HOMELESS YOUTH RISK AND RESILIENCE SURVEY: Findings from Houston, TX

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Salvation Army Area Command

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Funded by the Greater Houston Community Foundation-Funders Together to End Homelessness
Background: Why Risk and Resilience?

- Homeless young adults are well known to have high levels of risk indicators – trauma exposure, substance use, trade sex, mental health problems

- Less is known about how to address these factors

- More in-depth surveys that explore both risk factors and potential targets for intervention could inform strategies to reduce risk factors
Today’s Presentation

• HYRRS study used an in depth survey developed and implemented by a team of researchers across the country to increase sample sizes and the ability to be able to understand intervention targets and whether different types of youth have different targets

• Focused on describing the Houston sample from the data

• Some comparisons with other cities (3 others have complete data)

• Hearing from you about what is interesting to you

• Many further analyses to come using the full data set which will have over 1,000 youth
Methods – Consistent Across 7 cities

Inclusion Criteria: Ages 18-26

1. In a shelter, transitional housing, or spent the previous night on the streets, in a car, or other location not meant for habitation
   OR
2. Staying with friends, relatives, or family but not sure where they will stay 30 days from now

Recruitment Sites: Homeless Youth-Specific Service Setting
   - Salvation Army YARC & Covenant House (in Houston)

Screened for Literacy; If passed, self-administered on tablet; if not, interviewer assisted with reading on tablet

N=200 quantitative surveys at each site; N=30 qualitative interviews
Survey Measures

- Kessler 6 for mental distress; PHQ-9 for depression, PTSD-CL

- Adverse Childhood Experiences Scale (count of 10 traumatic events)

- Victimization on the Streets

- Self-report of prior diagnoses, past suicidal behavior, foster care & juvenile justice history, reasons for homelessness

- Substance Use Measures & Sexual Risk Behaviors – Based on Youth Risk Behaviors Survey

- Coping Scale, Stress of the Streets Scale, Experiences of Discrimination
Houston Sample

Mean Age = 21

Gender
- 56% Male
- 41% Female
- 3% Trans/Gender Queer

Sexual Orientation
- 74% Heterosexual
- 14% Bisexual
- 9% Lesbian/Gay
- 3% Questioning/Something Else
Homeless Experiences

Spent Last Night:
- 23% With Family/Friend/Acquaintance
- 45% Sheltered (including hospital, hotel/motel)
- 28% on the Streets
- 5% Apartment with Voucher

82% Became Homeless in Houston Area

71% Currently Consider Themselves “Homeless”

39% Consider Themselves to Be “Travelers”
How did they become homeless?

• 60% kicked out of family, relative, or foster home
• 16% ran away from family, relative, or foster home
• 13% could not pay the rent
• 12% aged out of foster care or juvenile justice
• 11% nowhere to go when left jail or prison
• 6% family is homeless
• 5% nowhere to go when left hospital

“I was raped by the person I was working for as a live in nanny”
“My mother went to prison”
“Got into an accident”
“Mistreated”
Where have they been?

- 37% had been involved with juvenile justice, 14% had aged out
- 43% had been in foster care, 16% had aged out
- 18% had been in both juvenile justice and foster care
- 56% had been arrested since age 18
Pregnant/Parenting Youth

- 53% have been pregnant or gotten someone pregnant
- 40% have children (54% fathers, 46% mothers)
- 16% have children with them (40% of those with children)
  Of those who have children with them
    - 63% are mothers
    - 37% are fathers
Trauma & Victimization

- Average of 4.7 traumatic events on the Adverse Childhood Experiences Scale

75% of general population have <2 events on ACE
Victimization/Violence Since Homelessness

- 25% Someone used force to take something they were wearing/carrying
- 40% Hit without an object
- 28% Attacked with a weapon or object
- 57% Witnessed someone else getting attacked
- 26% Experience violence from partner
Sexual Assault & Response

• 26% Reported Sexual Assault Since Becoming Homeless

• 42% of these had a sexual assault examination afterward

• For the 58% that did not, why?
  • 31% didn’t have health insurance
  • 26% didn’t know what the exam was
  • 23% didn’t know where to go
  • 19% couldn’t safely leave the situation
Experiences of Discrimination

- Treated with less respect than others: 21% (Always), 18% (Once/week), 14% (Few times a year)
- Receive poorer service than others at stores: 21% (Always), 13% (Once/week), 12% (Few times a year)
- People act as if you're not smart: 20% (Always), 15% (Once/week), 24% (Few times a year)
- People act as if they're afraid of you: 18% (Always), 19% (Once/week), 18% (Few times a year)
- You are threatened/harassed: 18% (Always), 10% (Once/week), 17% (Few times a year)
Experiences of Discrimination

Top Perceived Reasons for Discrimination

- Homelessness – 45%
- Race – 38%
- Education/Income Level – 30%
- Age – 27%

- 32% of African American youth and 44% of mixed race youth reported being attacked because of their skin color (since being homeless)

- 48% of youth who identify as LGBTQ had been attacked because someone said they were gay (since being homeless)
Sources of Stress

In past month, felt a lot or more than a little stress about…

37% Finding enough food to eat
35% Getting along with friends
35% Being arrested
31% Finding others to hang out with
34% Being treated badly by the rest of society
27% Being hit kicked or punched
21% Being raped

58% Being able to find work
55% Earning money
55% Getting more education
54% Having a purpose for my life
51% Finding a place to sleep
44% Finding a place to wash my clothes
41% Getting professional help for a health problem
39% Finding a place to take a bath or shower
Education & Employment

• 72% have a high school diploma or GED; 11% are currently attending some type of school

• 24% are currently working; 41% had a part time job in the last year; 30% had a full time job in the past year

• Other sources of income in past year
  • 25% Selling stolen goods
  • 39% Public Assistance
  • 21% Trading Sex
  • 31% Selling Blood/Plasma
  • 40% Selling person possessions
  • 31% Panhandling
  • 50% Money from friends or relatives
  • 40% Day Labor
  • 29% Work paid under the table
Mental Health

**Lifetime Diagnosis (Self Report)**

- **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder**: 27%
- **Schizophrenia or Psychosis**: 17%
- **Conduct Disorder or Oppositional Defiant**: 23%
- **Depression**: 44%
- **Bipolar**: 49%
- **Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder**: 51%

**Current Symptom Screeners**

- 42% met criteria for current mental distress on Kessler 6 scale
- 40% met screening criteria for PTSD
- 51% met screening criteria for moderate to severe depression
- 31% reported suicidal ideation in past year
- 19% had attempted suicide in past year
Mental Health Treatment

Treatment Experiences

- **Unmet Need**
  - Past Year: 28%
  - Ever: 33%

- **Inpatient**
  - Past Year: 18%
  - Ever: 34%

- **ER**
  - Past Year: 15%
  - Ever: 24%

- **Medication**
  - Past Year: 30%
  - Ever: 51%

- **Outpatient Therapy**
  - Past Year: 24%
  - Ever: 40%

Currently Need Treatment?

- Yes: 49%
- No: 20%
- Don't Know: 13%
- Currently Receiving: 17%
Substance Use

- 62% smoke cigarettes
  - 31% smoke every day
- 40% had used alcohol in the past month
- 24% had one or more episodes of binge drinking in the past month
- 45% screened positive for problematic substance use
## Substance Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance Used</th>
<th>Used Past 30 Days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kush (Synthetic Mj)</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecstasy</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocaine</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescription Drugs w/out prescription</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crack</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroin</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meth</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sexual Health

• 79% are sexually active

Of those that are sexually active…
• 51% have had sex with someone they met online
• 47% had used a condom the last time they had sex
• 37% had used drugs or alcohol the last time they had sex
• 27% reported ever trading sex

• 32% have received the HPV vaccination
• 53% have been tested for HIV in the past 3 months, 14% never tested at all
  • 9 youth (5%) reported testing positive
• 44% have been tested for HepC in the past 3 months, 28% never tested at all
• 72% had never heard of PrEP or had heard of it but didn’t know what it was
Social Media Use

67% have a smartphone

21% have a computer (laptop/desktop)

10% have a tablet (like an iPad)

44% use social media more than once a day

Last time online, looked up….
• Housing/shelter 48%
• Healthcare services 20%
• Pregnancy information 16%
• Diet & Nutrition 13%
• Medication information 24%
• Legal help 21%
• Childcare information 14%
• SSI information 21%
• School information 31%, GED 16%
• Financial aid for schools 24%
Coping Strategies

Most Endorsed
• Go off by myself to think
• Try to learn from a bad experience
• Realize that I am strong and can deal with whatever is bothering me
• Think about how things will get better in the future
• Use my spiritual beliefs, belief in a higher power

Least Endorsed
• Use drugs or alcohol
• Use my anger to get me through it
• Go to someone I trust for support
• Go to sleep
• Try not to think about it
LGBTQ Youth

• Much higher percent female than the overall sample (64% female, 25% male, 8% transgender, 2% something else)

• Higher rates of sexual assault since homeless (44% vs. 18%)

• Higher mean scores on screeners for PTSD, Mental Distress, Depression

• Higher rates of prior diagnoses of ODD/CD, Depression & Bipolar

• Higher rates of past suicidal ideation (40% vs. 28%)
COMPARISONS
Drop-in Center compared to Shelter

- Both provide services to youth with high mental health needs – no differences in most mental health outcome
- Greater connection with mental health services through shelter
- Populations don’t differ significantly by race/ethnicity or LGBTQ status
- No differences in histories of foster care involvement
Drop-in Center compared to Shelter

- Drop-in Center youth more likely
  - To have traded sex (31% vs. 18%)
  - To engage in other illegal sources of income generation including stealing, dealing drugs and also selling blood, collecting cans and panhandling
  - To report more stress about education, finding a job, and being arrested

Shelter youth more likely
- To be working (33% vs. 22%)
- To have worked in past year part-time (52% vs. 36%) or full-time (35% vs. 28%)
- To get money from others such as family or relatives
Drop-in Center compared to Shelter

Drop-in Center Youth had higher rates of many risk indicators

- All youth that reported being HIV positive were interviewed at the drop-in center
- Higher gang Involvement (32% v. 12%)
- History of Juvenile Justice involvement (46% vs. 20%)
- Arrested at much higher rates since turning 18 (71% vs. 27%)
- Higher rates of street victimization of multiple types
- More likely to screen positive for substance use problems (52% v. 29%)
- More likely to have been pregnant or gotten someone pregnant (63% v 33%)
What’s Similar Across Cities?

- Foster Care Involvement (37%-45%)
- Juvenile Justice Involvement (32-44%)
- Arrest since age 18 (45-57%)
- Witnessing violence (55-63%)
- Suicidal ideation (29%-34%)
- Gang Involvement (18-25%)
- LGBTQ (Houston, Phoenix & Denver are 26%, LA is 41%)
How is Houston Different?

- Highest rates of Schizophrenia, PTSD, ADHD
- Lowest rates of some types of street victimization
  - Use force to take something away from you (25% vs. 40% in other cities)
  - Attacked with an object (27% vs. 37% in other cities)
  - Attacked without an object (40% vs. 52% in other cities)
- Young People Less Mobile (81% vs. 59% in Phoenix)
- More Female (41% vs. 21-29% in other cities)
- Differences in Race/Ethnicity
Race/Ethnicity

- **White**
  - Houston: 10%
  - L.A.: 18%
  - Phoenix: 28%
  - Denver: 41%

- **African-American**
  - Houston: 62%
  - L.A.: 27%
  - Phoenix: 23%
  - Denver: 19%

- **Hispanic**
  - Houston: 7%
  - L.A.: 19%
  - Phoenix: 16%
  - Denver: 13%

- **Multiracial**
  - Houston: 16%
  - L.A.: 20%
  - Phoenix: 19%
  - Denver: 18%
DISCUSSION/IMPLICATIONS
Sources of Resilience to Build On

• Youth are concerned about their futures, finding work, and getting an education

• Youth are resourceful in using multiple strategies to generate income

• Most youth have their high school diploma or GED

• Most youth have a smart phone and are using the internet regularly

• Many are using the internet to locate resources

• Most endorsed a variety of positive coping strategies
Implications for Intervention Development

- Complex Trauma from Childhood Experiences and Street Victimization highlight need for all services to be trauma informed

- Experiences of Discrimination were prevalent – counter with empowerment interventions; validate these experiences and their impact on mental health

- Interventions need to include career development – job placement, further education, future planning

- Identify areas where education and better community coordination can improve access and outcomes
Next Steps…

• Homeless Youth Healthcare Initiative (Just funded by Simmons Foundation)

• Further Analyses to Examine Subgroups, Predictors of Better Outcomes, Social Network Data

• National Dissemination with full data set (n=1400), federal funding applications

• Further conversations to better understand what drives homelessness in Houston, particularly highly disproportionate racial composition

• Texas version of HYRRS??
Limitations

• Convenience Sample – youth across cities are not directly comparable due to sampling strategy

• Cross-sectional data – only one point in time

• Self-report data – youth’s perceptions of their own challenges, bias for social desirability
How to find out more about our findings…

Website coming soon….

Homeless Youth Research Collaborative
HYRC.org
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Questions??  Comments??