include additional options that are relevant for young people, including host home under “temporary situations” and college housing under “permanent situations.”

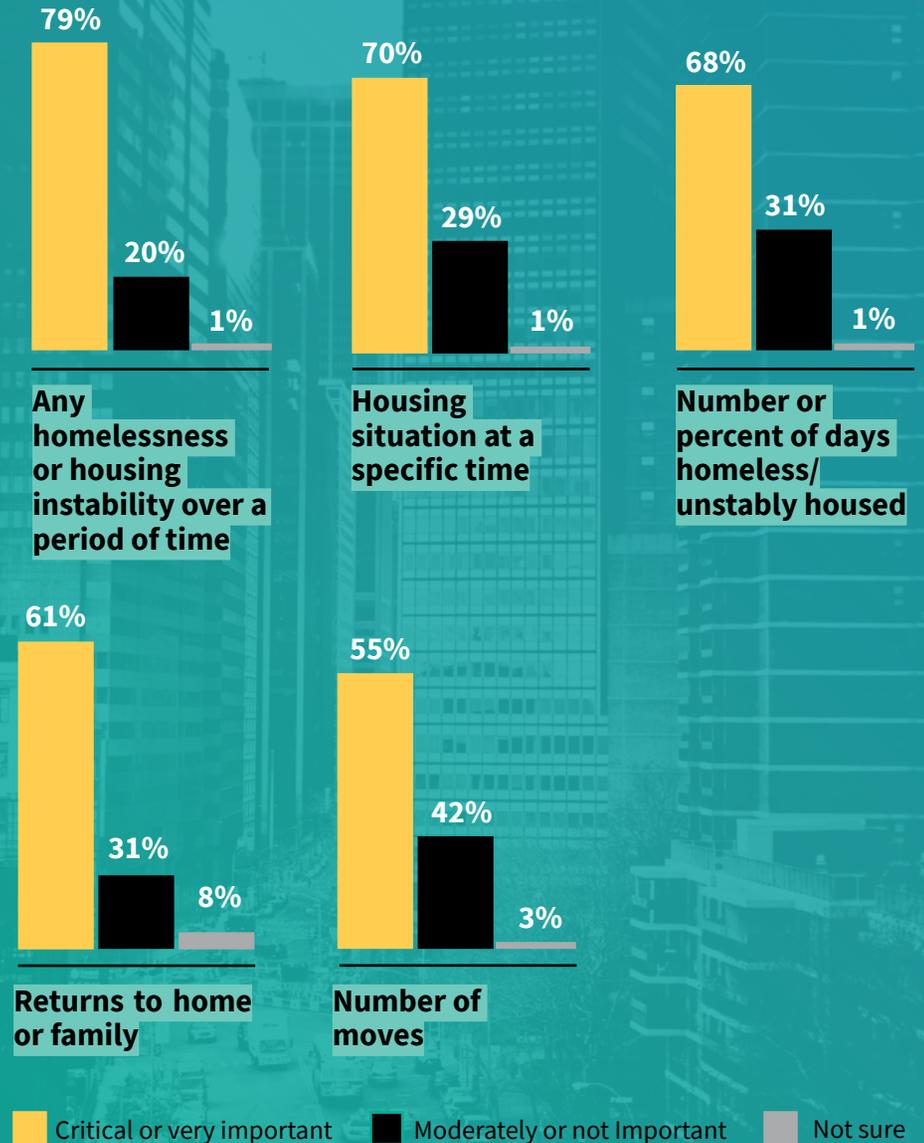
At the system level, communities aim to help young people work toward “permanent” situations. Yet, for some programs, exits into certain types of temporary situations might still be understandably taken as a sign of progress. For example, it can be progress for a young person to leave an emergency shelter into a transitional housing program or a safe temporary arrangement with friends, family, or a host home while they pursue education or employment goals and work toward a longer-term housing solution. So, while the measure can be used consistently across a system, communities and organizations might tailor what they consider to be successful response options for specific programs within the system. [The West Coast Convening Framework: A Practical Guide to Outcomes Measurement for Programs Serving Youth and Young Adults Experiencing Homelessness](#) provides a set of recommendations around which types of destinations should be considered positive exits from different types of programs.³

Consultations with young people underscored that various types of living situations—ranging from transitional housing to renting an apartment—could feel like stable housing and that many would still need continued support from programs while housed.

However, measuring a youth’s expected destination upon program exit is, by itself, a deficient way to measure stable housing. By itself, it is also a low bar for what the field is working to achieve with the youth and young adults we support. Hence, a second measure that captures housing stability over a period of time is also recommended.

[See the associated measure by clicking here \(pg. 36\).](#)

Figure 3. Importance of Measuring Housing Stability Outcomes



These results are based on a brief online survey of focus groups participants prior to the group discussion. They capture initial impressions prior to the discussions.

Outcome: Any homelessness or housing instability over the last 30 days

By definition, “stability” cannot be determined or measured in advance. Knowing whether housing situations can be characterized as stable requires looking at a young person’s housing situation over a period of time. Even if a young person exits into a situation that might appear to be permanent at the outset, such as signing onto a lease or moving in with a friend or family member with the expectation that the young person may stay there indefinitely, if those situations fall through and the young person becomes homeless again, then the destination was not actually stable or permanent.

There was wide agreement that systems and programs aimed at helping to end youth homelessness should measure the occurrence of any homelessness or housing instability over a defined period of time. Given the absence of clear measurement tools in this domain, the YOP team created a brief measure of any homelessness or housing instability over the last 30 days. It could be administered through a brief interview with a young person in person or by phone, or it could be self-administered through a survey.

See the associated measure by clicking here (pg. 39).

Going further

One more in-depth approach involves a validated measure called the Residential Time-Line Follow-Back (RTLFB) Inventory.⁴ Variations of this type of this method have been used in different studies and surveys with varying levels of detail. In general, this approach is considered the “gold standard” for measuring homelessness and housing instability. We believe it would be a useful area of measurement development for researchers to work toward developing and validating a scalable RTLFB measure, with guidance, for common use in youth homelessness systems and services. In doing so, this could well become a top core outcome measure in future iterations of this report.

The RTLFB asks a respondent how long they have been housed in their current residence and, if less than the follow-up period (in this case, 6 months), continues to ask about prior housing (or homelessness) situations until reaching the start of the follow-up period. The method allows for estimating the days an individual spent stably housed as a proportion of the number of days for which any type of residence data were available over the preceding 6 months. The measure can also capture other types of useful information (e.g., number of moves and types of housing and homelessness situations during the follow-up period). This approach assesses not only whether someone experienced any housing instability over a period of time, but also different degrees and types of housing instability. It was used in a large impact evaluation of a “housing first” program model in Canada.⁵ Using such an approach to talk through a young person’s housing “journey” over a period of time could also provide useful insights into a young person’s experiences and access to resources for casework discussions.

However, compared to the other core measures proposed above, it can be more time-intensive to capture this level of detailed information, and the process typically involves some form of structured interview or conversation. Although administration time can range from 5 to 45 minutes, depending on the number of moves a participant has experienced, Tsemberis and colleagues indicated that the average administration time for the tool is about 15 minutes for a 6-month recall period.⁶ Additionally, validation of the tool was based on administration by trained interviewers who were not direct service provider staff. Considering the additional complexities and lack of common experience with using this type of measurement approach at the system level, we recommend this as a complementary measure for consideration at this stage.

“[M]y definition of being successful would be having your own place... getting your own income and just being independent with a little bit of help here and there.”

- Youth consultation

“I’ve seen young people thrive the most in like transitional housing situations...where they are able to save money or take their time and get accustomed to living independently or get accustomed to what it means to have their own space, whether it’s communal or independently. So definitely a place where individuals have like the autonomy to grow and have shelter over their heads while they’re growing.”

- Youth consultation

Core Outcome Area: Permanent Connections

It is well documented that social isolation and a lack of positive connections are commonplace among youth experiencing homelessness and significant contributors to their homelessness as well as their difficulty escaping it.⁷ As youth spend more time experiencing homelessness, they tend to fill this void with connections to other young people on the streets. While providing emotional support, this can also reinforce integration into “street culture” and alienation from broader networks, which, in turn, can fuel more entrenched homelessness.⁸

Positive connections to family, peers, and other supportive adults can serve a range of purposes. Several studies have found that youth with at least one caring adult are more likely to have better well-being outcomes, including better physical health, less stress, improved mental health, improved educational and economic attainment, and higher life satisfaction as an adult.⁹ This underscores the importance of permanent connections as a protective factor and its impact on the other outcome areas.

These interpersonal relationships provide means for reciprocal support, establishment of social norms and obligations, and sharing of information and resources. The value of the social networks and the benefits that flow from these networks is an asset that is also referred to as social capital.¹⁰ What happens if a young person gets housed, and then a problem with the landlord or a roommate comes up? What if they cannot afford rent or meet other basic needs? What if they encounter an unexpected shock or a crisis arises? What if they need to find a job or get career advice to have enough income to maintain housing? What if they need to get connected with services or they are feeling sad, anxious, or depressed and unable to function well in day-to-day activities? Established social capital offers tangible supports that help youth respond to these life experiences.

Previous research (not specific to youth) on transitions from homelessness into independent or scattered site housing has found continued or even worsened social isolation even as housing stability increased among some formerly homeless people.¹¹ Moving into permanent housing situations can come with at least some initial strain on social supports and networks. In turn, this might take a toll on young people’s well-being, and, if continued, could pose a threat to their long-term resilience and housing stability. Some young people can even face risks to their housing by trying to counter feelings of social isolation—for example, by inviting friends to stay with them even when this defies lease agreements or program rules. The possibility of continued social isolation and its potential impact on young people reinforces the importance of measuring and tracking young people’s permanent connection outcomes and providing additional supports and interventions as needed.

Importantly, while the pre-focus group survey responses most commonly indicated the “presence of a supportive person” as critical or very important among the outcomes listed for permanent connections (see Figure 4), the perspective on this changed as focus groups had the opportunity to discuss. Focus groups underscored the importance of capturing connections as more than a supportive relationship between one youth and one other person. Young people explained that sometimes a relationship with a single individual cannot always offer the consistency or support needed and for all purposes. This risk might feel particularly acute among this population of young people whose vulnerability has been defined by frayed, unstable, and conflicted relationships throughout much of their lives.

“When you have those permanent connections...you’re setting up a solid support system for someone, and I’ve just seen people thrive when they have support versus when they lack support.”

– Youth consultation

“[P]ermanent connection, I feel...it’s something community-wise and just being involved, that would help. But with, like, one specific person, to at least... have a supportive group so in that way when that one person is not there because they have their own, you know, things to do or – we’re all human. People have... issues and people have things to do family-wise or even personal, so I think... having a... support system, like a group, not just one person specifically.”

– Youth consultation



Without knowing anything about the quality, stability, or characteristics of the connection, the mere “presence” of a supportive person in someone’s life at a point in time offers very limited insight and is difficult to interpret. Viewed widely enough, consultations pointed out the dilemma that almost any young person could be technically said to have the presence of at least one supportive person in their life—whether a case manager, a neighbor, a relative, or a peer on the streets. Yet, that presence might not be supportive or stable enough to help a young person exit homelessness and remain stably housed.

Additionally, it is common that the “presence” of a supportive person in a youth’s life is documented as a connection to a program staff or volunteer. While wanting to reinforce the importance of youth being able to identify any and all program staff as a positive connection, we recommend that, when supporting the development of new or existing permanent connections, the standard should be to cultivate non-program connections.

There are relevant RHY program elements under the 2017 HMIS data standards, including the following:

- Client has permanent positive adult connections outside of project
- Client has permanent positive peer connections outside of project
- Client has permanent positive community connections outside of project

For each, the response options are “no,” “yes,” and “worker does not know.”

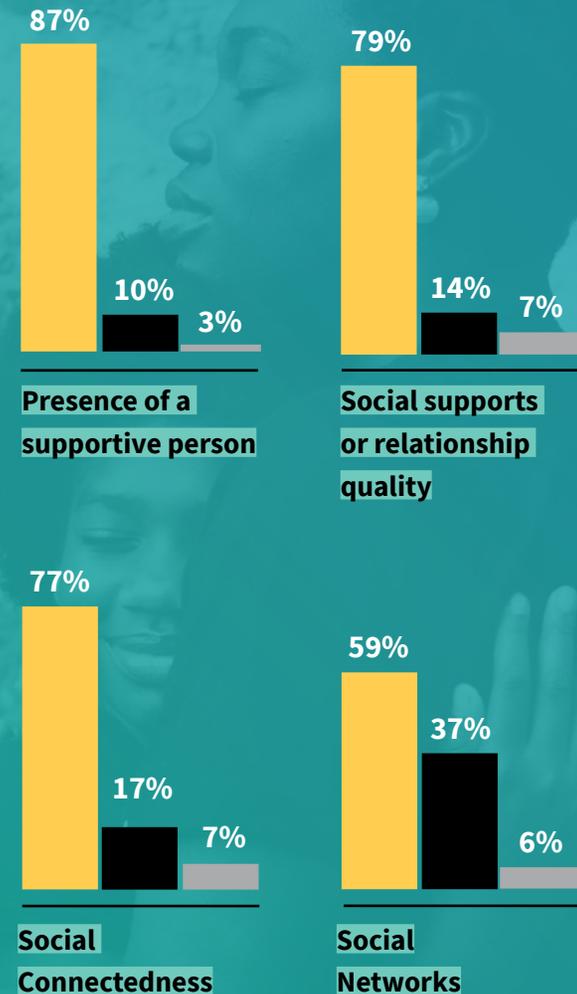
These elements usefully introduced systematic data collection on permanent connections for some federally-funded programs serving youth experiencing homelessness. However, they have significant limitations. They are not based on scientifically sound (valid and reliable) measurement, and they leave significant scope for various interpretations when answering. One worker might answer these questions for the same young person very differently from another worker. Terms like “permanent” and “positive” are not defined, and it is unclear how a worker should approach answering these questions for an individual youth.

These issues make it difficult to interpret data produced by these elements. Additionally, these measures focus on measuring the presence of connections rather than the types or quality of support available through those connections, which is important information highlighted by the consultations. Given these considerations, we suggest that programs and systems advance to using more robust and insightful measurement approaches to permanent connections.

Outcome: Social connections

Considering feedback from consultations that permanent connections for young people experiencing homelessness should include multiple sources of

Figure 4. Importance of Measuring Permanent Connections Outcomes



■ Critical or very important ■ Moderately or not important ■ Not sure

These results are based on a brief online survey of focus groups participants prior to the group discussion. They capture initial impressions prior to the discussions.

connection and different types of support, while accounting for young people's own views on the connections in their lives, we recommend the Youth Thrive™ Survey's Social Connections scale as a core outcome measure for permanent connections. While there are longer, more complex instruments that can be used for research or casework purposes, this relatively brief measure captures the essence of what consultation participants described as important with respect to both social supports and social connectedness. This measure accounts for diversity in sources, types, and degrees of social support in a young person's life while maintaining a reasonable amount of brevity for routine outcomes monitoring at scale.

We also recommend this measure over others for social support, in part, because it is part of a broader Youth Thrive™ Survey that many providers serving youth may want to use. Further, the Youth Thrive™ Survey was specifically developed and validated for youth and young adults, and primarily those of color and similar demographic characteristics to those served by runaway and homelessness programs.

See the associated measure by clicking here (pg. 41).

Going further

Some programs and researchers might want to capture a more detailed portrait of a young person's connections to adults. For this purpose, the Youth Connections Scale was developed and validated by The Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare (CASCW) at the University of Minnesota, in partnership with the Anu Family Services.¹² The scale collects information on the number of supportive adult connections in a young person's life by various categories, the strength of those connections, the types of supports that young people may or may not gain from those connections, and the overall level of youth connections to caring adults.

The scale is specifically designed to be used in a practice setting to support assessment, discussion, and intervention around the positive connections to caring adults that transition age youth need to thrive. The instrument was developed for youth in foster care but could be useful for youth experiencing homelessness more broadly with modest adaptations where specific foster care-related references are made. Because the instrument is relatively lengthy, it was automatically excluded as a candidate for a core outcome measure, but it offers a potentially useful resource for more in-depth assessment.



Recent research shows that lower levels of education are associated with higher risk for experiencing homelessness, even when controlling for other characteristics such as income, employment, and race or ethnicity.¹³ More broadly, economics literature underscores education as a contributor to social mobility and poverty reduction. Economists broadly agree on a significant “education premium” in the U.S.—that is, the earnings boost associated with more education.¹⁴ In turn, higher earnings are essential for young people’s sustainable exits from homelessness and into self-sufficiency, particularly as publicly funded housing support or welfare benefits expire for an individual or require greater income contributions in the context of market housing costs that have escalated well beyond the pace of income growth across the country.¹⁵

One of the challenges to measuring education outcomes is determining the right “stage” of measurement. As a starting point, young people have to be enrolled in school or an educational program. Once enrolled, they need to attend regularly. And, ultimately, the desired outcome is attainment of an educational diploma, degree, certificate, or other credential. At a deeper level, the end outcome of interest is also the increased skills and knowledge that reflect improvements in an individual’s human capital and capacity to thrive in a competitive global economy. At the program level, it can make sense to measure different stages of educational outcomes—enrollment, attendance, attainment, and/or skills development—but at the system and community level, it can be important to prioritize one or two metrics that help the system gauge its progress in supporting the needs of young people.

Another challenge is framing measures broadly enough that they are relevant for the educational pursuits of young people, generally from the ages of 13 and 25. For example, phrasing that is too narrowly designed for secondary education would not apply to young adults’ pursuits of higher education or vocational training. When considering outcome measures for the system and community level, this is an important consideration.

Ultimately, participants rated and described attainment as the most important outcome for the education domain (see [Figure 5](#)), but they also highlighted enrollment and attendance as important intermediate outcomes to attainment. As such, we propose core measures that capture enrollment and attendance (together, at a basic level for attendance) as well as attainment.

Outcome: Enrollment & Attendance

Although enrollment is an essential first step toward attainment, consultation participants were often concerned that enrollment by itself could lack meaning. As one participant remarked, “Just because there are many youth who are enrolled doesn’t necessarily mean that they’re actually attending; it just doesn’t seem to have as much meaning as attendance and attainment.” Young people tended to agree. At the same time, it is difficult to ask about attendance without

“I think that you have to capture degree attainment... that is so crucial for job acquisition. But I do think the whole process is critical, you know, each step of like enrolling, making it through... each of your steps, and I do think it’s really critical to do whatever we can to help young people get to whatever that attainment looks like, whether it’s a trade certification, whether it’s an AA, a BA, whether it’s something else. But... if I had to be pushed to say like what’s the most critical, it’s some kind of attainment of certification degree... because I do think that it’s really difficult to look at stable, ongoing life supporting employment without some kind of degree attainment.” – Youth consultation

also asking about enrollment. As such, we suggest a combined measure that captures key information on both enrollment and attendance, allows for tracking progress, and yet is broadly phrased enough to be flexible to different types and levels of education.

Additionally, consultation participants described low attendance (or chronic absenteeism) as an example of a “leading indicator,” which reflects an early sign of difficulty. With leading indicators, like irregular attendance, service providers and systems can engage earlier to help a young person get the support they need to get back on track for higher order goals like educational attainment before it is too late. The proposed measure is based on self-reported information or dialogue between an interviewer and a social worker or other practitioner.

See the associated measure by clicking here (pg. 43).

Outcome: Attainment

There was largely consensus among the consultation groups that attainment was more meaningful to measure than enrollment.

Given these inputs, we suggest using a slightly modified version of the 2018 American Community Survey question on educational attainment, as this measure has undergone significant scrutiny, allows for comparability to a major national data set, and provides a useful level of granularity to capture grade-level attainment progress.¹⁶

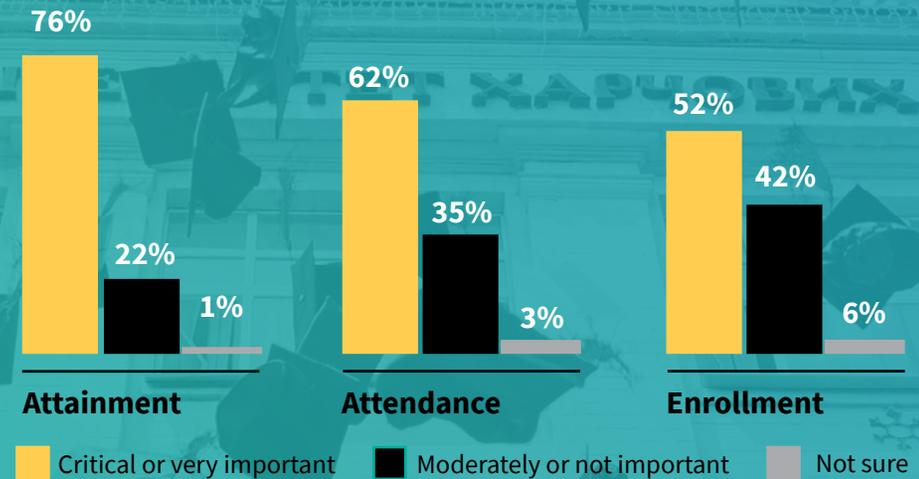
[See the associated measure by clicking here \(pg. 45\).](#)

Going further

For more granular level information, systems and programs could collect information on the number of days attending school over a defined reference period, such as the last two weeks. Or they could pull attendance records from schools or colleges to determine the number or percentage of days attended during a specific time period.

For students of primary or secondary school age, it would be appropriate to treat chronic absenteeism as a core outcome measure. This is a well-documented warning indicator for a range of challenges the student may be facing, including housing instability, and the significant loss of instructional time can be detrimental to students' educational success. Chronic absenteeism is typically defined as missing 15 or more days (about 10 percent of school days) in a school year. This information may be best obtained through school records, rather than surveys or interviews, and thus would likely require a data sharing agreement or other type of formalized arrangement between the system or service provider that would like to collect the information and the school system.

Figure 5. Importance of Measuring Education Outcomes



These results are based on a brief online survey of focus groups participants prior to the group discussion. They capture initial impressions prior to the discussions.

“In terms of attainment it just seemed very high level and when we’re really trying to affect change... in education in particular it can take literally years to reach that level of attainment, so we usually try to find some intermediate outcomes to focus on because otherwise the measure takes so long to hit that we’re just not as nimble in terms of our program development and interventions.”

– Stakeholder consultation

Employment is critical for young people to obtain income and often other benefits that are important for sustainable exits from homelessness. Recent research has found employment to be linked to housing stability and mental health among youth that experienced homelessness.¹⁷ However, simply having a job is insufficient to avoiding and escaping homelessness. Indeed, many young people work while experiencing homelessness and have significant employment histories. This is because young people often have very limited or sporadic employment with relatively low earnings potential, part-time coverage, a lack of benefits, and limited career mobility.

In the pre-consultation survey, employment status was most commonly rated as critical or very important within this domain, but the focus groups generally elevated income as a higher priority as the discussions progressed. As a result, we suggest that both income and employment status should be considered core outcomes.

Outcome: Income

Current HMIS data standards (2017) require that information on income and sources be collected from all clients of HUD-funded homelessness programs at program entry and program exit. As such, we recommend a measure that is consistent with these data standards. However, the data elements in the HMIS data standards are relatively lengthy, requiring separate information on income with respect to 15 different potential sources. For young people for whom this information is already collected, this provides satisfactory detail.

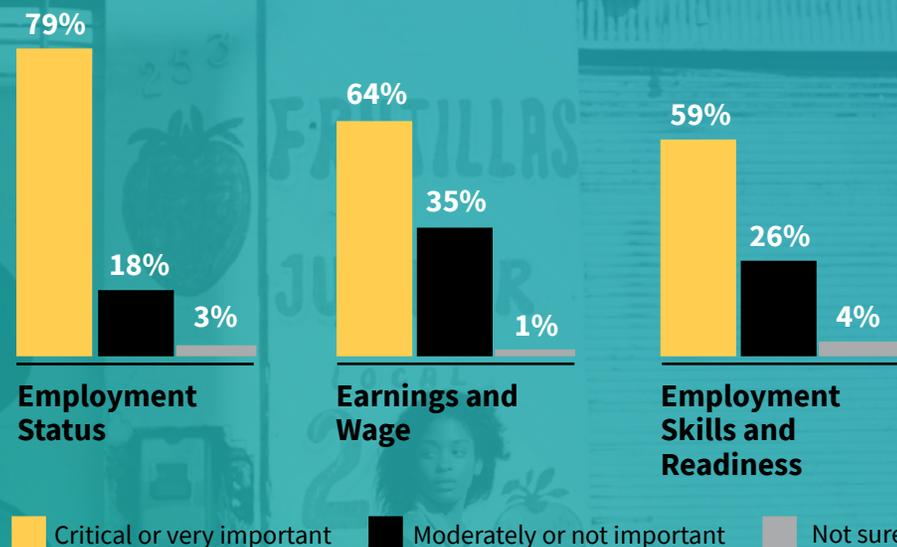
For programs that do not automatically collect this information on youth and young adults, we suggest the proposed abbreviated measure, from which aggregate data could still be compared to the HMIS data standards measure.

See the associated measure by clicking here (pg. 47).

Outcome: Employment status

Many programs will still want to capture information on employment status. In doing so, it is useful to measure employment status consistent with methods involved in broader national surveys so that concepts and trends can be compared. Simply asking whether someone has a job or not misses key information used by national surveys, government agencies, and others to determine employment statuses, such as “employed,” “unemployed,” or “not participating in the labor force.” Additionally, simplistic metrics like “having a job” leaves room for various interpretations of how to respond. For instance, if someone worked for a few hours recently as part of an irregular work opportunity, one person might interpret that as having a job and another might not without clear parameters.

Figure 6. Importance of Measuring Employment Outcomes



These results are based on a brief online survey of focus groups participants prior to the group discussion. They capture initial impressions prior to the discussions.

“When I think about employment... my mind immediately goes to the – how much money is somebody making, and are they making enough to support their household or pay their rent? And so, for me, like it’s really – the most important thing is the income and the earnings.”

– Stakeholder consultation

We recommend a subset of questions from the US Census Bureau’s 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) on employment status. The questions align with national and international norms for determining whether someone’s status is employed (full-time or part-time, wage/salary employment, or self-employment), unemployed (not working but seeking work), or not participating in the labor force (not working and not seeking work). Using the ACS questions for measuring employment status has multiple advantages. All ACS questions have undergone significant interagency federal review and content testing. All ACS measures are available in the public domain. Further, ACS data can also be accessed at various geographic levels and for different subpopulations. This makes it possible to directly compare employment-related data collected on youth experiencing homelessness to broader populations. In addition to the questions that are essential for capturing employment status, we also include an ACS question on the type of employment, and, for youth who are not working or who are working part-time, we also add a question as to whether the youth wants a full-time job.

See the associated measure by clicking here (pg. 49).

Outcome: Not in education, employment, or training

(NEET)

Often, surveys and evaluations will combine enrollment and employment outcomes to form a “NEET” (not in employment, education, or training) or “disconnectedness” measure that reflects a young person who is neither enrolled in education or training, nor working. This is a common metric used to signal the degree of social exclusion among young people (generally ages 16-24) at a high level. NEET data are reported on young people in the U.S. by the U.S. Department of Education and the Pew Research Center and internationally by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank.^{18 19}

This metric can be useful because the fact of a young person’s non-participation in education or training may not be concerning if they are employed and visa-versa. This metric highlights those youth experiencing homelessness who are likely to be particularly detached from the systems and opportunities they need to achieve sustainable stability and to contribute to a competitive local and national economy.

We recommend that an individual be considered NEET if they are neither considered “enrolled and attending,” per the Enrollment & Attendance Measure, nor “employed,” per the Employment Status measure.

The most wide-ranging core outcome area is social-emotional well-being, which can include a broad array of outcomes and measures. Social-emotional well-being represents young people’s capacity for social, emotional, and interpersonal functioning across day-to-day tasks and activities, including those that would be required to avoid or exit from homelessness. Without positive social-emotional functioning, young people struggle to strive toward fulfilling their aspirations in the face of significant obstacles, cope well with challenges as they emerge, and interact pro-socially with others across a range of situations. Young people experiencing homelessness have typically been exposed to significant stressors and trauma that further undercut their capacity for optimal functioning and increase the importance of interventions to support their social-emotional well-being.

At the same time, adolescence and young adulthood represent a key developmental window for improving social-emotional well-being.²⁰ In recent years, a growing evidence base has underscored the promise of interventions to help develop such skills in adolescence and young adulthood.²¹ Yet, a significant challenge with respect to this outcome area—given its broad scope—is identifying which social-emotional well-being outcomes are most important and under which circumstances, to measure for youth experiencing homelessness.

Social-emotional well-being is largely a strengths-based outcome area, in that it includes the presence of internal skills and assets, but it can also be characterized in part by the absence of difficulties such as mental health problems. Overall, consultation participants leaned toward capturing social-emotional well-being using a strengths-based model versus a deficit approach.

Ultimately, there was a lack of clear consensus on specific outcomes that should be measured under social-emotional well-being, and most consultation participants believed that multiple outcomes should be captured given the different dimensions of this domain. We recommend prioritizing a strengths-based mental health outcome, resilience, and self-efficacy at this stage, but we also discuss measures for mental health difficulties and life skills that may be particularly useful for programs and systems to incorporate. As evidence and measurement improve in this domain over time, these recommendations may need to be updated.

Outcome: Mental health

Youth largely concurred that mental health is critical to capture. Mental health has been defined in research and policy to represent more than the absence of mental illness—just as an individual could lack a physical illness while being physically unhealthy.²² As such, researchers have developed and validated instruments to capture broader mental health flourishing, such as the 14-item Mental Health Continuum-Short Form (MHC-SF), which assesses mental health in terms of psychological well-being, emotional well-being, and social well-being.²³ We recommend this measure because, with relatively few items, it captures multiple dimensions of mental health. Moreover, this instrument is validated for both adolescents and young adults.

See the associated measure by clicking here (pg. 51).

“There are a lot of outcomes in this domain. So if I had to choose, I would lean towards the resiliency and hope, self-efficacy, self-esteem. I understand that our young people often have depression and anxiety. I mean, being homeless is, in itself, traumatic. And the need for mental health is there. So a lot of that would just be for us about then finding that resource in the community to help them. But again, I would always go towards those strength-based resiliency and self-efficacy as a priority.”

– Stakeholder consultation



Outcome: Youth Resilience

Resilience is “youths’ power to meet life’s challenges, giving them the ability to manage stress, function in their daily lives, and ‘bounce forward’ when faced with adversity or trauma.”²⁴ Given the significant adversity that young people experiencing homelessness face, consultation participants described young people’s internal assets to face those adversities as particularly important. Further, with the growing emphasis on empowerment and self-sufficiency in efforts to end youth homelessness, the strength-based emphasis on personal agency in this outcome construct resonated with a number of consultation participants. We recommend the Youth Thrive™ instrument’s 10-item measure of resilience. This is the most validated measure we identified for youth resilience, and it was validated for and with transition-age youth with a focus on youth of color.

Notably, this resilience measure aligns quite closely with general self-efficacy measures. Self-efficacy reflects one’s belief in their ability to overcome challenges and execute tasks or achieve successful outcomes. Self-efficacy is often viewed as central to empowerment theory, as it reflects one’s sense of personal agency (which is different from self-esteem, an evaluation of self-worth). There is also research specifically with youth experiencing homelessness that demonstrates a relationship between increased self-efficacy, greater engagement of service connections, and increased housing stability.²⁵

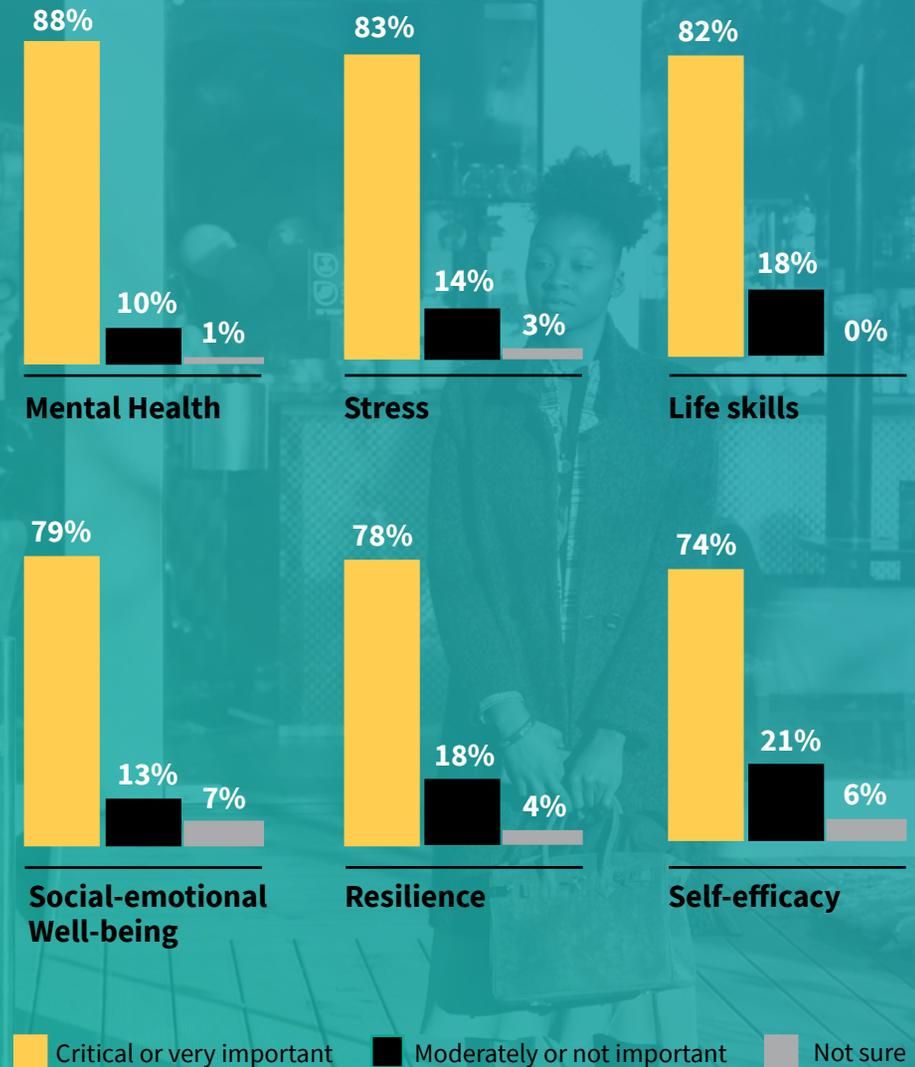
[See the associated measure by clicking here \(pg. 53\).](#)

Going further

Youth-serving organizations could administer the entire Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) Youth Thrive™ Survey. The full web-based survey takes less than 15 minutes for a young person to complete.²⁶ In addition to the youth resilience measure (and the social connections measure recommended above in the permanent connections section), it also includes other measures that collectively provide a well-rounded picture of a young person’s strengths and well-being. Other outcomes measured by the instrument include knowledge of adolescent development, concrete support in times of need, and cognitive and social-emotional competence.

Given the high rate of mental health difficulties among youth experiencing homelessness, many programs and systems will still want to measure and screen for potential disorders. This allows for determining which young people might need more thorough clinical assessments and potential treatment, as well as tracking progress in outcomes that should occur with the right alignments of supports and services. Among the most commonly used and well-validated brief screening measures for mental health difficulties are the Kessler 10 item (K10) and Kessler 6 item (K6) scales of psychological distress. These are designed to

Figure 7. Importance of Measuring Social-Emotional Well-Being Outcomes



These results are based on a brief online survey of focus groups participants prior to the group discussion. They capture initial impressions prior to the discussions.

screen for cases of serious mental illness and are validated for adolescents and adults in multiple languages. The K6 is simply a truncated version of the K10. We recommend using the K6 as the shorter but still valid option ([see pg. 55](#)).²⁷

Life skills came up frequently in both the consultations and the literature. In general, life skills involve skills that are necessary or desirable for full participation in everyday life. The difficulty, however, is that the term “life skills” is used broadly and has various meanings in different contexts. The evidence as to which life skills matter most and for what circumstances is often thin and variable. There was generally less evidence demonstrating relationships between these outcomes in youth homelessness compared to other outcomes in this domain. Additionally, measures in this domain tend to be longer—especially the commonly used Casey Life Skills Assessment—which might mean that these tools are more useful for in-depth program-level assessment than for community and agency level core outcome measures.

Nonetheless, life skills often represent a range of practical skills that may be important for young people to achieve greater self-sufficiency, and many programs specifically direct life skills development. As such, corresponding measures can be useful for many programs. Life skills measures often involve multidimensional instruments, such as the 113-item Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment, which contains a number of subscales (e.g., communication, daily living, housing, and money management) and the Toolkit For Evaluating Positive Youth Development’s Life Skills Scale (11 items), which captures friendship and communication and decision-making, planning, and leadership. In some cases, life skills fall naturally under social-emotional well-being (e.g., communication or social skills); whereas, in other cases, they would fall outside of the domain (e.g., budgeting skills, cooking skills, or career planning skills). There is also a 20-item abbreviated version of the instrument: the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment: Youth Short Assessment.²⁸

Apart from discussing specific outcomes and measures, the focus groups offered important insights into broader issues for outcomes measurement in systems and projects to address youth homelessness. These observations underscore the many ways in which bringing rigorous outcomes measurement into public systems and practice settings is challenging. Yet they also highlight why it is so important, and how we can collectively get better at it. In this section, we briefly outline themes that emerged that are not specific to any one core outcome area.

Streamline outcomes measurement and demonstrate the benefits to young people. Young people frequently alluded to the potential benefits of more consistent, shared measurement and tracking of their outcomes. As one young person lamented, “it gets annoying at times when youth have to answer the same question for, like, different organizations or different services.” If different programs and organizations used more common outcomes measures backed by better data sharing, this could mitigate this problem. Still, young people wanted to be informed about how and why their information would be shared, and how this would benefit them. Further, young people urged discipline in capturing the information that has strong value-added. For example, another youth posed the question, “How can we be strategic and focused about the information we need to know and not be so focused on everything we’d like to know?”

Pilot, learn, and evolve outcomes measurement. Participants recognized that there is a lack of ideal evidence or consensus on outcomes measurement for youth homelessness. Communities will often go through a period of piloting and iterating with new approaches and metrics. Similarly, this report offers a “current best thinking” understanding of outcomes and measures to help drive the field forward in addressing youth homelessness, but communities must also be supported in piloting these outcomes and measures, sharing learning from their experience, and contributing to improved tools and evidence so that we continue to get better at outcomes measurement.

Look at outcomes holistically. Participants commonly underscored the value of looking at multiple key outcomes together to get a fuller story of how young people are doing. This reinforces the strength of the USICH Framework’s approach with four core outcome areas. One participant captured the sentiment well in the following statement: “One thing that stood out is that, for some of these, looking at them in isolation would be pretty limiting. So if you’re just looking at employment, for example, and you’re seeing that they’re working minimally, minimal hours or something, well, that might make sense if they’re also in school full time. So, kind of looking at things in partnership with each other would be important.” Given such observations, it would be useful to consider individual-, program-, and system level dashboards to allow for examining the interplay and trends of different outcomes together.

Frame the purpose of outcomes measurement carefully. In public systems and policy, the tendency is to cast outcomes measurement as serving the purpose of “accountability.” While better outcomes measurement should drive

a whole system toward a greater focus on results, participants cautioned that high stakes outcomes measurement could create the unhelpful incentives to collect outcomes information in ways that place organizations in more favorable light. If funders communicate and demonstrate that the purpose of outcomes measurement is primarily to help the system collectively learn and continuously improve, and to support rather than penalize organizations that collect and share good outcomes information, this could help increase commitment to reliable outcomes measurement.

Moreover, encouraging or requiring grantees and systems to use the outcome measures repeatedly to track *change* over time, and not just what percentage of program participants meet a certain target at program exit, can help mitigate the risk of organizations engaging in “creaming.” “Creaming” involves recruiting youth into programs who are perceived as least vulnerable and most likely to meet a particular outcome target. Tracking the same outcomes over time, starting at intake, also makes it possible to assess the level of baseline advantage or disadvantage of young people recruited into a program.

Examine outcomes with an equity lens. Some focus groups elevated the need to collect robust information not only on outcomes, but also on race, ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation, such that outcomes could be analyzed along these lines. Disaggregating results by these key characteristics helps to pinpoint areas in which some young people are making more or less progress than others and making changes to targeting or service delivery to increase equitable outcomes. Equity also came up with respect to the measurement tools themselves. As one participant raised, “are tools being normed and validated on the population of young people who we know are experiencing homelessness, which is disproportionately young people of color?” Going forward, there should be careful attention and research directed to whether some groups of young people respond to certain measures differently than do other young people. Researchers should also investigate whether adjustments need to be made to the measure (e.g., the phrasing of questions) or the process (e.g., who administers the measure, where it is administered, or how it is administered) to increase cultural validity of outcomes measurement for different groups of young people.

There is no one right way to administer outcome measures. Some young people respond better to a trained staff person or peer asking structured questions through an interview while others prefer completing a self-administered survey on a tablet or computer. An interview approach involves a social interaction that some young people like, and it makes it easier to integrate the process of outcome measurement more seamlessly into goal setting and case management conversations. It may also be the most feasible method when young people are best reached for assessment by phone rather than in-person. On the other hand, this requires more personnel, personnel time, and staff training to ensure that the interviewer conducts assessment in ways that are safe, culturally sensitive, as intended for each measure, and unbiased.

By contrast, self-administered surveys can offer young people a greater sense of privacy and autonomy, and they also tend to make the process of data collection and entry more efficient – especially when the surveys are technology-based (e.g., computer or tablet). Increasingly, data collection technology makes it relatively easy to create surveys that include audio-visual features so that even low-literacy populations can complete self-administered surveys with only moderate assistance. Some youth participants suggested offering young people “options so...that they feel empowered” in the choice. For the most part and in the near future, we assume that most systems and projects will continue to collect data predominantly in the context of case management discussions, but further innovation and research should help to improve our understanding of when and how different administration techniques work best.

Follow-up outcomes measurement is very hard but likely to be most successful in the context of continuous contact and support. Most participants reinforced the importance and value of knowing how young people are doing over time, well after they have exited programs. At the same time, they also underscored how difficult it is to follow-up with young people to collect updated information on their outcomes after they are no longer participating in the program. This is especially the case for youth experiencing homelessness, who may frequently change residence, location, and contact information. There could also be a bias in follow-up outcomes if the young people who continue to struggle the most with instability are also the hardest to track longer-term outcomes for and are therefore underrepresented in the data. Extra efforts need to be taken to follow up with all young people, not just those doing well.

Although views and experiences differed on the most effective practices for collecting follow-up information on young people, the following strategies emerged from discussions:

- Placing greater priority in longer-term outcomes measurement, and investing more in organizations’ capacity and time to conduct good follow-up.
- Strengthening ongoing support or “aftercare” for young people after they exit a program and/or providing incentives to young people to keep in touch for outcomes measurement and continued casework.
- Building a rapport with young people and trying to have the same individual continue to follow-up with the young person over time.
- Continuously tracking and updating multiple forms of contact information for young people, including phone numbers, social media, and other contacts in their social networks.

“One thing that we’ve done is we have a test period, so that when we agree on what we think the outcomes and the measurements will be, we set a certain amount of time where we test them and then come back and do the needed revisions as a community.”

– Stakeholder consultation

“I think, too, the tension between outcomes that we’re collecting or data that we’re collecting, and then how that’s tied to specific program outcomes. So, every program wants to show or demonstrate their program is successful and that they’re doing important work that is making a difference.”

– Stakeholder consultation

“And so getting some pressure from the adult homeless services to skew to more positive outcomes so that they’re not bringing down the community scores in HMIS through CoC. So I think looking at how it’s not just individual funders but how there’s a system set up in place that kind of pushes people to skew towards more positive outcomes even if they’re not real.”

– Stakeholder consultation

This report outlines a set of outcomes and measures associated with the core outcome areas for youth experiencing homelessness elevated in the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) Framework to End Youth Homelessness. Recommendations emerged from a wide-ranging background review of existing evidence and measures, focus group discussions, and consultations with a wide range of stakeholders across the nation. We intend for this report, and the outcomes and measures it includes, to serve as a go-to resource for organizations and systems serving youth experiencing homelessness across the nation.

Going forward, key areas of work, building on this project, could include the following:

- With input from organizations and communities, develop operational protocols to guide integration of these measures into practice and data systems.
- Pilot and assess integration of these measures into organizations' routine programming and system efforts (e.g., YHDP communities).
- Develop or refine measures over time for the population, and to maximize cultural validity for different subpopulations (e.g., youth of color, youth for whom English is a second language, and LGBTQ youth).
- Aggregate and analyze outcomes data across communities to better understand or refine normative score levels and meaningful thresholds to inform service and support needs.

We cannot end youth homelessness in the dark, and this work takes us one big step further toward collecting and tracking better data on youth outcomes to guide service delivery at the individual, organizational, and system levels.

“I also agree that follow-up is the most important, and it would be nice if funders were willing to support that through paying for staffing and things.”

– Stakeholder consultation

“Another important thing is establishing some rapport with the young person. Ideally, the same person is interviewing them every time you talk to them. The interview experience is a pleasant one that makes the young person want to have it again.”

– Stakeholder consultation

TOOL: Example Instrument For Core Measures

Core Outcome Area: Stable Housing, Permanent Connections, Education & Employment, Social-emotional Well-being

OVERVIEW

- This instrument consolidates the full set of core measures into one instrument.

TARGET POPULATION

- Youth and young adults

LENGTH & HOW IT IS MEASURED

- 57+ items
- It is framed as an interviewer-administered survey, but it could be modestly adjusted to serve as a self-administered survey.
- Available in: English
- See descriptions of individual measures for further details.

DEVELOPER OR SOURCE

- See descriptions of each measure for developer or source.

PSYCHOMETRICS

- See descriptions of each measure for applicable psychometrics.

GOOD TO KNOW

- Measures may be omitted (in full) or additional measures may be added. However, items *within* measures **should not be removed, added, or changed**. Such modifications or adaptations generally need to be explicitly approved by the researcher(s) that created the measure. These measures are developed and often validated based on a specific set of items and response options. Changes to those items or response options can jeopardize the intentions and scientific properties of the measure. This should only be done by going through a research-based adaptation and revalidation process and/or with approval by the researcher(s) that developed the tool based on their understanding of what kinds of changes would be scientifically acceptable.

LEARN MORE

- Morton, M. H., Blondin, M., Chrisler, A., Pufpaff, J., Kull, M. A., Kugley, S., & Elliott, K. (2019). *Measuring Up: Youth-level Outcomes and Measures for System Responses to Youth Homelessness*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. Available at: <https://youthcollaboratory.org/youth-outcomes-project>

Example Instrument For Core Measures

[INCLUDE INFORMED CONSENT INFORMATION HERE, AS APPLICABLE.]

[Begin Interview/Survey]

I would like to ask you a series of questions to collect some information on you and your situation. I will also ask some questions about how you're doing in different areas of life. This information helps us better understand your strengths, where you might need some support, and to help keep track of how you're doing over time. You don't have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

BACKGROUND

[INCLUDE BACKGROUND QUESTIONS HERE, AS APPLICABLE. (EXAMPLES BELOW)]

First, I have some basic questions about yourself.

What is your first and last name? [First Name] [Last Name]

How old are you? [Years]

What is your date of birth? [DD/MM/YYYY]

Are you pregnant or a parent? __No __Yes __Doesn't know __Refuse to answer __Data not collected

Do you generally have your child(ren) with you on a daily basis? __No __Yes __Doesn't know __Refuse to answer __Data not collected

How would you describe your race from the following options? Please indicate all that apply to you.

__American Indian or Alaska Native __Asian __Black or African American __Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
__White __Doesn't know __Refuse to answer __Data not collected

How would you describe your ethnicity from the following options?

__Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino __Hispanic/Latino (a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American or other Spanish culture of origin, regardless of race) __Doesn't know __Refuse to answer __Data not collected

How would you best describe your gender identity from the following options? Please pick one option.

__Female __Male __Transgender female __Transgender male __Genderqueer, gender nonconforming, nonbinary
__Other __Doesn't know __Refuse to answer __Data not collected

How would you best describe your sexual orientation? Please pick one option.

__100% gay or lesbian __Mostly gay or lesbian but somewhat attracted to people of the opposite sex __Bisexual
__Mostly heterosexual but somewhat attracted to people of my own sex __100% heterosexual/straight __Asexual
__Pansexual __Questioning __Other __Doesn't know __Refuse to answer __Data not collected

CORE OUTCOME AREA: STABLE HOUSING

Current housing situation/expected destination

[If conducting this interview at intake or baseline OR sometime *after* a client has exited or completed a program:]
Where did you stay ***last night***?

[If conducting this interview at program exit:] Where do you expect to stay ***immediately after leaving this program***?

[Interviewer can use the client's response to select the best option. If needed, the interviewer could alternatively list the options for the client to select the best option. Additionally, if the interviewer or person inputting information has external information on where a young person stayed, or if they were, for example, deceased or incarcerated, the

interviewer or person inputting data should simply record that information directly based on the information they have.]

TEMPORARY SITUATIONS
<p><i>HUD-defined homelessness situation</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Place not meant for human habitation (anywhere outside—such as, street, park, viaduct, and so on—vehicle, abandoned building, vacant unit, train/bus, train/bus station, restaurant or retail establishment)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Emergency shelter, including hotel or motel paid for with emergency shelter voucher</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Safe Haven</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Moved from one Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) funded project to HOPWA transitional housing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Transitional housing for homeless persons (including homeless youth)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Hotel or motel paid for without emergency shelter voucher</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Host homes or other program-arranged temporary housing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Residential project or halfway house with no homeless criteria</p> <p><i>HUD-defined non-homeless temporary situation</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Staying or living with family, temporary tenure (room, apartment, dorm, or house)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Staying or living with friends, boyfriend, girlfriend, or other significant partner; temporary tenure (room, apartment, dorm, or house)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Staying or living with a stranger or acquaintance, temporary tenure (room, apartment, dorm, or house)</p> <p><i>Institutional situations</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Psychiatric hospital or other psychiatric facility</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Psychiatric hospital or other psychiatric facility</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Hospital or other residential non-psychiatric medical facility</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Jail, prison, or juvenile detention facility</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Foster home or group home</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Long-term care facility or nursing home</p>
PERMANENT SITUATIONS
<p><i>Continuum permanent housing projects</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Rental by client (yourself), with rapid rehousing or equivalent subsidy</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Moved from one HOPWA funded project to HOPWA permanent housing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Permanent housing (other than rapid rehousing (RRH)) for formerly homeless persons</p> <p><i>Rent/own with subsidy</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Rental by client (yourself), with Grant and Per Diem Transition in Place (GPD TIP) housing subsidy</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Rental by client (yourself), with Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) housing subsidy</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Rental by client (yourself), with other ongoing housing subsidy</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> College housing/dormitory assigned to client</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Owned by client, with ongoing housing subsidy</p> <p><i>Rent/own, no subsidy</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Rental by client (yourself), no ongoing housing subsidy</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Owned by client (yourself), no ongoing housing subsidy</p> <p><i>Other permanent</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Staying or living with family, permanent tenure</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Staying or living with friends, permanent tenure</p>
OTHER SITUATIONS

- Deceased
- Other
- No exit interview completed
- Doesn't know
- Refused to answer
- Data not collected

CORE OUTCOME AREA: STABLE HOUSING

Recent housing instability

Instructions: We would like to understand your recent housing situation. Thinking about the **LAST 30 days**, which of the following have you experienced **BECAUSE** you didn't have a safe or permanent place to stay? (Mark **ALL** that apply.)

- Sleeping outside, in a vehicle, or somewhere not meant for sleeping (for example: a park, abandoned building, bus station, 24-hour restaurant, laundromat, and the like)
- Sleeping in a hotel, motel, or hostel
- Sleeping in an emergency or homeless shelter
- Couch surfing or staying at someone else's place temporarily
- Sleeping anywhere else BECAUSE you didn't have a safe or permanent place to stay (for example: an emergency room, jail, or detention facility, and the like)
- None of the above; I have not experienced any housing instability during the last 30 days (please do not select any other options)
- Don't know (please do not select any other options)
- Refuse to answer (please do not select any other options)

CORE OUTCOME AREA: PERMANENT CONNECTIONS

Social Connections

Instructions: We are interested in how you feel about the following statements. Read (or listen to) each statement carefully. Using the options provided, indicate how much or how little each statement feels like you.

	Not at all like me	A little like me	Sort of like me	A lot like me	Very much like me
1. There are people in my life who encourage me to do my best.					
2. I have someone who I can share my feelings and ideas with.					
3. I have someone in my life who I look up to.					
4. I have someone in my life who doesn't judge me.					
5. I feel lonely.					
6. I have someone I can count on for help when I need it.					

7. I have someone who supports me in developing my interests and strengths.					
8. I have a friend or family member to spend time with on holidays and special occasions.					
9. I know for sure that someone really cares about me.					
10. I have someone in my life who is proud of me.					
11. There is an adult family member who is there for me when I need them (for example, my birth or adoptive parent, spouse, adult sibling, extended family member, legal guardian, non-biological chosen family).					
12. There is an adult, other than a family member, who is there for me when I need them.					
13. I have friends who stand by me during hard times.					
14. I feel that no one loves me.					
15. My spiritual or religious beliefs give me hope when bad things happen.					
16. I try to help other people when I can.					
17. I do things to make the world a better place like volunteering, recycling, or community service.					

CORE OUTCOME AREA: EDUCATION

Enrollment and attendance

Instructions: We would like to understand your **current** status with education or training. This question applies to school, college, a GED course, trade school, vocational training, or any other type of formal education or training course that involves a diploma, degree, credential, or certificate at the end.

Which of the following best describes your education status right now?

- NOT currently enrolled in any school or educational course
- Currently enrolled but NOT attending regularly (when school or the course is in session)
- Currently enrolled **and** attending regularly (when school or the course is in session)

CORE OUTCOME AREA: EDUCATION

Educational attainment

Instructions: What is the **highest** degree or level of school you have **COMPLETED**? Select **ONE** option. If currently enrolled, select the previous grade or highest degree received.

Through grade 12
<input type="checkbox"/> Under 8 th grade <input type="checkbox"/> 8 th grade <input type="checkbox"/> 9 th grade <input type="checkbox"/> 10 th grade <input type="checkbox"/> 11 th grade <input type="checkbox"/> 12 th grade – NO DIPLOMA
High school graduate
<input type="checkbox"/> Regular high school diploma <input type="checkbox"/> GED or alternative credential
Vocational training or trade school
<input type="checkbox"/> Some vocational training or trade school, no credential or certificate <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational training or trade school, received credential or certificate <input type="checkbox"/> Certificate program
College or some college
<input type="checkbox"/> Some college credit, but less than 1 year of college credit <input type="checkbox"/> 1 or more years of college credit, no degree <input type="checkbox"/> Associate's degree (<i>for example: AA, AS</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's degree (<i>for example: BA, BS</i>)
After bachelor's degree
<input type="checkbox"/> Master's degree (<i>for example: MA, MS, MEng, Med, MSW, MBA</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Professional degree beyond a bachelor's degree (<i>for example: MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate degree (<i>for example: PhD, EdD</i>)

CORE OUTCOME AREA: EMPLOYMENT

Income

Instructions: We are interested in some basic information about your recent income. Please answer these questions as accurately as you can as of today.

1. Do you currently receive income from <u>any</u> source? (<i>This does not include any income source that has been terminated.</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/> No [SKIP remaining income questions] <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to answer
2. Do you currently receive <u>earned income</u> from a job or business you own? (<i>In other words, income from employment, such as wages, salary, or self-employment.</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/> No [SKIP next question] <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to answer
3. What is the current amount of money you receive monthly from <u>earned income</u> ? (<i>If too difficult to answer, you can give the amount of money received LAST month, as well as you can remember.</i>)	\$ _____
4. Do you currently receive <u>income from any other source</u> ? (<i>For example, from public assistance, stipends, disability, panhandling, friends or family, etc.</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/> No [SKIP next question] <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to answer
5. What is the current amount of money you receive monthly from <u>other sources</u> ? (<i>If too difficult to answer, you can give the amount of money received LAST month, as well as you can remember.</i>)	\$ _____

CORE OUTCOME AREA: EMPLOYMENT

Employment Status

Now I'd like to get some basic information about your work situation. Please answer these questions as accurately as you can as of today.

<p>1. LAST WEEK, did you work for pay at a job (or business), even for as little as one hour?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes [SKIP to question 5] <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to answer</p>
<p>2. LAST WEEK, were you TEMPORARILY absent from a job?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, on vacation, temporary illness, parental leave, other family/personal reasons, bad weather, etc. [SKIP to question 5] <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to answer</p>
<p>3. During the LAST 4 WEEKS, have you been ACTIVELY looking for work? (For example, applying or searching for jobs?)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to answer</p>
<p>4. LAST WEEK, could you have started a job if offered one, or returned to work if recalled?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, could have gone to work [SKIP next question] <input type="checkbox"/> No, because of own temporary illness [SKIP next question] <input type="checkbox"/> No, because of all other reasons (in school, etc.) [SKIP next question]</p>
<p>5. How many hours do you USUALLY work each week?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 30 hours per week or more [SKIP next question] <input type="checkbox"/> 15 to 29 hours per week <input type="checkbox"/> 5 to 14 hours per week <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 5 hours per week <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to answer</p>
<p>6. Do you want a full-time job right now? (Full-time means working at least 30 hours per week.)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to answer</p>
<p>7. Please think about your current or most recent job activity. Describe your chief job activity or business last week. If you had more than one job, describe the one at which you worked the most hours. If you had no job or business last week, give information for your last job or business. (Please select ONE option that best describes your current or most recent job activity.)</p>	<p>PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYEE <input type="checkbox"/> For-profit company or organization <input type="checkbox"/> Non-profit organization (including tax-exempt and charitable organizations) GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE <input type="checkbox"/> Local government (for example: city or county school district) <input type="checkbox"/> State government (including state colleges/universities) <input type="checkbox"/> Active duty U.S. Armed Forces or Commissioned Corps <input type="checkbox"/> Federal government civilian employee SELF-EMPLOYED OR OTHER <input type="checkbox"/> Owner of non-incorporated business, professional practice, or farm <input type="checkbox"/> Owner of incorporated business, professional practice, or farm <input type="checkbox"/> Worked without pay in a for-profit family business or farm for 15 hours or more per week <input type="checkbox"/> Never had a job <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to answer</p>

CORE OUTCOME AREA: SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Mental Health

I'm going to finish up with a series of questions about how you're feeling lately. I am going to read a list of statements. Please listen to each statement carefully. I will then ask you for each statement whether, during the past month, you felt this way never, once or twice, about once a week, 2 or 3 times a week, almost every day, or every day. Give the best answer you can for each.

During the past month, how often did you feel...

	Never	Once or twice	About once a week	2 or 3 times a week	Almost every day	Every day
1. happy						
2. interested in life						
3. satisfied with life						
4. that you had something important to contribute to society						
5. that you belonged to a community (like a social group, your school, or your neighborhood)						
6. that our society is becoming a better place for people like you						
7. that people are basically good						
8. that the way our society works makes sense to you						
9. that you liked most parts of your personality						
10. good at managing responsibilities of your daily life						
11. that you had warm and trusting relationships with others						
12. that you had experiences that challenged you to grow and become a better person						
13. confident to think or express your own ideas and opinions						
14. that your life has a sense of direction or meaning to it						

[*Subscales: 1-3: emotional well-being; 4-8: social well-being; 9-14: psychological well-being]

CORE OUTCOME AREA: SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Youth resilience

Instructions: We are interested in how you feel about the following statements. Read (or listen to) each statement carefully. Using the options provided, indicate how much or how little each statement feels like you.

	Not at all like me	A little like me	Sort of like me	A lot like me	Very much like me
1. I learn from my mistakes.					
2. I believe I will be okay even when bad things happen.					
3. I do a good job of handling problems in my life.					
4. I try new things even if they are hard.					
5. When I have a problem, I come up with ways to solve it.					
6. I give up when things get hard.					
7. I deal with my problems in a positive way (like asking for help).					
8. I keep trying to solve problems even when things don't go my way.					
9. Failure just makes me try harder.					
10. No matter how bad things get, I know the future will be better.					

We have completed the assessment interview. Thank you very much for taking the time to share this information.

MEASURE: Current Housing or Expected Destination

Core Outcome Area: Stable Housing

OVERVIEW

- This measure, currently required of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) grantees serving homeless youth, captures an individual’s current housing situation (or expected destination upon exiting a program). It measures a youth’s housing situation at a snapshot in time. Situations are categorized as temporary situations (some of which are defined by HUD as homelessness), permanent situations, and other situations.

TARGET POPULATION

- Youth and adults

LENGTH & HOW IT IS MEASURED

- 1 item with 37 response options.
- Only one response option (the best fitting) is selected.
- This measure is usually conducted as part of a program or system exit interview. We have adapted it so that it could also be conducted during an intake assessment (baseline) and any time after leaving a program or system (follow-up). It could be administered through an interview or a self-report electronic or paper survey.
- The interviewer can use the youth’s response to select the best option. If needed, the interviewer could alternatively list the options for the youth to select the best option. Additionally, if the interviewer or person inputting information has external information on where a youth stayed, or if they were, for example, deceased or incarcerated, the interviewer or person inputting data could simply record that information directly based on the information they have.
- Available in: English.

DEVELOPER OR SOURCE

- 2017 Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) data standards, modestly adapted by Youth Outcomes Project team.

PSYCHOMETRICS

- None available.

GOOD TO KNOW

- In consultation with HHS, HUD, and other stakeholders, we added a few response options that are likely to be relevant for youth. We also adapted the guidance for the measure so that it could be used at intake (baseline) and follow-up points in addition to program exits.

LEARN MORE

- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). (2017). *HMIS Data Standards Manual*. Washington, D.C.: HUD. Available at: <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HMIS-Data-Standards-Manual-2017.pdf>, accessed on May 1, 2019.

Current Housing Situation or Expected Destination

[If at intake or baseline OR sometime *after* a youth has exited or completed a program:] Where did you stay ***last night?***

[If at program exit:] Where do you expect to stay ***immediately after leaving this program?***

TEMPORARY SITUATIONS

HUD-defined homelessness situation

- Place not meant for human habitation (anywhere outside—such as, street, park, viaduct, and so on—vehicle, abandoned building, vacant unit, train/bus, train/bus station, restaurant or retail establishment)
- Emergency shelter, including hotel or motel paid for with emergency shelter voucher
- Safe Haven
- Moved from one Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) funded project to HOPWA transitional housing
- Transitional housing for homeless persons (including homeless youth)
- Hotel or motel paid for without emergency shelter voucher
- Host homes or other program-arranged temporary housing
- Residential project or halfway house with no homeless criteria

HUD-defined non-homeless temporary situation

- Staying or living with family, temporary tenure (room, apartment, dorm, or house)
- Staying or living with friends, boyfriend, girlfriend, or other significant partner; temporary tenure (room, apartment, dorm, or house)
- Staying or living with a stranger or acquaintance, temporary tenure (room, apartment, dorm, or house)

Institutional situations

- Psychiatric hospital or other psychiatric facility
- Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center
- Psychiatric hospital or other psychiatric facility
- Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center
- Hospital or other residential non-psychiatric medical facility
- Jail, prison, or juvenile detention facility
- Foster home or group home
- Long-term care facility or nursing home

PERMANENT SITUATIONS

Continuum permanent housing projects

- Rental by client (yourself), with rapid rehousing or equivalent subsidy
- Moved from one HOPWA funded project to HOPWA permanent housing
- Permanent housing (other than rapid rehousing (RRH)) for formerly homeless persons

Rent/own with subsidy

- Rental by client (yourself), with Grant and Per Diem Transition in Place (GPD TIP) housing subsidy
- Rental by client (yourself), with Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) housing subsidy
- Rental by client (yourself), with other ongoing housing subsidy
- College housing/dormitory assigned to client
- Owned by client, with ongoing housing subsidy

Rent/own, no subsidy

- Rental by client (yourself), no ongoing housing subsidy
- Owned by client (yourself), no ongoing housing subsidy

Other permanent

- Staying or living with family, permanent tenure
- Staying or living with friends, permanent tenure

OTHER SITUATIONS

Deceased

Other

No exit interview completed

Doesn't know

Refused to answer

Data not collected

MEASURE: Recent Housing Instability

Core Outcome Area: Stable Housing

OVERVIEW

- This measure captures young people’s experiences of housing instability during a one-month period. Given that young people often move in and out of homelessness and housing instability, and between different housing situations, looking at such experiences over a period of time can be helpful.

exposed to potential abuse, trafficking, exploitation, etc.

LEARN MORE

- Morton, M. H., Blondin, M., Chrisler, A., Pufpaff, J., Kull, M. A., Kugley, S., & Elliott, K. (2019). *Measuring Up: Youth-level Outcomes and Measures for System Responses to Youth Homelessness*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

TARGET POPULATION

- Youth and young adults

LENGTH & HOW IT IS MEASURED

- 1 item with 8 response options.
- The respondent selects all response options that apply. If any are selected, the respondent is considered to have experienced recent housing instability.
- Self-report: This measure could be administered through an interview or a self-report electronic or paper survey.
- Available in: English.

DEVELOPER OR SOURCE

- Youth Outcomes Project team.

PSYCHOMETRICS

- None available.

GOOD TO KNOW

- This measure asks whether someone stayed in a particular housing situation, like couch surfing or staying in a hotel, because they lacked a safe and permanent place to stay. This is because the reason for staying in such situations is important to determining whether that situation reflects housing instability (some people couch surf or stay in a hotel for reasons other than lacking a safe and permanent place to stay). Systems and programs might also want to consider integrating other measures or questions about whether the situation itself is unsafe in order to identify youth

Recent Housing Instability

Instructions: We would like to understand your recent housing situation. Thinking about the **LAST 30 DAYS**, have you experienced any of the following sleeping situations **BECAUSE** you didn't have a safe or permanent place to stay? (Select **ALL** that apply.)

- Sleeping outside, in a vehicle, or somewhere not meant for sleeping (for example: a park, abandoned building, bus station, 24-hour restaurant, laundromat, and the like)
- Sleeping in a hotel, motel, or hostel
- Sleeping in an emergency or homelessness shelter
- Couch surfing or staying at someone else's place temporarily
- Sleeping anywhere else BECAUSE you didn't have a safe or permanent place to stay (for example: an emergency room, jail, or detention facility, and the like)
- None of the above; I have not experienced any housing instability during the last 30 days (please do not select any other options)
- Don't know (please do not select any other options)
- Refuse to answer (please do not select any other options)

Core Outcome Area: *Permanent Connections*

OVERVIEW

- This measure assesses how connected youth feel to people and society. It is important for youth to have people in their lives who matter to them and to whom they matter. The measure includes questions about different types and sources of support and connection.

TARGET POPULATION

- Youth and young adults, ages 12 to 26.

LENGTH & HOW IT IS MEASURED

- 17 items
- Items are measured on a 5-point scale from 1 (not at all like me) to 5 (very much like me).
- Responses are summed up to produce a total score.
- Self-report: This measure could be administered through an interview or a self-report electronic or paper survey.
- Available in: English

DEVELOPER OR SOURCE

- This measure is part of the Youth Thrive™ Survey developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP).

PSYCHOMETRICS

- Items were adapted from extant validated instruments and retested for internal consistency, reliability, and validity with youth and young adults, ages 12 to 26, with satisfactory results.
- The consultation and validation samples were intentionally overrepresented by youth of color, systems-involved youth, and LGBTQ-identifying youth.

GOOD TO KNOW

- There are currently no score thresholds or ranges provided by the developers that indicate high or low levels of social connections. Systems and programs should focus on progress over time.

They might also consider examining how specific young people fare relative to a broader pool of young people taking the survey in the organization or community until more broadly normed data are made available.

- Organizations and systems using this measure could consider asking youth to complete the full [web-based Youth Thrive™ survey](#), which includes four additional measures of youth thriving and takes less than 15 minutes to complete.

LEARN MORE

- Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP). (2018). Youth Thrive™ Survey. Washington, D.C.: CSSP. Available at: <https://cssp.org/our-work/project/youth-thrive#survey-instrument>, accessed on May 1, 2019.

Social Connections

Instructions: We are interested in how you feel about the following statements. Read (or listen to) each statement carefully. Using the options provided, indicate how much or how little each statement feels like you.

	Not all like me (1)	A little like me (2)	Sort of like me (3)	A lot like me (4)	Very much like me (5)
1. There are people in my life who encourage me to do my best.					
2. I have someone who I can share my feelings and ideas with.					
3. I have someone in my life who I look up to.					
4. I have someone in my life who doesn't judge me.					
5. I feel lonely.					
6. I have someone I can count on for help when I need it.					
7. I have someone who supports me in developing my interests and strengths.					
8. I have a friend or family member to spend time with on holidays and special occasions.					
9. I know for sure that someone really cares about me.					
10. I have someone in my life who is proud of me.					
11. There is an adult family member who is there for me when I need them (for example, my birth or adoptive parent, spouse, adult sibling, extended family member, legal guardian, non-biological chosen family).					
12. There is an adult, other than a family member, who is there for me when I need them.					
13. I have friends who stand by me during hard times.					
14. I feel that no one loves me.					
15. My spiritual or religious beliefs give me hope when bad things happen.					
16. I try to help other people when I can.					
17. I do things to make the world a better place like volunteering, recycling, or community service.					

Core Outcome Area: Education and employment

OVERVIEW

- This measure assesses whether someone is enrolled in school or an educational course and attending regularly.

TARGET POPULATION

- Youth and adults

LENGTH & HOW IT IS MEASURED

- 1 item with 3 response options
- Only one response option (the best fitting) is selected.
- Self-report: This measure could be administered through an interview or a self-report electronic or paper survey.
- Available in: English

DEVELOPER OR SOURCE

- Youth Outcomes Project team.

PSYCHOMETRICS

- None available.

GOOD TO KNOW

- The concept of “attending regularly” is included because young people felt that simply being enrolled in school or a course is not sufficiently meaningful. Because regular attendance can look different for different educational programs, levels, and courses, it is up to the young person to decide whether they are attending regularly. The intention is to capture whether the young person is actively engaged in school or education, rather than enrolled but effectively inactive.

LEARN MORE

- Morton, M. H., Blondin, M., Chrisler, A., Pufpaff, J., Kull, M. A., Kugley, S., & Elliott, K. (2019). *Measuring Up: Youth-level Outcomes and Measures for System Responses to Youth Homelessness*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

Educational Enrollment & Attendance

Instructions: We would like to understand your **CURRENT** status with education or training. This question applies to school, college, a GED course, trade school, vocational training, or any other type of formal education or training course that involves a diploma, degree, credential, or certificate at the end.

Which of the following **BEST** describes your education status right now? (Select one option.)

- NOT currently enrolled in any school or educational course
- Currently enrolled but NOT attending regularly (when school or the course is in session)
- Currently enrolled **and** attending regularly (when school or the course is in session)

MEASURE: Educational Attainment

Core Outcome Area: Education and employment

OVERVIEW

- This measure captures the highest level of education completed by an individual. It can be used to track progress in educational attainment.

TARGET POPULATION

- Youth and adults

LENGTH & HOW IT IS MEASURED

- 1 item with 18 response options.
- Only one response option (the best fitting) is selected.

PSYCHOMETRICS

- Before a question is added to the ACS, it is reviewed by more than 30 Federal agencies through an interagency committee review process, and it is then subject to over two years of content testing. Content testing involves the collection and analysis of data on the quality of the responses to the question, looking at a range of indicators. At the same time, we are unaware of documented validity or reliability studies for this measure. Formal and published psychometric testing of educational attainment measures is generally rare.

GOOD TO KNOW

- *Adaptation:* In consultation with youth and subject matter experts, we added response options for vocational and certificate courses.

LEARN MORE

- U.S. Census Bureau. “Methodology: American Community Survey (ACS).” Available at: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/methodology.html>, accessed on May 1, 2019.
- This measure could be administered through an interview or a self-report electronic or paper

survey. Another person, such as a social worker, with knowledge of, or information on, the young person’s situation might also be able to complete this measure on the young person’s behalf.

- Available in: English.

DEVELOPER OR SOURCE

- U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey.

Educational Attainment

Instructions: What is the highest degree or level of school you have COMPLETED? Select ONE option. If currently enrolled, select the previous grade or highest degree received.

Through grade 12
<input type="checkbox"/> Under 8 th grade <input type="checkbox"/> 8 th grade <input type="checkbox"/> 9 th grade <input type="checkbox"/> 10 th grade <input type="checkbox"/> 11 th grade <input type="checkbox"/> 12 th grade – NO DIPLOMA
High school graduate
<input type="checkbox"/> Regular high school diploma <input type="checkbox"/> GED or alternative credential
Vocational training or trade school
<input type="checkbox"/> Some vocational training or trade school, no credential or certificate <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational training or trade school, received credential or certificate <input type="checkbox"/> Certificate program
College or some college
<input type="checkbox"/> Some college credit, but less than 1 year of college credit <input type="checkbox"/> 1 or more years of college credit, no degree <input type="checkbox"/> Associate's degree (<i>for example: AA, AS</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's degree (<i>for example: BA, BS</i>)
After bachelor's degree
<input type="checkbox"/> Master's degree (<i>for example: MA, MS, MEng, Med, MSW, MBA</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Professional degree beyond a bachelor's degree (<i>for example: MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate degree (<i>for example: PhD, EdD</i>)

MEASURE: Income

Core Outcome Area: Education and employment

OVERVIEW

- This measure captures monthly income. Young people said it isn't enough to have a job. It's the quality of, and income associated with, a job that matters for helping young people achieve sustainable housing stability.

TARGET POPULATION

- Youth and adults

LENGTH & HOW IT IS MEASURED

- 5 items with yes/no or numeric (dollar amount) response options.
- This measure captures information on the amount of monthly income from two general sources (if applicable for the youth): *earned income* (from formal or informal employment, self-employment, or business ownership) and *any other source* (e.g., public assistance, stipends, disability, panhandling, friends or family, etc.).
- If the respondent has difficulty determining the monthly income amount, the interviewer can help him/her calculate the approximate amount currently earned in a month (for example, by summing up the total income received over the last four weeks).
- This measure could be administered through an interview or a self-report electronic or paper survey.
- Available in: English.

DEVELOPER OR SOURCE

- 2017 Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) data standards, adapted by Youth Outcomes Project team.

PSYCHOMETRICS

- None available

GOOD TO KNOW

- We used the same measurement approach that is in the HMIS data standards, and the aggregate

amounts would be comparable to HMIS data (i.e., for earned income, all other income, and for total income). However, we reduced the number of subcategories for types of income, several of which would typically not apply to youth. So this adaptation of the measure would not provide as much detailed income breakdown or take as much time to administer. If a program is already collecting income information for RHY-HMIS, it could simply continue to use that information rather than doing this one also.

LEARN MORE

- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). (2017). *HMIS Data Standards Manual*. Washington, D.C.: HUD. Available at: <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HMIS-Data-Standards-Manual-2017.pdf>, accessed on May 1, 2019.

Income

Instructions: We are interested in some basic information about your recent income. Please answer these questions as accurately as you can as of today.

1. Do you currently receive income from <u>any</u> source? <i>(This does not include any income source that has been terminated.)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> No [SKIP remaining income questions] <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to answer
2. Do you currently receive <u>earned income</u> from a job or business you own? <i>(In other words, income from employment, such as wages, salary, or self-employment.)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> No [SKIP next question] <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to answer
3. What is the current amount of money you receive monthly from <u>earned income</u> ? <i>(If too difficult to answer, you can give the amount of money received LAST month, as well as you can remember.)</i>	\$_____
4. Do you currently receive <u>income from any other source</u> ? <i>(For example, from public assistance, stipends, disability, panhandling, friends or family, etc.)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> No [SKIP next question] <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to answer
5. What is the current amount of money you receive monthly from <u>other sources</u> ? <i>(If too difficult to answer, you can give the amount of money received LAST month, as well as you can remember.)</i>	\$_____

MEASURE: Employment Status

Core Outcome Area: Education and employment

OVERVIEW

- This measure captures information on an individual's current employment status. It assesses whether someone's status is employed (full-time or part-time, wage/salary employment or self-employment), unemployed (not working but seeking work), or not participating in the labor force (not working and not seeking work).

TARGET POPULATION

- Working-age population

LENGTH & HOW IT IS MEASURED

- 7 items with yes/no or multiple choice options.
- Answers to these employment questions can include either formal or informal employment (for example, with or without a contract for wage employment, or with or without an incorporated business for self-employment).
- Status is **employed** if the response to (1) or (2) is "yes;" **unemployed** if (1) or (2) is "no," (3) is "yes," and (4) is "yes;" and **not participating in the labor force** if (1) and (2) is "no," (3) is "no," or (4) is "no." Part-time employment is typically considered working fewer than 30 hours per week.
- This measure could be administered through an interview or a self-report electronic or paper survey.
- Available in: English and Spanish.

DEVELOPER OR SOURCE

- U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey.

PSYCHOMETRICS

- Before a question is added to the ACS, it is reviewed by more than 30 Federal agencies through an interagency committee review process, and it is then subject to over two years of content testing. Content testing involves the collection and analysis of data on the quality of the responses to the question,

looking at a range of indicators. At the same time, we are unaware of documented validity or reliability studies for this measure.

GOOD TO KNOW

- Adaptation:* We added a question on whether the respondent wants a full-time job, omitted some broader information on employment and income that ACS captures, added a response option (never had a job) to item 6. Unlike ACS, we also did not anchor item (4) to the last 12 months.
- If the respondent says "don't know" or has difficulty determining the number of hours worked in the last 7 days, the interviewer can help them calculate the 'approximate' number of hours USUALLY worked each week. For example, you could ask them, "About how many days do you work in a typical week? AND about how many hours do you work in a typical day?" You can then approximate the number of hours typically worked in a week.

LEARN MORE

- U.S. Census Bureau. "Methodology: American Community Survey (ACS)." Available at: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/methodology/questionnaire-archive.html>, accessed on May 1, 2019.
- U.S. Census Bureau. "American Community Survey: 2017 Subject Definitions." Available at: https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/tech_docs/subject_definitions/2017_ACSSubjectDefinitions.pdf?#, accessed on May 1, 2019.

Employment Status

Instructions: These questions are about work. Please answer these questions about your work situation as accurately as you can.

<p>1. LAST WEEK, did you work for pay at a job (or business), even for as little as one hour?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes [SKIP to question 5] <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to answer</p>
<p>2. LAST WEEK, were you TEMPORARILY absent from a job?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, on vacation, temporary illness, parental leave, other family/personal reasons, bad weather, etc. [SKIP to question 5] <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to answer</p>
<p>3. During the LAST 4 WEEKS, have you been ACTIVELY looking for work? (For example, applying or searching for jobs?)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to answer</p>
<p>4. LAST WEEK, could you have started a job if offered one, or returned to work if recalled?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, could have gone to work [SKIP next question] <input type="checkbox"/> No, because of own temporary illness [SKIP next question] <input type="checkbox"/> No, because of all other reasons (in school, etc.) [SKIP next question]</p>
<p>5. How many hours do you USUALLY work each week?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 30 hours per week or more [SKIP next question] <input type="checkbox"/> 15 to 29 hours per week <input type="checkbox"/> 5 to 14 hours per week <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 5 hours per week <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to answer</p>
<p>6. Do you want a full-time job right now? (Full-time means working at least 30 hours per week.)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to answer</p>
<p>7. Please think about your current or most recent job activity. Describe your chief job activity or business last week. If you had more than one job, describe the one at which you worked the most hours. If you had no job or business last week, give information for your last job or business. (Please select ONE option that best describes your current or most recent job activity.)</p>	<p>PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYEE <input type="checkbox"/> For-profit company or organization <input type="checkbox"/> Non-profit organization (including tax-exempt and charitable organizations) GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE <input type="checkbox"/> Local government (for example: city or county school district) <input type="checkbox"/> State government (including state colleges/universities) <input type="checkbox"/> Active duty U.S. Armed Forces or Commissioned Corps <input type="checkbox"/> Federal government civilian employee SELF-EMPLOYED OR OTHER <input type="checkbox"/> Owner of non-incorporated business, professional practice, or farm <input type="checkbox"/> Owner of incorporated business, professional practice, or farm <input type="checkbox"/> Worked without pay in a for-profit family business or farm for 15 hours or more per week <input type="checkbox"/> Never had a job <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to answer</p>

MEASURE: Mental Health

Core Outcome Area: Social-emotional well-being

OVERVIEW

- This measure reflects a strengths-based approach to assessing mental health. The measure assesses emotional, psychological, and social aspects of well-being in order to classify respondents' mental health as:
 - 1) Flourishing (high positive emotions and functioning)
 - 2) Languishing (low positive emotions and functioning)
 - 3) Moderate (neither flourishing nor languishing)

TARGET POPULATION

- Youth and young adults, ages 12 to 26.

LENGTH & HOW IT IS MEASURED

- 14 items, 3 subscales
- Subscales: 1-3: emotional well-being; 4-8: social well-being; 9-14: psychological well-being.
- Items are measured on a 6-point scale from 1 (never) to 6 (every day).
- Scoring: *Flourishing*: Individuals must report that they experience 'everyday' or 'almost every day' at least seven of the symptoms, where one of the symptoms is from the emotional well-being cluster. *Languishing*: individuals must report that they 'never' or 'once or twice' experienced at least seven of the symptoms, where one of the symptoms is from the emotional well-being cluster. *Moderately mentally healthy*: Individuals who do not fit the criteria for flourishing or languishing.
- Self-report: This measure could be administered through an interview or a self-report electronic or paper survey.
- Available in: English, French, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Dutch, Norwegian, Swedish, & Finish.

DEVELOPER OR SOURCE

- Keys et al. (2002)

PSYCHOMETRICS

- This measure has been subject to formal validity (discriminant validity) and reliability (internal

consistency and test-re-test) testing and shown satisfactory results.

- Psychometrics have held up across a range of cultural contexts and with adolescents—although we are unaware of specific psychometric testing of the instrument for vulnerable or minority youth in the U.S.

GOOD TO KNOW

- The long form includes 40 items.

LEARN MORE

- Keyes, C. L. (2002). The mental health continuum: From languishing to flourishing in life. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 207-222.
- Lamers, S. M., Westerhof, G. J., Bohlmeijer, E. T., ten Klooster, P. M., & Keyes, C. L. (2011). Evaluating the psychometric properties of the mental health continuum-short form (MHC-SF). *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 67(1), 99-110.
- Keyes, C. L. (2006). Mental health in adolescence: Is America's youth flourishing?. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 76(3), 395-402.

Mental Health Continuum—Short Form (MHC-SF)

Instructions: I am going to read a list of statements. Please listen to each statement carefully. I will then ask you for each statement whether, during the past month, you felt this way never, once or twice, about once a week, 2 or 3 times a week, almost every day, or every day. Give the best answer you can for each.

During the past month, how often did you feel...

	Never (1)	Once or twice (2)	About once a week (3)	2 or 3 times a week (4)	Almost every day (5)	Every day (6)
1. happy						
2. interested in life						
3. satisfied with life						
4. that you had something important to contribute to society						
5. that you belonged to a community (like a social group, your school, or your neighborhood)						
6. that our society is becoming a better place for people like you						
7. that people are basically good						
8. that the way our society works makes sense to you						
9. that you liked most parts of your personality						
10. good at managing responsibilities of your daily life						
11. that you had warm and trusting relationships with others						
12. that you had experiences that challenged you to grow and become a better person						
13. confident to think or express your own ideas and opinions						
14. that your life has a sense of direction or meaning to it						

MEASURE: Youth Resilience

Core Outcome Area: Social-Emotional Well-Being

OVERVIEW

- Resilience is youths' power to meet life's challenges, giving them the ability to manage stress, function in their daily lives, and "bounce forward" when faced with adversity or trauma.

TARGET POPULATION

- Youth and young adults, ages 12 to 26.

LENGTH & HOW IT IS MEASURED

- 10 items
- Items are measured on a 5-point scale from 1 (not at all like me) to 5 (very much like me).
- Responses are summed up to produce a total score.
- Self-report: This measure could be administered through an interview or a self-report electronic or paper survey.
- Available in: English

DEVELOPER OR SOURCE

- This measure is part of the Youth Thrive™ Survey developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP).

PSYCHOMETRICS

- Items were adapted from extant validated instruments and retested for internal consistency, reliability, and validity with youth and young adults, ages 12 to 26, with satisfactory results.
- The consultation and validation samples were intentionally overrepresented by youth of color, systems-involved youth, and LGBTQ-identifying youth.

GOOD TO KNOW

- There are currently no score thresholds or ranges provided by the developers that indicate high or low levels of social connections. Systems and programs should focus on progress over time. They might also consider examining how specific

young people fare relative to a broader pool of young people taking the survey in the organization or community until more broadly normed data are made available.

- Organizations and systems using this measure could consider asking youth to complete the full [web-based Youth Thrive™ survey](#), which includes four additional measures of youth thriving and takes less than 15 minutes to complete.

LEARN MORE

- Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP). (2018). Youth Thrive™ Survey. Washington, D.C.: CSSP. Available at: <https://cssp.org/our-work/project/youth-thrive#survey-instrument>, accessed on May 1, 2019.

Youth Resilience

Instructions: We are interested in how you feel about the following statements. Read (or listen to) each statement carefully. Using the options provided, indicate how much or how little each statement feels like you.

	Not all like me (1)	A little like me (2)	Sort of like me (3)	A lot like me (4)	Very much like me (5)
1. I learn from my mistakes.					
2. I believe I will be okay even when bad things happen.					
3. I do a good job of handling problems in my life.					
4. I try new things even if they are hard.					
5. When I have a problem, I come up with ways to solve it.					
6. I give up when things get hard.					
7. I deal with my problems in a positive way (like asking for help).					
8. I keep trying to solve problems even when things don't go my way.					
9. Failure just makes me try harder.					
10. No matter how bad things get, I know the future will be better.					

MEASURE: Psychological Distress

Core Outcome Area: Social-emotional well-being

OVERVIEW

- The Kessler-6 (K6) scale is designed to screen for cases of serious mental illness.

TARGET POPULATION

- Youth and adults

LENGTH & HOW IT IS MEASURED

- 6 items
- Items are measured on a 5-point scale from 0 (none of the time) to 4 (all of the time).
- Responses are summed up to produce a total score.
- Research suggests that a score of 13+ on the K6 is the optimal threshold for assessing for severe mental illness, and 5+ for moderate mental illness (Prochaska et al., 2012).
- Self-report: This measure could be administered through an interview or a self-report electronic or paper survey.
- Available in: [16 languages](#)

DEVELOPER OR SOURCE

- Kessler et al. (2003)

PSYCHOMETRICS

- This is one of the most widely used and validated mental health screening instruments available in the U.S. and internationally.
- Its validity and reliability are well documented by multiple studies in an array of contexts, and scale properties have shown to be stable with racial and ethnic minority sub-samples of large surveys.

GOOD TO KNOW

- There is also a Kessler-10 (K10) 10-item version, which includes the same items as the K6 plus four additional items for further sensitivity to differentiate between degrees of mental illness.

However, the K6 is a shorter and still valid option for screening and outcome measurement.

- The [full instrument](#) also includes additional questions to support clinical assessments and service planning, but we only include the items here that would be used for scoring and outcome measurement purposes.

LEARN MORE

- Kessler, R.C., Barker, P.R., Colpe, L.J., Epstein, J.F., Gfroerer, J.C., Hiripi, E., Howes, M.J., Normand, S-L.T., Manderscheid, R.W., Walters, E.E., Zaslavsky, A.M. (2003). Screening for serious mental illness in the general population. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 60(2), 184-189.
- Prochaska, J. J., Sung, H. Y., Max, W., Shi, Y., & Ong, M. (2012). Validity study of the K6 scale as a measure of moderate mental distress based on mental health treatment need and utilization. *International Journal of Methods in Psychiatric Research*, 21(2), 88-97. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mpr.1349>
- K10 and K6 Scales website at: https://www.hcp.med.harvard.edu/ncs/k6_scales.php.

Psychological Distress Kessler-6 (K6)

Instructions: The following questions ask about how you have been feeling during the past 30 days. For each question, please select the option that best describes how often you had this feeling.

During that month, how often did you feel...

	None of the time (0)	A little of the time (1)	Some of the time (2)	Most of the time (3)	All of the time (4)
1) nervous?					
2) hopeless?					
3) restless or fidgety?					
4) so depressed that nothing could cheer you up?					
5) that everything was an effort?					
6) worthless?					

¹ Morton, M.H., Dworsky, A., & Samuels, G.M. (2017). *Missed opportunities: Youth homelessness in America. National estimates*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. ([Back to Page](#))

² Validity refers to the credibility of the data—in other words, that the measure accurately captures what it is meant to capture. Reliability refers to the repeatability of the data—in other words, if the measure were to be implemented at a slightly different time or administered by a different person or method, the information collected would be consistent. Notably, measures must be reliable to be valid. Without evidence of a measure's validity and reliability, it is difficult to fully trust the information collected using specific measures. ([Back to Page](#))

³ Wilderson, D., Mouseau, H., Buren, E. V., & Jamarillo, A. J. (n.d.). *The West Coast Convening Framework: A Practical Guide to Outcomes Measurement for Programs Serving Youth and Young Adults Experiencing Homelessness*. Retrieved from <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56fb3022d210b891156b3948/t/5aa98ff524a694c63a711796/1521061879620/WCC+Framework+-+Guide+to+Outcomes+Measurement+FINAL.pdf> ([Back to Page](#))

⁴ Tsemberis, S., McHugo, G., Williams, V., Hanrahan, P., & Stefancic, A. (2007). *Measuring homelessness and residential stability: The residential timeline follow back inventory*. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 35(1), 29-42. ([Back to Page](#))

⁵ Kozloff, N., Adair, C. E., Lazgare, L. I. P., Poremski, D., Cheung, A. H., Sandu, R., & Stergiopoulos, V. (2016). "Housing first" for homeless youth with mental illness. *Pediatrics*, 138(4), e20161514. ([Back to Page](#))

⁶ Tsemberis, S., McHugo, G., Williams, V., Hanrahan, P., & Stefancic, A. (2007). *Measuring homelessness and residential stability: The residential time line follow back inventory*. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 35(1), 29-42. ([Back to Page](#))

⁷ Wright, E. R., Attell, B. K., & Ruel, E. (2017). *Social support networks and the mental health of runaway and homeless youth*. *Social Sciences*, 6(4), 117. ([Back to Page](#))

⁸ Johnson, G., & Chamberlain, C. (2008). *From youth to adult homelessness*. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 43(4), 563-582. ([Back to Page](#))

⁹ Semanchin Jones, Annette & LaLiberte, Traci, 2013. "Measuring youth connections: A component of relational permanence for foster youth," *Children and Youth Services Review*, Elsevier, vol. 35(3), pages 509-517. ([Back to Page](#))

¹⁰ Semanchin Jones, Annette & LaLiberte, Traci, 2013. "Measuring youth connections: A component of relational permanence for foster youth," *Children and Youth Services Review*, Elsevier, vol. 35(3), pages 509-517. ([Back to Page](#))

¹¹ Busch-Geertsema, V. (2014). *Housing first Europe—results of a European social experimentation project*. *European Journal of Homelessness*, 8(1).; Tsai, J., Mares, A. S., & Rosenheck, R. A. (2012). *Does housing chronically homeless adults lead to social integration?* *Psychiatric Services*, 63(5), 427-434.; Kirst, M., Zerger, S., Harris, D. W., Plenert, E., & Stergiopoulos, V. (2014). *The promise of recovery: narratives of hope among homeless individuals with mental illness participating in a Housing First randomised controlled trial in Toronto, Canada*. *BMJ open*, 4(3), e004379. ([Back to Page](#))

¹² <https://cascw.umn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/YCSImplementation.pdf> ([Back to Page](#))

¹³ Morton, M. H., Dworsky, A., Matjasko, J. L., Curry, S. R., Schlueter, D., Chávez, R., & Farrell, A. F. (2018). *Prevalence and correlates of youth homelessness in the United States*. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 62(1), 14-21. ([Back to Page](#))

¹⁴ Strauss, H., & De la Maisonnette, C. (2009). *The wage premium on tertiary education: New estimates for 21 OECD countries*; Burbidge, J. B., Magee, L., & Robb, A. L. (2002). *The education premium in Canada and the United States*. *Canadian Public Policy/Analyse de politiques*, 203-217. ([Back to Page](#))

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