

Linking Assessment Tools to Housing and Outcomes for Youth

Eric Rice, PhD

Policy Recommendations

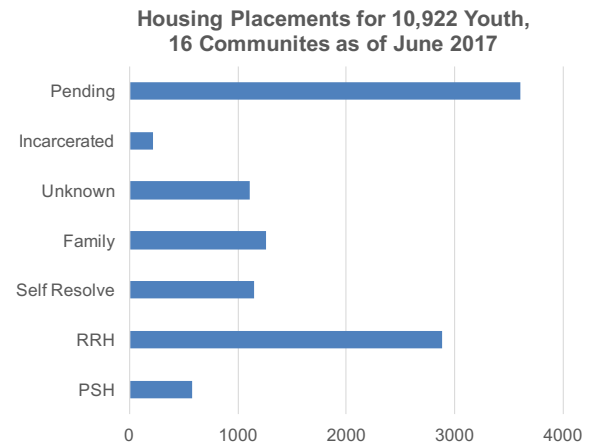
1. Use the TAY-VI-SPDAT: Next Step Tool for Homeless Youth (NST) to assess vulnerability.
2. PSH is effective for almost any youth, regardless of NST score.
3. Rapid rehousing (RRH) can be an effective solution for youth who score up to 10.
4. 66% of youth who score less than 4 successfully self-resolve or return home. Family reunification and other case management services appear sufficient for many.
5. More experimentation with rapid rehousing for higher scoring youth is needed.

Context

Voices of Youth Count suggests that youth homelessness has reached an epidemic level in the United States. One in thirty teens 13-17 and one in ten youth age 18 to 24 experience at least one night of homelessness each year, amounting to 4.2 million persons a year. Many communities have attempted to address this problem by creating coordinated community responses, typically referred to as Coordinated Entry Systems. In such systems, most agencies within a community pool their housing resources in a centralized system. Youth seeking housing are first assessed for eligibility and vulnerability. The most widely adopted tool for assessing youth vulnerability is the TAY-VI-SPDAT: Next step tool for homeless youth (NST), which was developed by OrgCode Consulting, CSH, Community Solutions, and Eric Rice. This brief summarizes new evidence that suggests the NST is highly effective in identifying youth who are in need of housing. High scoring youth who are given housing resources are highly likely to succeed in housing programs, but without such intervention are likely to remain homeless.

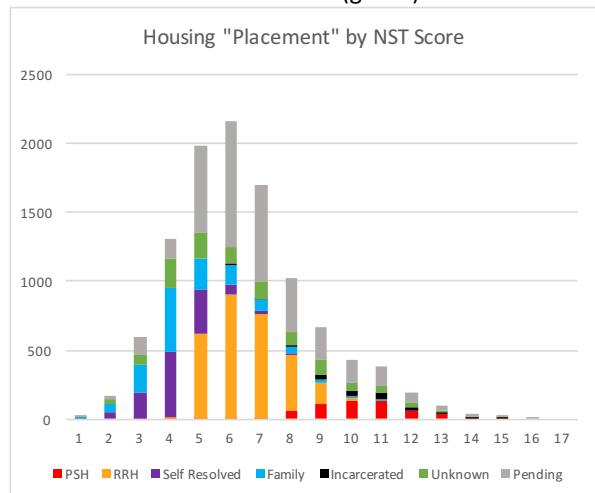
Data and Methods

Administrative data from the HMIS on 10,922 youth in 16 communities were downloaded and de-identified by Iain De Jonge and OrgCode. Analyses were conducted by Eric Rice. These data include four key housing outcomes: rapid rehousing (RRH), permanent supportive housing (PSH), returning to family, and self-resolving. Stable housing is defined by NOT returning to the HMIS system after an exit from housing or remaining in the housing intervention in question at the close of data collection in May 2017.



Results

Low Scoring Youth: 793 youth scored 1-3. 522 (66%) of these youth either self-resolved (purple) or returned home (blue) and only 20 of those youth returned to homelessness during the period observed. 160 youth are still awaiting housing (gray) and 111 were lost to their CES (green).



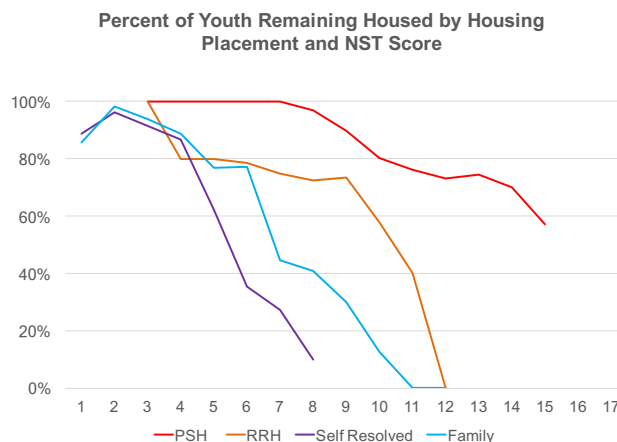
Housing Placements: With a small number of exceptions, communities are not placing youth with NST scores lower than 8 in PSH (in red). Most communities are using RRH to house those who

score from 3 to 9 (in orange). Only 25 of the 10,922 youth who scored 10 or higher were placed in RRH.

NST and Outcomes: As NST score increased the number of youth who successfully remain housed goes down. That is to say, higher scoring youth are more likely to return to homelessness.

NST and PSH Outcomes: PSH appears to be a highly effective housing model for youth even with high NST scores, 70% of youth who scored a 14 remained stably housed in PSH. 100% of the 16 youth with scores less than 8 who received PSH remained stably housed. *PSH appears to work better across all NST scores than RRH.*

NST and RRH Outcomes: 80% of youth scoring 4 remained stably housed, this number only drops to 73% at scores of 9. RRH for youth scoring 10 is effective as 57% of the 19 youth who scored 10 were retained. Only 6 youth with scores greater than 10 were observed and data the results are inconclusive.



Family Outcomes: Of the youth who returned home, approximately 90% of those who scored 4 or less remained stably housed; 80% of youth scoring 5-6 who returned home remained stable. At scores of 7, only 45% remain stable and this drops to 0% by 12.

Self-Resolving Outcomes: Those who scored 4 or less were extremely likely to remain stable (90% or better) if they self-resolved. 62% of youth scoring 5, 35% of youth scoring 6, 27% of those scoring 7, and 10% of those scoring 8 remained stably housed if self-resolving was their initial exit.

Limitations and Caveats

- (1) Stable housing outcomes are identified by youth either still being in a program or exiting to a stable housing situation and NOT subsequently returning to HMIS. Youth who become homeless again but do not return to shelter services or other services that use were not recorded as failures
- (2) These results do not report for how long youth were retained in housing – length of stay could be 1 day or up to 2 years. We have new data and will be looking into this issue.
- (3) We should be cautious to not make decisions about RRH for those who score 10 or higher until more data is available. It may or may not work.
- (4) No information about the quality of services is recorded in these data.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Iain De Jonge for providing the data. Thanks to Matthew Morton, Megan Blondin and Megan Gibbard-Kline for asking so many tough questions and helping me interpret the data. Thanks to Hau Chan, Phebe Vayanos, Milind Tambe and Matthew Morton who helped write a paper that informed this brief.

References for further Reading

- Voices of Youth Count national estimates available here: <http://voicesofyouthcount.org/brief/national-estimates-of-youth-homelessness>
- OrgCode TAY-VI-SPDAT available here: <http://www.csh.org/2015/06/orgcode-community-solutions-csh-launch-next-step-tool-for-youth>
- Chan, H., Rice, E., Vayanos, P., Tambe, M., & Morton, M. (2017). Evidence from the Past: AI Decision Aids to Improve Housing Systems for Homeless Youth. Available here: http://teamcore.usc.edu/papers/2017/current_housing.pdf
- Rice, E. (2018). Assessment Tools for Prioritizing Housing Resources for Youth Who are Homeless. available here: <http://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/Ch4-1-MentalHealthBook.pdf>

This work is a part of the USC Center for Artificial Intelligence in Society
USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work and USC Viterbi School of Engineering
Visit us at: cais.usc.edu