

The West Coast Convening Framework:

A Practical Guide to Outcomes Measurement
for Programs Serving Youth and Young Adults
Experiencing Homelessness



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The West Coast Convening: A Meeting of the Minds

The West Coast Convening (WCC) is a biannual meeting of service providers, advocates, researchers, and government partners from California, Oregon, and Washington, who are interested in the issue of youth homelessness. The group began meeting in 2013 and comes together to share best practices and brainstorm strategies to reduce the experience of homelessness for youth and young adults.

From the beginning a recurring topic at these meetings was program outcomes. Over multiple meetings the group focused on the following questions: Who is measuring what and where is there consistency? How do we meet the needs of the organization and funders simultaneously? How can we use outcomes data to inform the field?

Participants of the WCC agreed that while there is a tremendous amount of measurement and subsequent learning taking place at agencies within the social sector, there is a dearth of available practical guidance in this area. Particularly guidance that leverages both the voice and experience of evaluation practitioners and program leadership within non-profit organizations working to improve the outcomes for the people they serve.

The need had been identified, and a call to action emerged to develop a shared, consensus-driven, outcomes framework that could be utilized by providers to facilitate results-driven care, data sharing, and cross-agency analysis. The WCC Outcomes Workgroup was convened to work toward the goal of creating that framework. This is the result of those efforts – The WCC Framework: A Practical Guide to Outcomes Measurement for Programs Serving Youth and Young Adults Experiencing Homelessness.



Overview of the WCC framework

ALIGNMENT TO OTHER FRAMEWORKS

The WCC Workgroup sought to recognize, align, and build on existing research-informed frameworks of outcomes measurement for programs serving youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. There is the Framework to End Youth Homelessness (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2013) which includes these core outcomes for youth experiencing homelessness—stable housing, permanent connections, education/employment, and social-emotional well-being. Similarly, the National Network for Youth (2013) identifies these outcomes: stable housing; permanent connections; education, training & employment; health & social/emotional well-being; and self-sufficiency. While there is a great deal of consistency with these frameworks, they do not provide information regarding specific metrics and indicators, or guidance on critical measurement considerations when implementing on the ground. The WCC Framework aligns to these frameworks with outcomes identified in the areas of housing stability, education, employment, self-sufficiency, and well-being. In addition, the WCC Framework builds on these existing frameworks by providing guidelines for outcome indicators, suggested measurement tools, and conditions and intervals for measurement.

PURPOSE AND USE OF THE FRAMEWORK

The WCC framework is designed primarily for use by leadership teams, including program and evaluation staff, within organizations serving youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. It is a resource for the creation and refinement of an outcomes measurement strategy that is aligned to programmatic goals and service populations, and can be used to inform the development of a programmatic theory of change or logic model (or refine an existing model). The framework also leverages the best available research and consensus from the field to provide a catalog of metrics which can be used to establish internal benchmarks, drive internal outcomes management, create accountability among staff, and support reporting to funders and other stakeholders. The framework does not provide measures for monitoring program and staff performance, nor does it capture indicators of service utilization or other program activities needed to achieve outcomes. These are considered within the realm of internal performance management and quality improvement, and are therefore not included.

Elements to Consider

OUTCOMES SHOULD MATCH AN AGENCY'S MODEL OF CARE

Most communities strive to have a continuum of programming that addresses youth and young adults where they are in terms of service needs and which provides a range of engagement and intensity levels. This document presents an outcomes framework that identifies key outcomes and associated metrics across program types. There is a great degree of diversity among youth and young adults experiencing homelessness including demographics, life experiences, presenting issues, and service needs. Diversity extends to differences in cultural values, behaviors, and preferences. In order to meet the needs of the population, there are a range of culturally and developmentally responsive services that should be provided. When utilizing this outcomes framework, or any other, it is important to take into account a program's model of care, as well as the needs and definitions of achievement that are supported and valued by the cultural communities who are the intended partners and recipients of services.

A program's model of care includes the services provided, program length, the approach to provision, and programmatic goals. The model of care will determine the appropriateness of utilization of certain outcomes over others. For instance, the approach and aims of providing services in a drop-in center setting may be focused purely on meeting youth and young adult's basic needs and engaging them in services. In these settings, the provision of services should support the development of a basic foundation of skills, knowledge, and tools. As participants engage in services more deeply, more intensive programming can then build on that basic foundation to support them in achieving longer term outcomes. For example, a low-barrier day labor program that provides short-term employment opportunities and an introduction to employment expectations would have minimal assumptions in terms of appropriate outcomes based on program duration, services provided, and overall goals. An appropriate outcome for this program would be an increase in basic job skills, as evidenced through punctuality and workplace communication. In contrast, a six-month job training program might identify increased employability as an appropriate outcome, evidenced by the development of both hard (transferable sector specific job skills) and soft employment skills. Expected outcomes for a program should always be aligned to the model of care and it is important that this criteria is utilized in the process of outcomes selection.



CONSIDER AGE AND LIFE STAGE

The selection of outcomes and the timeframe for their achievement must be viewed through a developmentally appropriate lens that considers chronological age, cognitive level, and social-emotional needs of youth served by the program. The framework in this document has been designed to reflect universal indicators of progress for agencies serving youth and young adults experiencing homelessness, yet some indicators may not be appropriate or relevant for all. Providers serving minor youth, transitional age youth (16-24), or a blend of minors and young adults, should ensure that they are selecting indicators that are age-appropriate for their participants. For example, the education section of this framework identifies the completion of a GED/high school diploma as an appropriate outcome for youth and young adults ages 18 and older. For youth under the age of 18, enrollment in secondary school is identified as an age appropriate outcome.

In addition to considerations of chronological age, the outcomes framework reflects a positive youth development orientation and a focus on the achievement of key developmental tasks and milestones that are central to successfully navigating the transition to adulthood. The framework is built around the development of proficiency, self-efficacy, and resiliency in the areas of academic attainment, economic independence, and social-emotional well-being. Existing research on service interventions has provided promising evidence that a focus on these life domains generally aligns with the developmental needs of youth and young adults (Dion, 2013). Nevertheless, it is recommended that the selection and use of metrics from this framework by individual organizations be informed by their own thoughtful consideration of the specific developmental context and needs of the population of youth and young adults they serve.

CONSIDER LIFE HISTORIES AND PATHWAYS INTO HOMELESSNESS

The population of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness is not homogeneous. They differ based on many factors including reason for homelessness, family history, trauma history, length of time homeless, parenting status, and systems involvement. When designing programs and setting outcomes there must be a recognition of these differences as they impact both the type and intensity of services provided, as well as outcomes attainment. Outcome models can account for different acuity levels in a couple of ways - increasing the length of time before expected attainment of an outcome or by setting different targets for a particular outcome. This outcomes framework was developed to provide standardized metrics as well as flexibility to adjust timelines and target goals to account for factors such as behavioral health issues, developmental disability, trafficking involvement, or chronic physical health issues.

EXAMPLES:

- Youth who have more acute mental health needs or that are dually diagnosed (for example mental health and substance abuse issues) may reach a lower level of attainment than youth without these issues since they are also working on developing the tools to manage their behavioral health issues.
- Youth who received extended foster care/transitional housing through the foster care system may achieve outcomes after a shorter length of stay than those without access to those extended services prior to program entry.

THE MIDDLE IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE END

Outcomes should be appropriate for the length and/or intensity of the program. This framework reflects indicators of progress for participants over time in program as well as at program exit. There is often a focus on exit outcomes, however it is also important to account for progress made while in the program, in addition to endpoints. Inclusion of incremental outcomes allow for a complete picture of the building blocks that are necessary to achieving long term outcomes. Additionally these short and intermediate level outcomes provide valuable information for direct line staff to assist in case

planning and service provision. It also addresses one of the biggest challenges in the social sector - funder reporting requirements that don't align with the program length or an individual participant's point of completion. Incremental outcomes provide metrics that can be utilized for reporting at those moments of misalignment.

This framework also includes metrics to track outcomes post-exit. Given how particularly dynamic and mobile the youth and young adult population is, contacting and reaching them for follow-up after they leave program is often an extremely time and resource intensive process. Follow-up response rates are often too low to reflect a representative sample and to prove useful in understanding the true nature of change post-exit. Findings tend to skew towards reflecting the highest functioning of those served in a program, because they are often the individuals who are easiest to locate due to their post-program stability. It is recommended that only organizations with significant resources to implement a multi-faceted approach to engage in follow-up data collection embark on the collection of post-exit outcomes in their measurement framework. Furthermore, it may be appropriate to discuss financial support for tracking outcomes post-exit with funders, as many intervention models are not inherently designed to follow up with youth after they leave program. With regards to providing aftercare, it should be emphasized that this framework does not expect providers to offer resources to exited youth; before attempting to track youth outcomes post-exit, providers should clarify internally what, if any, resources or incentives they can provide to youth they attempt to contact. If post-exit follow-up is pursued as a data collection and evaluation strategy, a timeline of 6 and 12 months after exit is recommended to conduct interviews.

Service Models

The outcomes presented in this framework have been designed primarily with housing programs in mind, and the most common of these housing program types are described in detail within this section. However, the framework may also be utilized for non-housing programs as long as they are appropriately aligned with the program model, taking into consideration the services provided, the length of service engagement, and the intensity of services provided.

There are some common program types that serve youth and young adults experiencing homelessness that, for the most part, should not be included within an outcomes framework due to how services are accessed (intermittently or as-needed) and type of services provided (for example, provision of basic needs). Outreach is an important component of early intervention which provides crisis services, basic needs, and referrals to additional supports. Drop-in centers offer immediate services such as food, clothing, showers, laundry, bus tokens, and personal hygiene supplies. Traditional outreach and drop-in center service models are inherently not appropriate to include when measuring attainment of outcomes (Patton, 2014). Programs should measure participant utilization of these services and activities as a participant may later enroll into an outcomes producing program and previous service history provides important information (Hunter, 2013). In addition these early intervention services, with repeat engagement, contribute to the development of skills that build toward the identified outcomes.

HOUSING PROGRAM TYPES

Crisis/Emergency Housing is short-term in nature. It is often the first step in the stabilization process and emphasis is primarily on meeting basic needs. The main focus is to provide immediate safety and stability for residents while assessing for additional service needs. There are various models of crisis/emergency housing; some only provide overnight shelter while others provide around the clock housing and support services. Basic services provided are food, shelter, clothing, and hygiene facilities. Additional services that may be provided include counseling, case management, group services, behavioral health services, and linkages to other support services. For youth under the age of 18 there is usually also a focus on family counseling and reunification.

Time Limited Housing (also described as transitional housing) provides longer-term housing paired with comprehensive support services that build independent living skills and support overall well-being. Common models include congregate and community-based housing. Congregate is a single site housing model where residents live in either a home or dorm-type setting. Community-based housing places residents either in individual apartments or in multiple units that are co-located in one building. Support services include case management, counseling, independent living skills, educational support, and employment services. Case Management is an important component of this model. Through this mechanism youth and young adults develop both short- and long-term goals related to education, employment, financial stability, and well-being and create individualized case plans to achieve these goals.

Non-Time Limited Housing (also known as permanent supportive housing) is intended for youth who are in need of longer-term housing and support. This model pairs housing with support services, similar to those offered in time limited/transitional housing programs. These individualized services are provided to address the issues that are barriers to stability and build the skills and knowledge needed for long-term self-sufficiency. This model should incorporate a “moving on” culture that encourages residents to move to independent or adult permanent supportive housing (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2016). The term trans-permanent has even been used to highlight the fact that permanent supportive housing for youth and young adults, in contrast to permanent supportive housing for adults, is still transitional in nature for the majority of residents, with a focus on eventually enabling youth and young adults to live outside a program environment (Corporation for Supportive Housing, 2003).

Host Homes provide stable housing in the community. While there are variations of this model, host homes generally consist of an arrangement between a community member and a service provider in which the community member provides the residents with the basic necessities such as housing and food. The service provider provides program coordination, community member support, and other support services. This model may be short-term, akin to emergency housing, or longer term. Therefore, it is recommended that host home programs utilize the outcomes for either Crisis/ Emergency Housing or Time Limited Housing depending on the model of care.

Outcomes and Indicators

The outcomes charts include the following items:

- **Program Type** – specifies whether an indicator applies generally to Crisis/Emergency, Time Limited or Non-Time Limited Housing. While the framework specifically provides suggestions for housing programs, these outcomes can also be applied to other programs as long as they align to the program model.
- **Outcome** – the desired change in knowledge, skills, behavior, or attitude for participants.
- **Indicator** – the way in which it is known that the change occurred.
- **Time of Measurement** – specifies the points of indicator measurement relative to a participant’s stage of program involvement (intake, in-program, program exit, post-program exit).
- **Definition and Notes** – provides details on measurement and additional guidance. In some instances includes scaled items for measurement and suggested scoring.



Housing

SAFE AND STABLE HOUSING

Housing provides a stabilizing effect which allows youth and young adults to focus on goals related to long-term self-sufficiency. This is why the framework focuses on outcomes attainment for housing programs, as those individuals are in a position where they are no longer focused on day-to-day survival. Consistent, stable housing is also important for youth leaving housing programs, and must be a fundamental outcome.

It is also important for youth and young adults to obtain and maintain safe housing. Defining and measuring what constitutes “safe” housing at exit warrants consideration. There are a variety of checklists and other tools available for assessing the safety of the physical surroundings of a dwelling such as the operability of fire alarms, or locks on windows and doors. The ability to conduct this type of assessment on the housing a youth is moving into as they exit the program may not always be possible. Nevertheless, an equally important gauge of housing safety addresses the perceptions of environmental risk and neighborhood condition that impacts an individual’s feelings of safety and security within the home and neighborhood in which they live. There is evidence to suggest that perceptions of safety and security in one’s home and neighborhood can negatively impact the development of children as well as the psychological and physical health and wellbeing of vulnerable adult populations (Child Trends, 2013; Hsu, Simon, Henwood, Wenzel, & Couture, 2016). For this reason, it is recommended that organizations seeking to adopt safe housing as an outcome measure move to integrating this form of assessment as both an in-program (for programs with a community-based housing model) and exit measurement strategy. Measurement of perceived safety and security in housing may include global feelings of safety at different times of the day or night, appraisals of neighborhood violence and instability, resources and structures that are available and accessible to provide support within communities, and the presence of safe or unsafe cohabitants (friends, partners or relatives).

Housing Outcomes

PROGRAM TYPE: CRISIS/EMERGENCY HOUSING			
Outcome	Indicator	Time of Measurement	Definition and Notes
Obtains Stable Housing	% of youth moving to stable housing at program exit	Program Exit	<p>Stable Housing defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College housing • Employment-based housing (apartment manager, agricultural worker, caretaker) • Friend/family/partner/spouse - permanent • Home ownership • Host home • Job training program (for example, Job Corps) • Permanent housing program (including permanent supportive housing) • Rental (subsidized or unsubsidized) • Transitional housing
Obtains Safe Housing	% of youth that exit to safe housing	Program Exit	<p>Both participant and staff answer yes to the question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Is exit destination safe?”

Housing Outcomes

PROGRAM TYPE: TIME LIMITED/NON-TIME LIMITED HOUSING			
Outcome	Indicator	Time of Measurement	Definition and Notes
Obtains Stable Housing	% of youth moving to stable housing at program exit	Program Exit	Stable Housing defined as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College housing • Employment-based housing (apartment manager, agricultural worker, caretaker) • Friend/family/partner/spouse - permanent • Home ownership • Host home • Job training program (for example, Job Corps) • Permanent housing program (including permanent supportive housing) • Rental (subsidized or unsubsidized) • Transitional housing
Maintains Stable housing	% of residents maintaining stable housing after program exit	Post-Program Exit	
Obtains Safe Housing	% of residents that exit to safe housing at program exit	Program Exit	Both resident and staff answer yes to the question: "Is exit destination safe?"
Maintains Safe Housing	% of residents that report they experience feeling safe in their home and community	Post-Program Exit	Resident selects a or b from following scale: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Feels safe in community all the time. B. Feels unsafe in community occasionally. C. Feels unsafe in community at various times (at night, etc.) D. Feels unsafe in community most of the time. E. Feels unsafe in community at all times.

Education

Post-secondary achievement has been well recognized as an essential factor in the achievement of economic self-sufficiency (Milesi, Lansing, Bell, Goerge, & Stagner, 2010). For those without a high school diploma, the job market becomes increasingly restricted in the number and types of work opportunities available. Individuals who don't have a high school diploma have a four-fold likelihood of being unemployed, relative to those who have graduated with their secondary degree (American Human Development Project, 2009). It has been estimated that in 2018, 37% of all jobs in the United States will be for workers who have a high school diploma, down from 72% in 1973 and 41% in 2007 (Carnevale et al., 2011). A growing number of jobs are requiring postsecondary credentials, especially those that offer a living wage. The U.S. is now a demanding economy that puts a premium on education and training.

While the interdependence between education, employment, and economic viability is well documented, obtaining these milestones are increasingly out of reach for a significant portion of young people. Almost one in five youth will not complete high school or will not complete on time (America's Promise Alliance, 2014). Moreover, one urban study revealed that only 50% of high school graduates went on to post-secondary education, and only 32% of those who started post-secondary persisted into their second year (Milesi et al., 2010). There are currently an estimated 3 million young people nationally between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither working nor in school (Ross & Svajlenka, 2016). The majority of these young adults fall between 20 and 24 years of age, suggesting that the problem of disconnection becomes graver after young people are expected to have obtained a secondary degree (Ross & Svajlenka, 2016). Given these trends in secondary and post-secondary completion, labor market growth projections suggest that the demand for workers with post-secondary credentials and training will outpace availability within the working-age populous by 2020 (Carnevale, Smith, and Stohl, 2013). These findings make a strong case for supporting youth and young adults in achieving a post-secondary degree to promote self-sufficiency and long-term economic stability.



Education Outcomes

PROGRAM TYPE: CRISIS/EMERGENCY HOUSING			
Outcome	Indicator	Time of Measurement	Definition and Notes
Achieves Academic Reconnection	% of participants who are not enrolled in school at intake who complete academic pre-enrollment portfolio	Intake, In Program, Exit	<p>Program participant has completed an academic pre-enrollment portfolio if they have obtained the legal documents required for school enrollment, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth certificate • Social Security card • Government-issued identification • Residency verification • Immunization records • School transcript • Individual Education Plan (if applicable)
	% of participants reconnected to academic institution/ education program	Intake, In Program, Exit	<p>Academic reconnection is defined as meeting one of the following criteria based on age and educational status at enrollment:</p> <p>Participants under age 18 who were not in school at program entrance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrollment in primary or secondary school <p>Participants under age 18 who were in school at program entrance with irregular attendance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent attendance in primary or secondary school <p>Participants age 18 and over who were not in school at program entrance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrollment in GED program • Enrollment in adult education program • Enrollment in postsecondary education

Education Outcomes

PROGRAM TYPE: CRISIS/EMERGENCY HOUSING			
Outcome	Indicator	Time of Measurement	Definition and Notes
Makes Academic Progress	% of participants who advance academically	Intake, In Program, Exit	<p>Academic progress is defined as achievement of at least one of the following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful completion of one GED test component • Continued enrollment in GED program • Enrolled in high school and earning high school credits • Postsecondary persistence demonstrated by credit attainment or advancement in matriculation status

Education Outcomes

PROGRAM TYPE: TIME LIMITED/NON-TIME LIMITED HOUSING			
Outcome	Indicator	Time of Measurement	Definition and Notes
Achieves Academic Reconnection	% of participants who are not enrolled in school at intake who complete academic pre-enrollment portfolio	In Program	<p>Program participant has completed an academic pre-enrollment portfolio if they have obtained the legal documents required for school enrollment, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth certificate • Social Security card • Government-issued identification • Residency verification • Immunization records • School transcript • Individual Education Plan (if applicable)
	% of participants reconnected to academic institution/ education program	Intake, In Program, Exit	<p>Academic reconnection is defined as meeting one of the following criteria based on age and educational status at enrollment:</p> <p>Participants under age 18 who were not in school at program entrance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrollment in primary or secondary school <p>Participants under age 18 who were in school at program entrance with irregular attendance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent attendance in primary or secondary school <p>Participants age 18 and over who were not in school at program entrance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrollment in GED program • Enrollment in adult education program • Enrollment in postsecondary education

Education Outcomes

PROGRAM TYPE: TIME LIMITED/NON-TIME LIMITED HOUSING			
Outcome	Indicator	Time of Measurement	Definition and Notes
Makes Academic Progress	% of participants who advance academically	Intake, In Program, Exit	<p>Academic progress is defined as achievement of at least one of the following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful completion of one GED test component • Continued enrollment in GED program • Enrolled in high school and earning high school credits • Postsecondary persistence demonstrated by credit attainment or advancement in matriculation status
Becomes Educationally Engaged	% of participants (under age 18) who are enrolled in secondary education at program exit	Program Exit	<p>Participant is enrolled in one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school • Alternative high school
	% of participants (age 18 and over) who are enrolled in postsecondary education at program exit	Program Exit	<p>Participant is enrolled in one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community college • Four-year college or university • Two-year college or university • Vocational program
Maintains Educational Engagement	% of participants (under age 18) who maintain enrollment in secondary education	Post-Program Exit	<p>Participant is enrolled in one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school • Alternative high school
	% of participants (age 18 and over) who maintain enrollment in postsecondary education	Post-Program Exit	<p>Participant is enrolled in one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community college • Four-year college or university • Two-year college or university • Vocational program

Education Outcomes

PROGRAM TYPE: TIME LIMITED/NON-TIME LIMITED HOUSING			
Outcome	Indicator	Time of Measurement	Definition and Notes
Achieves Educational Benchmark	% of participants (18 and over) who complete High School	Intake, In Program, Exit	Participant completes their high school diploma or GED
	% of participants (18 and over) who attain postsecondary credentials	Intake, In Program, Exit	Participant has successfully completed coursework and received credentials from one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community college • Four-year college or university • Two-year college or university • Vocational/certificate program
	% of participants (18 and over) who complete High School	Post-Program Exit	After program exit, participant completes their high school diploma or GED
	% of participants (18 and over) who attain postsecondary credentials	Post-Program Exit	Participant has successfully completed coursework and received credentials from one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community college • Four-year college or university • Two-year college or university • Vocational/certificate program
Academic Motivation (Optional)	% of participants who demonstrate self- motivation related to attainment of educational goals	In Program	Participant demonstrated academic motivation if they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend school consistently in order to attain educational goals/milestones • Access academic counseling and guidance resources • Pursue courses, internships, and experiences that advance academic and career goals • Demonstrate resilience by problem-solving to achieve educational goals

Employment

DEFINING EMPLOYMENT

While the term employment seems relatively straightforward to define and understand, operationalizing its definition for the sake of measurement can be more nuanced and complex. One important consideration includes what gets included in the “employment bucket”. The increasing globalization of the workforce, participation in the shared economy, and diversity in the kinds of work available expand the range and scope of what counts as employment. Obtaining high quality internal employment data can depend on the ability to verify employment, and organizations may be challenged to develop creative strategies for verifying forms of employment that do not issue verification letters or pay stubs. Employment sustainability, as well as opportunities for wage increases, benefits, and promotions that support increased economic self-sufficiency are all important factors to weigh when determining how to define and measure employment outcomes. For instance, internship placements may or may not yield a regular salary or wage, but may be included in the definition of employment because they provide valuable work experience that can increase a young person’s employability in a particular field and lead to sustainable employment over time. Also important is determining which youth should be included in the measurement of employment based on their ability to work. Circumstances for youth who are receiving SSI benefits, who have become new parents, or who are engaged in education full-time may prevent them from working, and they may not be included in the pool of eligible youth for attainment of employment outcomes. The organization must determine both what employment is and who is included in the group for measurement based on their mission and program model.

CAREER EXPLORATION AND PLANNING

Social service agencies have developed programming to assist young people in career exploration and planning as a means to increase long-term economic self-sufficiency for the populations they serve. This may include preparing young people for high rigor career programs and/or alternative education that provide paths to sustainable employment through the attainment of career-related work experience and stackable skills and vocational certificates associated with a chosen career pathway of interest.

Career exploration and planning may include a number of measurable activities and milestones that help the young person identify, gain experience, and pursue education related to a career pathway of interest. Career exploration activities may include the use of assessment to identify areas of the workforce that align with the youth’s interests, passions and personality; selection of an initial career pathway of interest; participation in job shadows; volunteering; informational interviews; and/or attending career fairs. The completion of prerequisite coursework or a job-training program for a chosen career of interest may also be an essential aspect of a young person’s pursuit of career-related, sustainable living wage employment. Depending on the services provided, career exploration activities and milestones may be assessed as part of the employment and education measurement strategy for an organization.

Employment Outcomes

PROGRAM TYPE: CRISIS/EMERGENCY HOUSING			
Outcome	Indicator	Time of Measurement	Definition and Notes
Achieves Job Readiness ¹	% of participants who demonstrate the ability to obtain employment through development of an employment portfolio	In Program, Exit	<p>Program participant has completed an employment portfolio if they have obtained the legal documents and developed supplemental materials required for gaining employment including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resume • Cover letter (at least one completed example/template) • Reference list • State ID or driver's license
	% of participants who demonstrate job search and interview skills necessary to obtain employment	In Program, Exit	<p>Program participant demonstrates proficiency in pre-employment skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully conducts job search • Demonstrates proper interview attire and hygiene • Possesses interview skills (mock interviews can be used to gauge proficiency) • Able to independently complete job application • Possesses professional communication skills²

¹ Job Readiness is the degree to which a youth demonstrates that they meet commonly accepted employability standards and requirements. Employability standards are behaviors needed during the interview process as well as to be successful in gaining an interview. The requirements portion includes development and possession of items that would be expected during the interview process and upon hiring, such as a resume and identification. To support assessment, the employability requirement items have been grouped into an employment portfolio category. Both areas need to be assessed through staff observation and or verification. To guide items assessed by observation an organization must create a ranking system so that all staff are using the same criteria. This system should reflect the skills that are built during the course of service provision.

² For example, appropriate handshake, create professional “thank you for the interview” email

Employment Outcomes

PROGRAM TYPE: TIME LIMITED/NON-TIME LIMITED HOUSING

Outcome	Indicator	Time of Measurement	Definition and Notes
Achieves Job Readiness	% of participants who demonstrate the ability to obtain employment through development of an employment portfolio	In Program, Exit	<p>Program participant has completed an employment portfolio if they have obtained the legal documents and developed supplemental materials required for gaining employment including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resume • Cover letter (at least one completed example/template) • Reference list • State ID or driver's license • Green Card (if applicable)
	% of participants who demonstrate job search and interview skills necessary to obtain employment	In Program, Exit	<p>Program participant demonstrates proficiency in pre-employment skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully conducts job search • Demonstrates proper interview attire and hygiene • Possesses interview skills (mock interviews can be used to gauge proficiency) • Able to independently complete job application • Possesses professional communication skills
Obtains Employment	% of participants employed at living wage	In Program, Exit	Participant is employed and salary meets the living wage requirement. ³
Maintains Employment	% of participants who have maintained employment	In Program, Exit	Participant has maintained employment at living wage for a period of six months. Agency should determine if there is an allowable period of time without employment within the six months, for example less than a 30 days

³ The employment outcome includes the indicator of youth employed at a living wage. Living wage is an income amount that is needed to account for housing and basic needs in a geographic area, and the actual living wage for a geographic area is adjusted regularly to account for cost-of-living increases. Tools that can be utilized for determining living wage are included in the Additional Resources section.



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Employment Outcomes

PROGRAM TYPE: TIME LIMITED/NON-TIME LIMITED HOUSING			
Outcome	Indicator	Time of Measurement	Definition and Notes
Maintains Sustainable Employment	% of participants who maintain employment at living wage or those previously employed (without living wage) who secure employment at living wage	Post-Program Exit	Participant has maintained or newly obtained employment at a salary that meets the living wage requirement.



Self-Sufficiency

Most youth and young adults experiencing homelessness have not developed the skills necessary to live independently. For many, instability in their homes forces them out onto the streets before they are adults. It is therefore important that service providers work with youth and young adults to build the basic skills that they'll need to live on their own. This includes menu planning, cooking, household maintenance, household budgeting, and money management.

The outcomes proposed in this section include a combination of metrics that consider both whether a participant has gained knowledge of a particular area, and whether they put that knowledge into practice. For example, the section on Financial Skills includes both the knowledge of budget management as well as the practice of maintaining a budget. Both knowledge and practical application of that knowledge are important factors in determining whether a participant has mastered a particular skill. The indicators in this section of the outcomes framework provide examples of specific content and constructs that are recommended for assessment. In addition there are standardized tools that can be utilized to measure self-sufficiency which organizations may opt to use if it is appropriate for their population and aligns to their model of care.⁴

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AND ENTITLEMENTS

A range of public benefits and entitlements may be available to youth who are placed at increased risk of homelessness. There appear to be at least two distinct perspectives on whether the ability to secure these benefits should be assessed as a positive outcome for youth receiving them as part of the social safety net. Receipt of entitlements may be viewed as a positive outcome if the entitlement promotes long-term economic stability, self-sufficiency, and prevention of poverty. However, entitlements that have been shown to increase system dependence and produce transgenerational poverty may be viewed as a negative cost to the individual and to society. Organizations must weigh these factors - with careful consideration of the existing literature - against desired outcomes if they choose to include public entitlements as a positive outcome. It is recommended that organizations include only those metrics that have a clear link to an organization's outcome goals related to self-sufficiency. For instance, child-care subsidies for young parents address a well-documented barrier to employment, providing a direct link between receipt of an entitlement and a primary indicator of economic self-sufficiency.

4 There are a number of tools that have been developed to measure life skills, independent living skills, or self-sufficiency. Providers may elect to use one of these tools or they may elect to develop their own set of questions to assess youth's knowledge, skill, and practice in this domain. Tools that can be utilized for measuring skills in this domain are included in the Additional Resources section.

Self-Sufficiency Outcomes

PROGRAM TYPE: TIME LIMITED/NON-TIME LIMITED HOUSING			
Outcome	Indicator	Time of Measurement	Definition and Notes
Obtains Proficiency in Financial Management	% of participants who are able to manage a budget	In Program, Exit	<p>Participant has a bank account and has kept to their budget for at least the last two months AND responds affirmatively to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have a bank account • I pay utility bills when they are due • I keep records of the money I am paid and the bills I pay • I plan for the expenses that I must pay each month • I put money aside for future purchases or emergencies <p>Response Options - Yes/No</p> <p>Scoring - Yes response to at least 80% (4/5) of the questions</p>
Obtains Financial Literacy	% of participants who demonstrate financial literacy	In Program, Exit	<p>Participant responds affirmatively to the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand how interest rates work on loans or credit purchases. • I understand the disadvantages of making purchases with my credit card. • I know the importance of a good credit score. • I know the advantages and disadvantages of using a check cashing or payday loan store. • I know where I can get help with an income tax form. <p>Response Options- No, Mostly No, Somewhat, Mostly Yes, Yes</p> <p>Scoring - Mostly Yes or Yes response to at least 80% (4/5) of the questions</p>

Self-Sufficiency Outcomes

PROGRAM TYPE: TIME LIMITED/NON-TIME LIMITED HOUSING			
Outcome	Indicator	Time of Measurement	Definition and Notes
Able to Manage Activities of Daily Living	% of participants who demonstrate ability to perform daily activities needed to manage a household	In Program, Exit	<p>Participant consistently demonstrates skills (minimum 5 out of 7):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grocery shops with a list and compares prices. • Able to make meals with or without using a recipe. • Reads food product labels for fat, sugar, salt, and calories. • Regularly does laundry: clothing and bedding. • Keeps living space clean and free of clutter. • Knows the products to use when cleaning the bathroom and kitchen. • Safely uses household appliances.
Maintains Personal Safety	% of participants who demonstrate ability to maintain a sense of personal safety	In Program, Exit	<p>Participant responds affirmatively to the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know the risks of meeting someone in person that I met online. • If someone sent me messages online that made me feel bad or scared, I would know what to do or who to tell. • An adult I trust, other than my worker, checks in with me regularly. • My relationships are free from hitting, slapping, shoving, being made fun of, or name calling. • I know the signs of an abusive relationship. • I have a place to go when I feel unsafe. <p>Response Options – No, Mostly No, Somewhat, Mostly Yes, Yes</p> <p>Scoring - Mostly Yes or Yes response to at least 70% (4/6) of the questions</p>

Self-Sufficiency Outcomes

PROGRAM TYPE: TIME LIMITED/NON-TIME LIMITED HOUSING			
Outcome	Indicator	Time of Measurement	Definition and Notes
Possesses Community Knowledge	% of participants who demonstrate knowledge of community and ability to navigate resources	In Program, Exit	<p>Participant responds affirmatively to the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have people I can talk to [in the community] if I'm having problems or need advice • I know where to find help when I need it • I can find what I need on the internet • I seek help when I need it • I know how to access resources that allow me to maintain independence <p>Response Options - Yes/No</p> <p>Scoring - Yes response to at least 70% (4/5) of the questions</p>

Well-Being

Youth and young adults with experiences of homelessness have led unstable lives, often beginning in their homes of origin and continuing to the instability and anxiety of living on the streets. Over two thirds of homeless youth reported that they experienced a major trauma at some point in their life such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, and witnessing or being a victim of violence (Family and Youth Services Bureau, 2014). Life on the street is itself a traumatizing experience, and substance use is often a coping mechanism for dealing with the harsh reality. As a result, many youth and young adults who have experienced homelessness are dealing with depression, anxiety, substance abuse, or another behavioral health issue. It is therefore important to ensure that when participants leave program environments they are able to manage both their physical and emotional health and maintain a sense of overall wellness in their lives.

A trauma informed model of care is essential when working with youth and young adults with experiences of homelessness. This approach recognizes the impact that trauma has had in a participant's life, seeks to ensure that they are not re-traumatized while in the program, and that they have the tools to minimize the impact of these experiences in their life going forward. Research has shown that service models that utilize a trauma informed care lens have positive outcomes related to self-esteem, improved relationships, increased safety, and housing stability (Hopper, Bassuk, & Olivet, 2010). Harm reduction is also a useful approach that can be used to assist program participants to identify the behaviors and activities that can have negative impact on their life goals and provide tools to minimize those impacts, both in the short and long-term.

In addition to managing both physical and behavioral health needs programs should promote wellness for participants. This goes beyond making sure that doctor appointments are made, medication regimens are adhered to, or that substance use is managed in a way that doesn't impact daily functioning. It is about cultivating well-being and a maintaining a quality of life. Service models should include activities that develop healthy relationship skills, cultivate self-care, and identify interests that bring participants happiness. When youth and young adults leave programs they should feel connected to community and have a system of support available to them.



Well-Being Outcomes

PROGRAM TYPE: TIME LIMITED/NON-TIME LIMITED HOUSING			
Outcome	Indicator	Time of Measurement	Definition and Notes
Manages Physical Health	% of participants who are able to manage their physical health needs	In Program, Exit	<p>Staff assessment in consultation with participant. Affirmative responses to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is able to manage health benefits and navigate system • Accesses community and health resources regularly • Understands own physical health baseline and identifies when something feels different or worse than usual • Understands what is healthy at different life stages and for individual health needs • Practices dental hygiene and understands when there is a dental issue and what to do about it • Can describe the circumstances when they would need to go to the emergency room instead of the doctor's office. <p>Response Options - Yes/No</p> <p>Scoring – Yes response to at least 70% (4/6)</p>
	% of participants who practice preventative health care	In Program, Exit	<p>Participant meets the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is linked with a primary care physician • Schedules and participates in wellness care appointments • Has health insurance <p>Response Options - Yes/No</p> <p>Scoring - Yes response of 100% (3/3)</p>

Well-Being Outcomes

PROGRAM TYPE: TIME LIMITED/NON-TIME LIMITED HOUSING			
Outcome	Indicator	Time of Measurement	Definition and Notes
Manages Behavioral Health	% of participants who are able to manage their behavioral health needs	In Program, Exit	<p>These are general indicator areas recommended to include in an assessment for this metric.⁵</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth is not placed at imminent risk of harm to self or others. Youth has expressed awareness of and personal responsibility for his/her mental health Youth is actively practicing harm reduction strategies to reduce the negative consequences of substance use. Youth's functioning in education, employment, interpersonal relationships, and housing is not significantly impaired by drug use or symptoms of mental illness. Youth is accessing appropriate mental health and substance use services when necessary. Youth is avoiding participation in high-risk behaviors, including high-risk sexual and criminal activities. Youth is developing healthy conflict resolution and interpersonal skills.

⁵ There are numerous tools to assess various behavioral health issues and associated improvements and/or impairment in functioning. Tools that can be utilized for measuring behavioral health are included in the Additional Resources section.

Well-Being Outcomes

PROGRAM TYPE: TIME LIMITED/NON-TIME LIMITED HOUSING			
Outcome	Indicator	Time of Measurement	Definition and Notes
Maintains Social Connection	% of participants who are socially connected	In Program, Exit	<p>Staff assessment in consultation with participant. Affirmative responses to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has substantial and long-term ties with community • Has significant natural supporters who contribute to helping support their health and well-being • Is connected to a non-program adult with whom they have a connection of the mind, heart, or spirit • Has a clear sense of cultural identity and is connected to others who share that identity. If a youth identifies with a culture that has specific rituals or ceremonies, they feel able to engage in those practices at the level that they desire. <p>Response Options - Yes/No</p> <p>Scoring - Yes response to at least 75% (3/4)</p>



Final Thoughts

The WCC Framework: A Practical Guide to Outcomes Measurement for Programs Serving Youth and Young Adults Experiencing Homelessness can be utilized by service providers, funders, and other stakeholders interested in a shared framework for measuring program impact in the domains of housing stability, education, employment, self-sufficiency, and well-being. The Framework builds on previous work and aligns to existing research-informed frameworks of outcomes measurement for programs serving youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. It also draws heavily on the knowledge and experience of leaders in the field, leveraging internal evaluators and program leadership to develop consensus around best practices for monitoring toward mutually recognized outcomes.

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Additional Resources

LIVING WAGE TOOLS

The EPI Family Budget Calculator (Gould, Finio, Sabadish, & Wething, 2013) and the Living Wage Calculator (Glasmeier, 2017) are two online tools that calculate living wage by incorporating housing costs, childcare, transportation, health care, housing, other necessities, and taxes. The former generates a calculation of monthly costs and the latter an annual calculation of costs and the accompanying living wage, comparing it to poverty wage and minimum wage. The two calculators use different weights for different components of their model and providers are encouraged to use the calculator they feel most accurately reflects costs in their region. In addition, providers should not feel limited to these two calculators as there are other options available, some unique to a community.

The selection of a living wage calculator is contingent first and foremost upon how an organization chooses to define income. Definitions must be informed by careful consideration of factors such as number of hours worked (e.g. part-time versus full-time), the timeframe for measurement (e.g. hourly wage, monthly, or annual), and sources of income to be included (e.g. inclusion of benefits and other entitlements in the definition of income). Moreover, how an organization makes determinations regarding how wage and/or income will be captured is dependent on what is appropriate for the population of focus and the services provided, as well as on the availability and accuracy of data sources.

- Economic Policy Institute Family Budget Calculator — <http://www.epi.org/resources/budget/>
- MIT Living Wage Calculator — <http://livingwage.mit.edu/>

LIFE SKILLS/SELF SUFFICIENCY TOOLS

There have been a number of tools that have been developed to measure skill development related to independent living and self-sufficiency. The Casey Life Skills Assessment (Nollan, et al., 2002) is a commonly used tool to measure competencies and behaviors youth need to achieve long term goals of stability and self-sufficiency. Designed to assess the readiness of youth to live on their own it measures life skills mastery across several domains including maintaining healthy relationships; daily living activities; using community resources; and planning and goal-setting. The Self-Sufficiency Matrix (The Snohomish County Self-Sufficiency Taskforce, 2004), while not developed specifically for youth and young adults, was designed to be flexible and adaptable. The tool has outcomes scales, based on 25 identified key areas of self-sufficiency, which can be used in any combination based on program model. Outcome scales include Household Management; Safety; Support Systems and Transportation; and Setting Goals & Resourcefulness.

- Casey Life Skills Assessment — <https://www.casey.org/casey-life-skills-resources/>
- Self-Sufficiency Matrix: An Assessment and Measurement Tool Created Through a Collaborative Partnership of the Human Services Community in Snohomish County — <http://www.selfsufficiencystandard.org/sites/default/files/selfsuff/docs/SelfSufficiencyMatrix2010.pdf>

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TOOLS

Here are a few tools that can be utilized to screen for behavioral health issues and/or assess for associated improvement or impairment in functioning. The Brief Symptom Inventory-18 (Derogatis, 2000) is a self-report scale that helps measure psychological distress along three primary symptom dimensions - somatization, depression, and anxiety. The Ohio Scales were designed to measure outcomes for youth receiving mental health services. The tool includes scales that measure problem severity, functioning, satisfaction with treatment, and hopefulness. Scales are rated from the youth, parent, and agency worker perspective. Users can use all scales or one independently depending on the circumstances. The Modified Mini Screen (New York State Practice Improvement Collaborative, 2005) is a short screening tool designed to identify persons in need of an assessment in the domains of mood disorders, anxiety disorders and psychotic disorder. The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire is a brief screening survey that is most appropriate for youth up to the age of 16. The tool has five scales: emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems, and prosocial behavior.

- Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI)-18 — <https://www.pearsonclinical.com/psychology/products/100000638/brief-symptom-inventory-18-bsi-18.html>
- Ohio Scales — <https://sites.google.com/site/ohioscales/the-scales>
- Modified Mini Screen (MMS) — <https://www.oasas.ny.gov/treatment/cod/documents/MINIScreenUsersGuide.pdf>
- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) — <http://www.sdqinfo.com/>

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