



BrainGain@PEC

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BrainGain@PEC provides brief summaries of research or publications on family homelessness and related issues. Previous issues of BrainGain@PEC can be found at <http://bit.ly/2iaczvQ>.

Linking Homelessness Vulnerability Assessments to Housing Placements and Outcomes for Youth

This report is the “first comprehensive and rigorous evaluation of the connection between vulnerability scores, housing placement (of youth/young adults who experience homelessness), and stability of housing outcomes.”

PEC is summarizing the report in hopes that local stakeholders will become interested in reading the complete report and understand the importance of this research document. This summary does not represent the complete report, which [can be read here](#).

In Philadelphia, 523 young persons age 13-17 experienced homelessness while enrolled in the School District of Philadelphiaⁱ, and 445 young persons age 13-17 slept at least one night in emergency housing and reported in the City’s Homeless Management Information Services databaseⁱⁱ. Philadelphia has few housing resources for the number of young people who experience homelessness. This is a national challenge, resulting in the utilization of a ‘vulnerability’ score that serves as a **triaging** mechanism that aids in determining who gets housing and who does not.

In sum, this report shows that:

- “High vulnerability scores were associated with higher odds of continued homelessness without housing intervention, suggesting the vulnerability tool used is effective in predicting youth that need to be prioritized for housing services in the context of limited resources.”
- “The majority of low-scoring youth appear to return home or self-resolve and remain stably exited from homelessness.”
- “Youth with vulnerability scores of up to 10 who were placed in rapid rehousing (RRH) also had low returns to homelessness, but success was much more variable for higher-scoring youth.”

- Youth placed in permanent support housing (PSH) had low recorded returns to homelessness, regardless of their score.

Background:

The analysis sought to understand:

- how communities are using risk assessment scores to link youth with different types of housing and support services;
- which youth were most likely to remain homeless without support;
- and which were most likely to return to homelessness systems after exiting.

The preferred tool for assessing youth vulnerability is the “Transition Age Youth-Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (TAY-VI-SPDAT): Next Step Tool (NST) for youth who experience homelessness. The NET is a set of 28 multiple-choice questions collecting a youth’s housing and homelessness risks, wellness, and other categories.

Youth responses are scored 0-17. The higher the score, the higher the vulnerability. The NET is generally given at intake. Youth who score 0-3 are recommended that no moderate or high-intensity services be provided at that time. Youth who score 4 to 7 are recommended to time-limited housing supports, if available. For youth scoring 8 or higher, the tool recommends assessment for long-term housing with high service intensity.

Methodology and data analysis: Readers are encouraged to fully understand the methodology, which is not provided here. In sum, the data set examined 10,922 youth from 16 communities during a two year period beginning in 2015. Numerous variables were viewed, including demographics and exits from homelessness. A sample of the demographic data shows:

- 30.2 percent were under age 18
- 47.7 percent were White, followed by 31 percent as Black, and 15.2 percent as Hispanic
- 30.4 percent identified as LGBQQI2
- 66.7 percent were from urban areas
- 65.8 percent slept most frequently in shelters, followed by 13.8 percent transitional housing, followed by 14.1 percent in a car, a couch or outdoors.

A sample of Results include: [show graphs]

- 88.8 percent were stably exited for at least 180 days following their first exit from homelessness in the categories provided, Self-Resolved, Family, PSH, RRH, Pending (youth waiting for housing), Unknown, and Incarcerated.
- Youth who scored 8 and 9 and who were given RRH did not reenter the homelessness system for at least 180 days.
- Family exits appear to be more successful for lower scoring youth

- The report reflects data on how the scoring system maps into actual exits, which suggests the availability of resources as a third of youth were waiting for housing or were lost from the system.
- As scores increase, the number of youth who successfully remain housed for 180 or more days decreased.
- Readers are encouraged to understand the multivariate logistic regression models of stable exits for specific variables, i.e., exits to family, demographics, trauma history, and others.

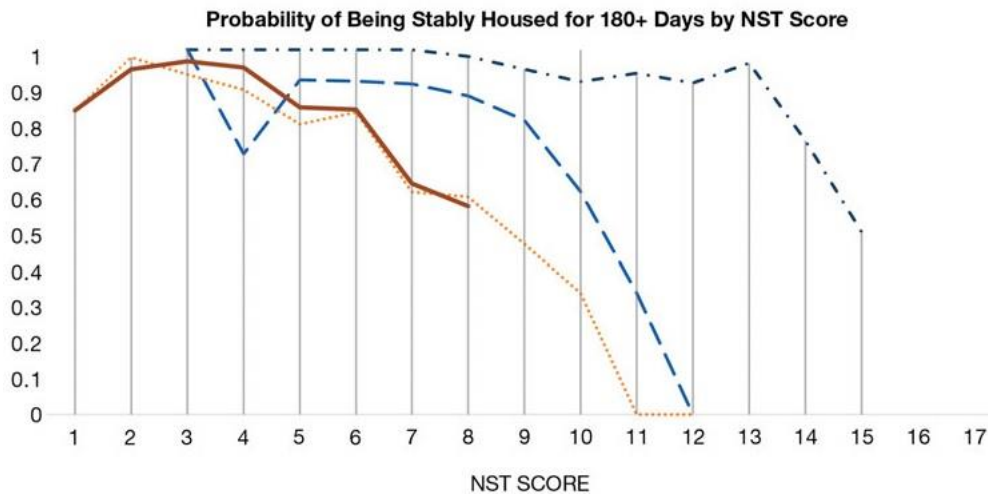
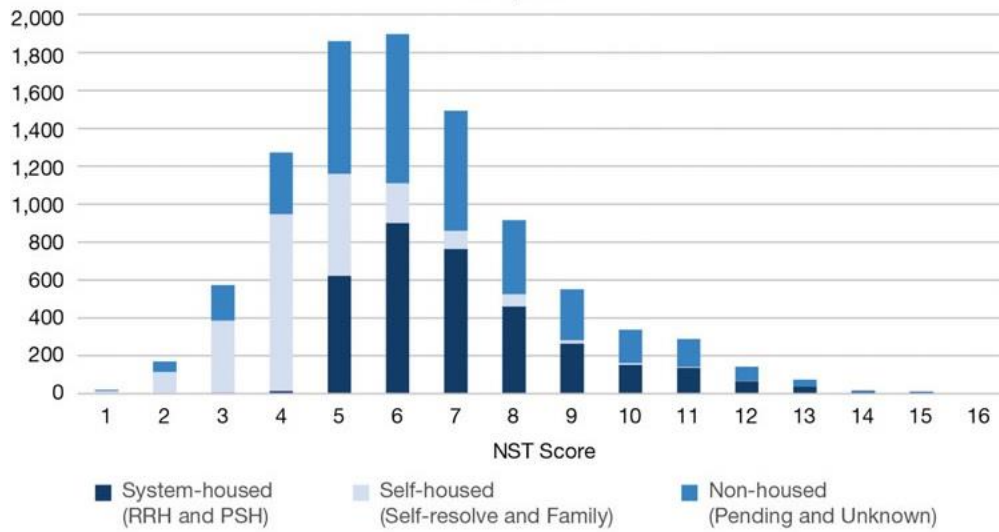
Exhibit 2 Distribution of Housing Exits by NST Score (Among youth assessed by November 2, 2016) (n= 9,850)

NST Score	PSH	RRH	Self-Resolved	Family	Incarcerated	Unknown	Pending	Total
1	0	0	9	7	0	2	3	21
2	0	0	55	61	0	28	27	171
3	1	4	189	193	0	80	109	576
4	5	10	471	462	0	214	111	1273
5	3	620	315	223	4	184	515	1864
6	2	899	67	143	9	118	672	1910
7	4	760	22	73	7	121	516	1503

Exhibit 4 Percentage of Youth Who Remained Stably Housed for at Least 180 Days, and the Distribution of Successful Exits by NST Score. (n=4913) (Among youth who exited by November 2, 2016).

NST Score	PSH %	RRH %	Family %	Self-Resolved %
1			83.3	83.3
2			97.9	94.6
3	100.0	100.0	93.2	96.8
4	100.0	71.4	89.0	95.1
5	100.0	91.7	79.5	84.2
6	100.0	91.4	82.8	83.6
7	100.0	90.6	60.9	63.2
8	98.2	87.3	59.6	57.1
9	94.7	80.6	46.7	
10	91.2	61.1	33.3	100.0
11	93.5	33.3		0.0
12	90.9	0.0		0.0
13	96.3			
14	75.0			
15	50.0			
16				
17				

Housing Exit by NST Score
 (only youth assessed 180 days prior to 11/2/16)
 n= 9,640



Discussion:

- Most communities studied were using the vulnerability index for housing interventions, i.e., youth with higher scores of 8 and above were referred to PSH, youth scoring 5-7 were referred to RRH, and neither PSH nor RRH were provided to many youth scoring 4 or less.
- RRH ‘generally appears to be a useful housing intervention for those youth with a score of less than 10. However, the authors recommend a more rigorous impact evaluation to test variables in housing interventions.’

- The percentage of youth who successfully remained self-resolved or with family dropped dramatically as their score increased.
- 27.3 percent of youth who scored 4 or less did not exit homelessness, and the authors recommend reunification strategies to be employed. In the absence of reunification, RRH, transitional or other forms of assistance may be appropriate. The authors recommend providing more intensive supports or housing interventions for this subset.
- The authors write that the “scores by themselves still represent limited information and offer a blunt basis for good decision making with individual youth.”
- Readers are encouraged to review the authors’ writing on the data’s limitation.

Policy Recommendations:

- The authors write that using an evidence-based triage tool to assess vulnerability can inform prioritization of housing resources, and they recognize the ‘abhorrent reality of how to prioritize and place young people in the precious few spots available in housing programs.’
- Communities using RRH to service youth with a score of 10 or less should feel assured about connecting these youth to time-limited and less service-intensive programs like RRH and have a sense of likelihood of success.
- Case management services to address family reunification and other diversion and prevention services is recommended for youth scoring 4 or less.

ⁱ School District of Philadelphia, <http://bit.ly/2KpUC54>

ⁱⁱ Email communication from Michele Mangan (Philadelphia OHS) to Joe Willard (PEC) 10-02-2017.