

HOMELESS YOUTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT

THE NEEDS OF UNHOUSED YOUTH IN
METRO DENVER THROUGH A LENS OF
DATA, EQUITY, AND LIVED EXPERIENCE



Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder,
Broomfield, Denver, Douglas
and Jefferson Counties

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THOUGHTS FROM OUR YOUNG ADULT LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

Experiencing homelessness is just exactly that, an experience. Homelessness is not an identity.

"I would say the vast majority of people experiencing homelessness right now didn't ask to be homeless; they were put in that position. It was the worst time of my life but, it was a necessary struggle for my growth into the person I am now. I've experienced so much hate and violence on the streets, but it didn't affect me so bad to be hateful and violent to other people. Actually, I think it made me more kind and helpful toward people. Homelessness taught me the power of empathy. It sharpens empathy in a way only that person can understand. I learned a lot being homeless, but I was one of the lucky ones who got the chance to get out of the streets. A lot of people, my age included, don't get that opportunity."

"Being homeless has changed my life. I saw a whole different side of the world. I knew people were homeless, but I didn't see the population. I had a false image of homelessness until I was homeless."

"In late 2021, I found out I was pregnant. I went from worrying about just me and my significant other to worried about our baby and us. I was very scared about the future because I didn't know when I was going to get housing. I considered giving my baby away because I didn't want her to be on the street with me. I didn't get housing until two months before my baby was born. Being homeless is different for everyone. You could have a job and still live on the streets. As a teenager, I needed guidance, respect, and just support to push me to do more. I had to find that for myself."

"Being in this predicament completely changed the way I see the world, and I hope to see people get the help they deserve because no one should be homeless. The data that you are going to see reflects what real people go through. I want readers to understand that just because you are homeless doesn't mean you are less of a person. I want this report to open the public's eyes to the reality of what happens to some people."

*Young Adult
Leadership Committee*

MAKING THE HOMELESS
SYSTEM BETTER FOR YOUTH

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01

INTRODUCTION

Homelessness is not limited to the individuals we see, those characterized as "visibly" homeless. There is an entire subset of this population composed of children, families, youth, and others that make up the 'invisible' homeless. Historically in the region, 3 in 4 people experiencing homelessness are in emergency shelters, transitional housing, or other situations you may not see. This report seeks to bring visibility to our youngest and most vulnerable population experiencing homelessness - those 24 and under.

The purpose of this report is to provide meaningful insight into the nature of homelessness for unaccompanied and parenting youth aged 24 and under. The first of its kind in metro Denver, it consolidates six data sources to depict the overall issue of youth homelessness as it occurs across systems for a deeper understanding of the problem. While 'youth' under 18 and 'young adults' 18-24 have different needs and challenges, they are used interchangeably in this report.

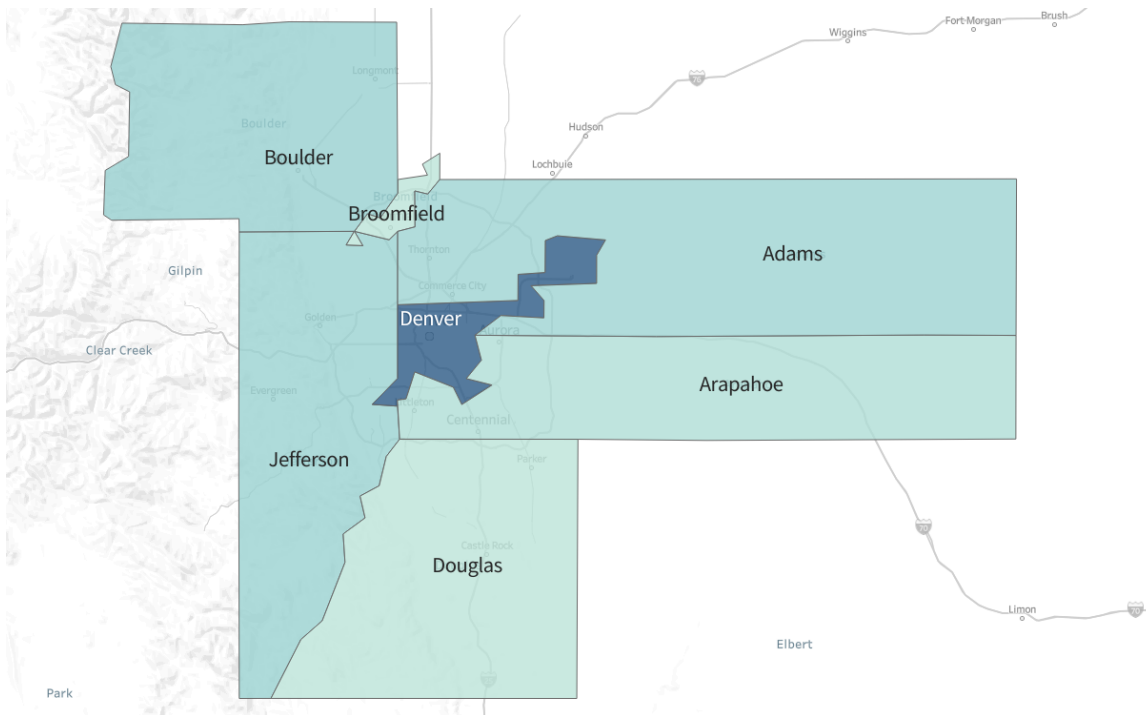
This report includes Community Outreach conducted in the Spring of 2023 with youth and providers across metro Denver to better understand their needs and experiences. While the 'Causes' and 'Disparities' identified in this report use all of the available data sources, the 'Needs' section that follows relies heavily on this outreach data.

We hope that by the end of this report, readers understand homelessness as a matter of systemic failures rather than personal shortcomings, by and large; recognize the disparities that exist for specific populations of youth; and use our findings to help guide decisions about housing resources and improvements to make the homeless system better for youth.

DATA SOURCE	METHODOLOGY	TIMEFRAME	DEFINITION
Colorado Homeless Management Information System (COHMIS or HMIS)	Statewide Data System, collects real-time data on individuals accessing homelessness services	CUMULATIVE July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022	Housing and Urban Development
Point in Time (PIT) Count	Survey, outreach, & HMIS system pull	SINGLE NIGHT January 24, 2022	Housing and Urban Development
Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT)	Providers administer the VI-SPDAT to people in a housing crisis and enter data into HMIS	CUMULATIVE July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022	Housing and Urban Development
Runaway & Homeless Youth (RHY) Program	RHY providers determine if a youth is eligible for RHY services and enroll them in the appropriate program	CUMULATIVE July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022	Runaway and Homeless Youth Act
McKinney-Vento Data from the Colorado Department of Education	Identification by school districts, tracked in Student Information System (SIS)	CUMULATIVE 2021-2022 School Year	United States Department of Education
Community Outreach	Homeless Youth Survey, Provider Survey, and Youth-Led Listening Space	Spring 2023	Self-Reported

BACKGROUND

A Continuum of Care (CoC) is a regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals. The metro-Denver region’s CoC is made up of seven counties including Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson. The views detailed in this report are those of the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI), the region’s CoC.



Part of MDHI’s role as the regional CoC includes overseeing the region’s Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), conducting the annual Point in Time (PIT) count, and creating a Coordinated Entry (CE) system. Each of these activities provides data points on homelessness that are included in this report. Additionally, the most recent data from the Department of Education is included to provide more context to homelessness experienced by families, children, and youth in the region.

LIMITATIONS

This report synthesizes the current information available regarding homelessness in the region. However, as with any data surrounding the issue of homelessness, there are several key limitations. The data does not provide “apple-to-apple” comparisons across sources. Comparison is not possible nor advised. Significant differences in counts do appear; however, each of these data sets is unique in what, who, and how it measures homelessness. When combined, they create a deeper understanding of homelessness locally.

01 DIFFERENT DEFINITIONS OF HOMELESSNESS

Four definitions of homelessness are used for this report, provided by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, the US Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services, and youth in our Needs Assessment who self-identified as having lived experience of homelessness.

02 DIFFERENT TIMEFRAMES AND METHODOLOGIES

The Point in Time takes place on a single night; the HMIS, RHY, and VI-SPDAT data are cumulative (July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022); the McKinney Vento data is from the last reported school year; and the Needs Assessment was conducted in Spring 2023. Each source has different methodologies and reporting requirements for data collection.

03 LACKING STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

This data would benefit from statistical analysis to further explore the relationship and significance of the disparities homeless youth experience when compared to the general population and marginalized subsets of youth.

02 STATE OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

DATA SUMMARY

1,787

HMIS

Youth accessing services related to homelessness at HMIS Partner Agencies

07/01/21 - 06/30/2022

375

POINT IN TIME

Youth counted experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness on a single night

NIGHT OF 01/24/22

322

VI-SPDAT

People in youth households assessed by the VI-SPDAT in our Coordinated Entry System

07/01/21 - 06/30/2022

632

RHY

Unaccompanied homeless youth served by Runaway & Homeless Youth (RHY) projects

07/01/21 - 06/30/2022

952

MCKINNEY-VENTO

Students identified and reported by public school districts as experiencing homelessness

2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Homelessness is a growing challenge in the Denver metro area, and oftentimes public perception is at odds with the data on this issue. This Needs Assessment is intended to provide a comprehensive overview of the homeless youth system through a lens of data, lived expertise, and equity. The following is a summary of findings.

TOTAL HOMELESS YOUTH

The region's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) showed 1,787 youth accessing services related to homelessness in a one-year period between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022. During the same period, 632 unaccompanied youth were served by Runaway and Homeless Youth Projects. School districts also identified and reported 951 unaccompanied students experiencing the educational definition of homelessness during the 2021-2022 school year, and the 2022 Point in Time Count identified 375 youth experiencing literal homelessness on a single night in January.

CAUSES AND FACTORS

We analyzed data from six sources to identify the most prominent causes and contributing factors of youth homelessness. Across data sources, **the number one contributing factor to youth homelessness is family critical issues.** About 35% of unhoused youth were in Foster

Care. 1 in 3 youth served by Runaway and Homeless Youth Projects report insufficient family income, and 1 in 5 have an incarcerated parent. Of those assessed for housing resources, 70% say their current lack of stable housing is because of “unhealthy or abusive relationships at home or elsewhere.” Other leading contributing factors of youth homelessness include: a lack of support, eviction, abuse or violence, a lost job or inability to find work, mental or behavioral health, and a lack of affordable housing.

DISPARITIES

The following races experiencing homelessness are overrepresented compared to the local census across data sources: Black or African American (3.8X), Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (3.7X), American Indian or Alaska Native (3.1X), and Multiracial (2.6X) youth. The overrepresentation of these races results from a centuries-long history of oppression, ongoing systemic racism, and inequitable public policy decisions in healthcare, criminal justice, education, housing, child welfare, and income.

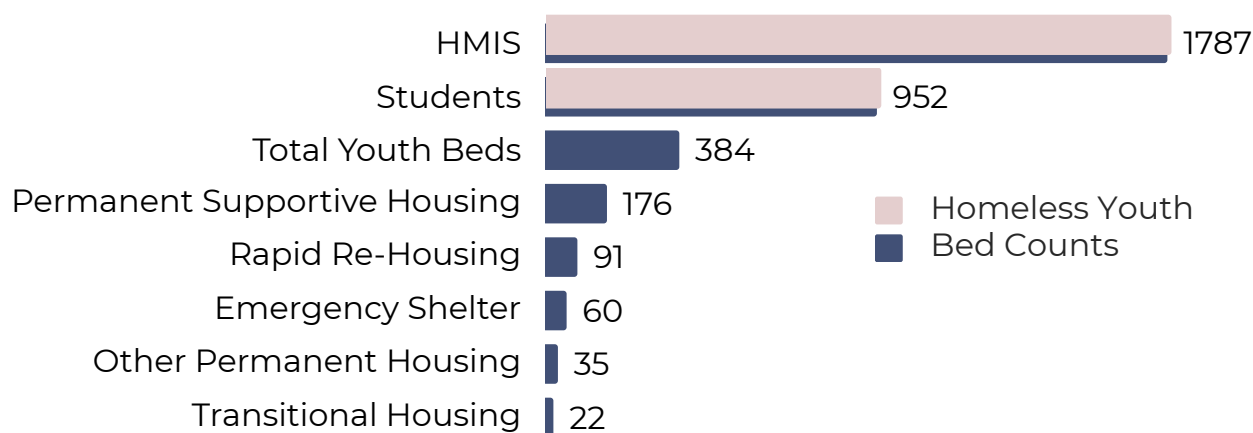
Point in Time data indicates that 20% of unhoused youth identify as LGBTQ+, while only 4.6% of adults in Colorado identify as such. LGBTQIA+ youth disproportionately experience homelessness compared to their straight and cisgender peers. Family conflict due to a lack of acceptance of a youth's sexual orientation and gender identity is a common cause of homelessness for LGBTQIA+ youth, who are at higher risk for assault, trauma, mental health conditions, and suicide.



BARRIERS

Homelessness is not the result of personal failings. This issue is rooted in systems: economic, justice, and health. When we asked young people about their barriers to housing, **54% said lack of income**, and **46% said lack of affordable housing**, followed by **mental health, lack of vital documents, and their age**. Other barriers include a lack of affordable housing or landlords willing to rent to them; trouble understanding the complexities of leases, vouchers, and other programs; as well as, criminal history, transportation, and childcare.

NEEDS



There are 1,787 homeless unaccompanied youth and 951 students experiencing homelessness, yet only 384 beds in our region are reserved for youth. This report calls for an increased number of youth-specific emergency shelter programs with flexible shelter stay time periods and requirements; increased host home programs; the adoption of a successful transitional housing model for youth aging out of foster care; and better coordination between RHY Programs and state funds for juvenile justice respite programs. These housing resources should be harm-reduction focused, designed with youth input and cross-sector collaboration, and supported by targeted interventions that meet the specific needs of local youth, specifically those who identify as BIPOC, parenting, and LGBTQ+.

03

DATA SOURCES

HOMELESS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

HUD defines an HMIS as "a local information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness." As the HMIS lead agency for the Metro Denver Continuum of Care, MDHI is responsible for managing an HMIS software solution that complies with HUD's standards.

The data collected helps us better understand the size, characteristics, and needs of the local population experiencing homelessness and play a part in program evaluation, grant writing, research coordination, tracking of services provided, and advancing effective fact-based funding and legislative decisions. The statewide HMIS system is called Clarity, a software developed by Bitfocus. Clarity is a highly collaborative system, which is crucial for providing optimal services.

METHOD

STATEWIDE DATA SYSTEM THAT COLLECTS
REAL-TIME DATA ON INDIVIDUALS
ACCESSING HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

TIMEFRAME

CUMULATIVE
JULY 1, 2021 - JUNE 30, 2022

HOMELESSNESS DEFINITION

HUD DEFINITION OF LITERALLY HOMELESS

Nearly 92% of shelter providers in Metro Denver and 100% of HUD-funded programs regularly enter client-level data into HMIS.

POINT IN TIME DATA

The Point in Time (PIT) is an annual count of people experiencing homelessness across the country on a single night in January. The data is meant to be representative of homelessness “on any given night,” specifically during the winter months. As the CoC, MDHI works closely with leads in the seven counties to determine the needs and resources of each community, organize the count and survey, and ensure compliance with HUD guidelines. There are slight variations in each community’s approach depending on their needs and resources.



LIMITATIONS

The PIT has several factors such as weather, capacity, volunteer engagement, etc. that may result in an undercount.

DID YOU KNOW?

People staying with friends, family, or paying for a hotel are considered 'at risk of homelessness' and not included in this count.

METHOD

SURVEY, OUTREACH, & HMIS SYSTEM PULL

TIMEFRAME

NIGHT OF JANUARY 24, 2022

HOMELESSNESS DEFINITION

HUD DEFINITION OF LITERALLY HOMELESS

YOUTH SUPPLEMENTAL SURVEY (YSS)

The YSS is a youth-specific survey administered to those aged 24 and under during the night of the Point in Time count. This survey is optional for youth and provides additional data around gender identity, sexual orientation, criminal justice and foster care involvement, school completion status, history of homelessness, and barriers to housing.

VI-SPDAT DATA

The TAY-VI-SPDAT (Transition Age Youth Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool) is administered to young people aged 24 and under seeking housing or homelessness services. The tool measures client vulnerability and is one of many factors used to dynamically prioritize clients for the limited number of housing resources in our Coordinated Entry System. All data is entered into the Colorado HMIS database.

People experiencing homelessness are first administered the OneHome Initial Screener to determine if they should be enrolled in the Coordinated Entry Program in HMIS. To complete an assessment and enter Metro Denver's Coordinated Entry System as a youth, one must meet HUD's literal homeless criteria and be 18-24, with or without children in the household. Young adults (age 18-24) who are at-risk of homelessness, as defined by HUD, and have been in foster care at least one day on or after their 16th birthday are also eligible. Clients with at least one minor child in the household are administered the Family VI-SPDAT, regardless of the head of the household's age.

This data also includes responses from those 24 and under who were incorrectly administered the individual VI-SPDAT instead of the TAY.

“I was ignored by my psychologist, I was ignored by my school or the people I was living with, and I OD'd, and I was still being ignored. And people weren't willing to believe or understand what I was going through. They thought it was better to kick me out instead of helping and acknowledging; because they were ignoring me, that's what made me feel like I was alone; not having the support or mental health resources”

YOUNG ADULT WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

ADDRESSING RACIAL INEQUITIES IN COORDINATED ENTRY

In 2021, MDHI partnered with C4 Innovations to analyze racial inequities in our Coordinated Entry System (CES). As part of the continued work, the Results Academy working group was formed to advise and partner in the upcoming CES redesign, ensuring there are racially equitable goals and outcomes. Members from our Young Adult Leadership Committee participate alongside front-line staff, and community leadership.



LIMITATIONS

Not all data fields are required. While the VI-SPDAT has also been proven to be racially inequitable, our CES has worked to address these inequities by rewording the questions and addressing prioritization criteria.

DID YOU KNOW?

People staying with friends, family, or in a motel paid for by themselves are considered 'at risk of homelessness' and not included in this count.

METHOD

PROVIDERS ADMINISTER THE VI-SPDAT TO ELIGIBLE HOUSEHOLDS AND ENTER DATA INTO HMIS

TIMEFRAME

CUMULATIVE
JULY 1, 2021 - JUNE 30, 2022

HOMELESSNESS DEFINITION

HUD DEFINITION OF LITERALLY HOMELESS

Full eligibility criteria and a map of Access Points for our Coordinated Entry System is available on our website at mdhi.org.

RUNAWAY & HOMELESS YOUTH DATA

According to the Family and Youth Services Bureau, the Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Program "serves as the national leader for the provision of shelter services to unaccompanied homeless youth." Grants are administered to public and private organizations that provide outreach, crisis intervention, emergency shelter, counseling, family reunification, and aftercare services to runaway and homeless youth and their families.



LIMITATIONS

This data set only includes youth aged 21 and under.

DID YOU KNOW?

RHY programs can serve Youth at Risk of Separation from the Family, which means an individual — (A) who is less than 18 years of age; and (B) (i) who has a history of running away from the family of such individual; (ii) whose parent, guardian, or custodian is not willing to provide for the basic needs of such individual; or (iii) who is at risk of entering the child welfare system or juvenile justice system as a result of the lack of services available to the family to meet such needs.

METHOD

RHY PROVIDERS DETERMINE IF A YOUTH IS ELIGIBLE FOR RHY SERVICES AND ENROLL THEM IN THE APPROPRIATE PROGRAM

TIMEFRAME

CUMULATIVE, JULY 1, 2021 - JUNE 30, 2022

HOMELESSNESS DEFINITION

RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH ACT

MCKINNEY-VENTO DATA

The McKinney Vento Act requires public school districts to identify, support, and report on students experiencing homelessness at some point during the school year. This data is sent to the U.S. Department of Education and is publicly available. Since this identification is intended to support the educational needs of students, the definition of homelessness under the Department of Education varies from HUD.



LIMITATIONS

This data only captures students enrolled in public schools, and does not include the entire household such as parents/guardians.

DID YOU KNOW?

People staying with friends, family, or in a motel due to economic hardship are included in the Dept. of Education's definition of homelessness.

METHOD

IDENTIFICATION BY SCHOOL DISTRICTS, TRACKED IN STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (SIS)

TIMEFRAME

CUMULATIVE SCHOOL YEAR 2020-2021, LAST AVAILABLE

HOMELESSNESS DEFINITION

US DEPT. OF EDUCATION



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

In the Spring of 2023, MDHI conducted a comprehensive three-part assessment to better understand the needs of young people experiencing homelessness in our community and those serving them.

The Youth Homelessness Needs Assessment collected and compiled data from the following methods:

- Youth-Led Listening Space
- Homeless Youth Survey
- Homeless Youth Provider Survey

YOUTH LISTENING SPACE		YOUTH SURVEY	PROVIDER SURVEY
Young Adult Facilitators	Young Adult Participants	Young Adult Responses	Homelessness Provider Responses
4	10	57	42

METHOD

LISTENING SPACE, YOUTH SURVEY, PROVIDER SURVEY

TIMEFRAME

SPRING 2023

HOMELESSNESS DEFINITION

SELF-IDENTIFIED AS HOMELESS

YOUTH-LED LISTENING SPACE

On April 26, 2023, MDHI's Young Adult Leadership Committee (YALC) facilitated a Listening Space with young people at Urban Peak's shelter and drop-in center in the heart of downtown Denver. We asked them questions about barriers to housing, problems with shelter, and how they would like to see the system change. In the future, we would like to hold more of these spaces to ensure we are capturing the needs of youth across the region, especially as we test system improvements. Youth were paid with a \$50 gift card.

HOMELESS YOUTH SURVEY

The YALC co-designed the survey with the staff lead based on federal funding requirements and examples from other communities. The survey consisted of 27 optional questions, all designed with a trauma-informed approach. It provides more quantitative data than the listening space, while also leaving room for narrative feedback. We partnered with our provider community and local outreach team at Urban Peak to ensure the survey could be accessed by youth across the region. Youth were paid with \$10-15 gift cards.

COMMUNITY PROVIDER SURVEY

This survey was open to anyone in metro Denver working with unhoused youth aged 24 and under. We wanted to know more about how they include youth voices and address the needs of special populations, as well as how we can better support their work.

MDHI would like to thank all the young adults who participated in this process for their trust, vulnerability, and insight; the youth providers who care deeply about the system we serve and the outcomes of our young people; and the Central Florida CoC and the Sacramento CoC for providing valuable insight into this process.

04

DEMOGRAPHICS

“There were many nights we had to sleep in piles of snow because the only youth shelters we knew and was told or given any information about did not allow us to come back. And other shelters were not able to take us in because I was not 21 I was only 18. I believe more youth services should be offered as many times we found ourselves helpless.”

YOUTH WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

The following section outlines data on youth-only households for both sheltered and unsheltered living situations. This includes transition-aged youth 18-24, unaccompanied youth, parenting youth, and students.

While the definition of “unaccompanied youth” varies between HUD, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the US Department of Education, the issue remains the same – we are failing young people in this country, particularly those exiting foster care.

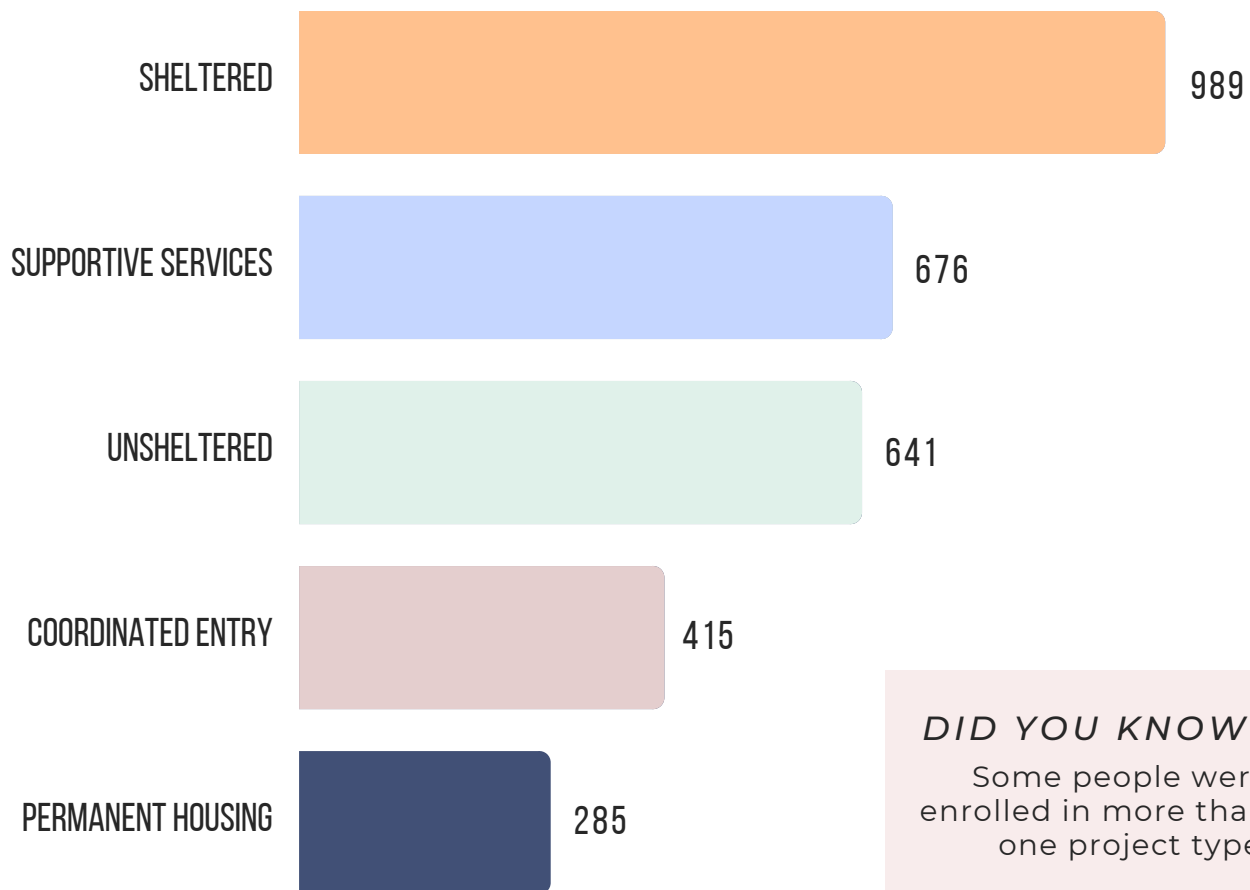
When surveyed during an MDHI Listening and Healing Session, young adults with lived experience were adamant about a few recurring themes:

- Being looked down on or stigmatized as "homeless" or "young"
- Racial and financial inequity
- Lack of trust in "the system" to empathize or meet their needs

YOUTH HMIS DATA

1,787 YOUTH
ACCESSED HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

YOUTH SERVED BY PROJECT TYPE

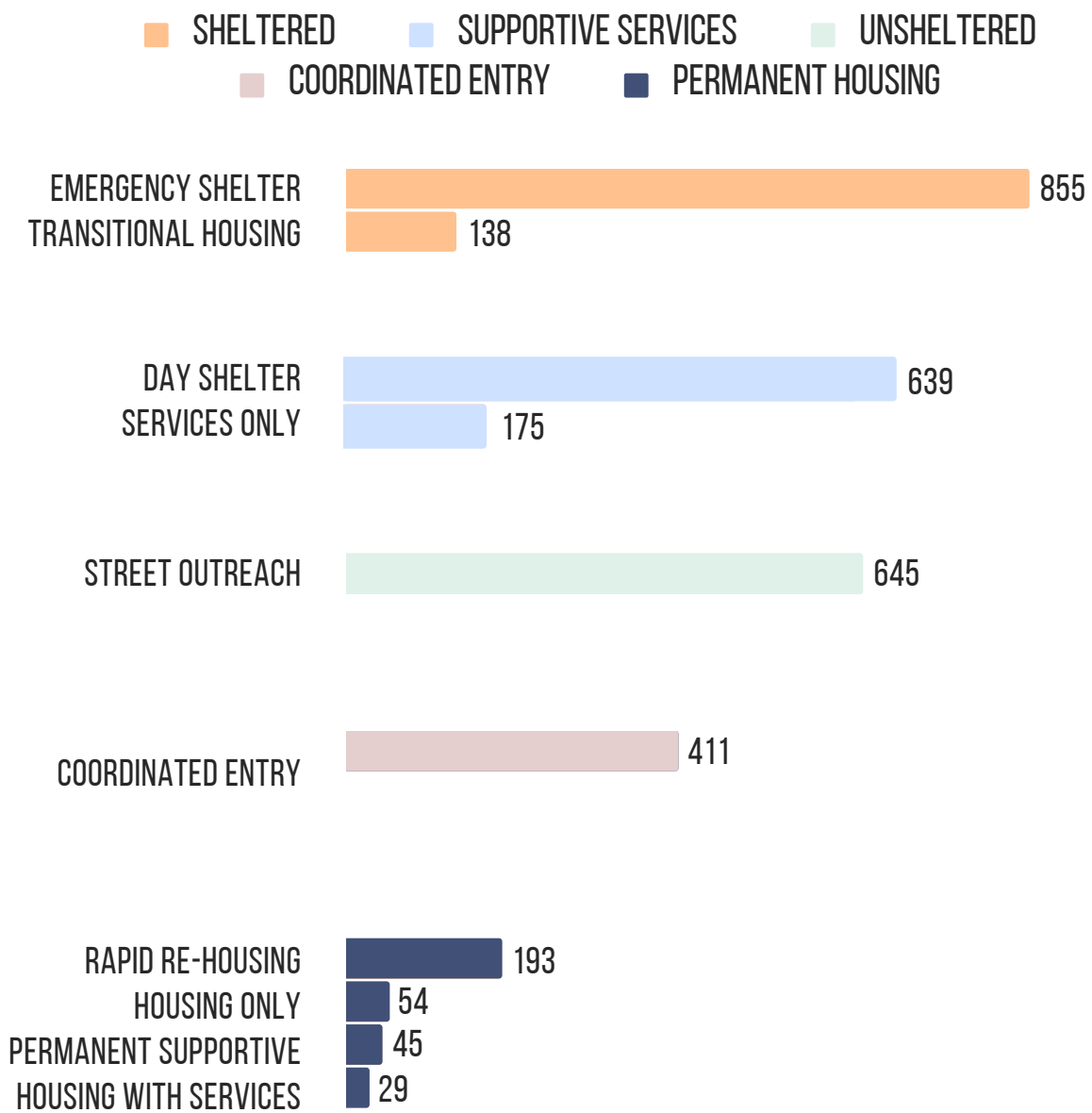


**While people in housing are no longer considered homeless, those in Permanent Housing were counted because they were experiencing homelessness at the time of enrollment.*

YOUTH HMIS DATA

1,787 YOUTH
ACCESSED HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

PROJECT TYPE BREAKDOWNS



YOUTH HMIS DATA

This data represents the number of youth households accessing services or housing related to homelessness at HMIS Partner Agencies in Metro Denver between July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022.

"Exiting the foster care system is feeling and being basically homeless. The challenges? The dangers of being robbed or harm or losing the little bit we do have. The worries of where will I live and what happens if I can't afford it."

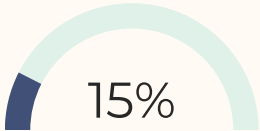
YOUTH WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

1,787 YOUTH
ACCESSED HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

GENDER	YOUTH
Male	49.2%
Female	45.6%
Nonconforming	2.8%
Transgender	1.9%

AGE	YOUTH
0 to 17	16.1%
18 to 24	83.9%

OTHER FACTORS	YOUTH
Disabling Condition	45.3%
Chronically Homeless	21.1%



Newly Homeless
Experiencing homelessness for the first time

YOUTH POINT IN TIME

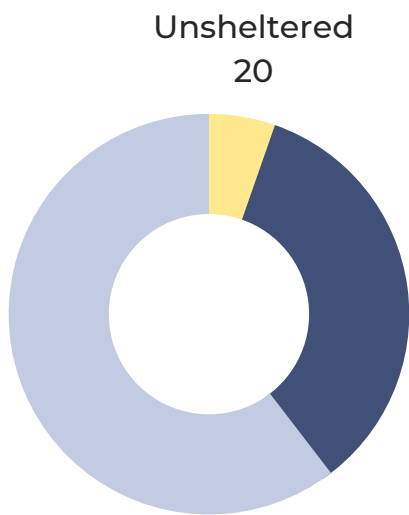
375 YOUTH
COUNTED ON 01/24/22

This data represents the number of youth in youth-only households ages 0-24 counted during the annual Point in Time. The count took place on January 24, 2022, and includes those staying in emergency shelters, safe havens, transitional housing, and places outside not meant for human habitation. It is a snapshot of the many youth experiencing homelessness on a single night and does not include those staying with friends, family, or in a motel.

WHERE THEY STAYED THAT NIGHT

20 UNSHELTERED

355 SHELTERED



Transitional Housing
128

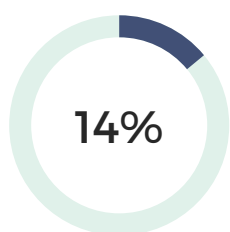
Emergency Shelter
226

'Sheltered' includes Transitional Housing, Safe Haven, and Emergency Shelter.

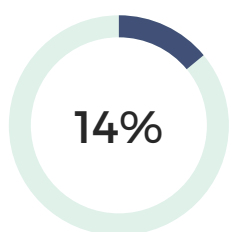
4 in 10 Newly Homeless
Experiencing homelessness for the first time

CONDITIONS AND BARRIERS FOR YOUTH

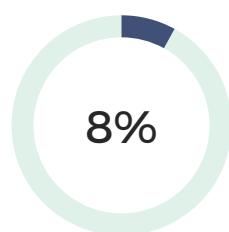
People counted during the Point in Time are asked to complete an optional survey. This survey collects information about their length of time homeless, factors contributing to homelessness, household demographics, and conditions or barriers. This data helps us understand the makeup and challenges of our local unhoused population.



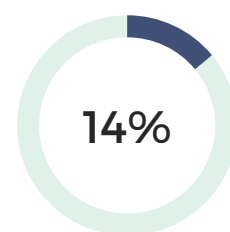
Disabling Condition



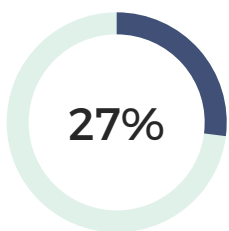
Chronic Health Condition



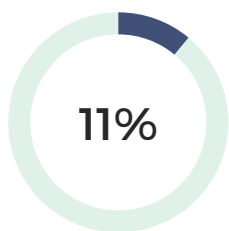
Developmental Condition



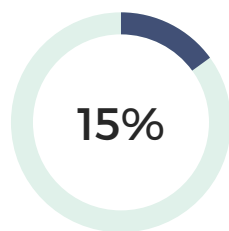
Domestic Violence



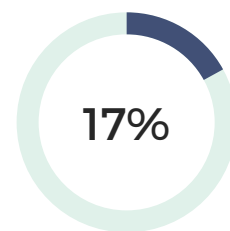
Mental Health Concern



Physical Disability



Substance Use



Chronically Homeless

"I feel angry when there is a lack of empathy for youth experiencing these barriers. You think people working in this field would want to really help. I know people had it worse, and that upsets me because I know that the outcomes are negative. When we lean on institutions for support and they don't support us, it is upsetting. They were not focusing on me as an individual, but more as a behavior problem."

YOUTH WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

YOUTH POINT IN TIME

375 YOUTH
COUNTED ON 01/24/22

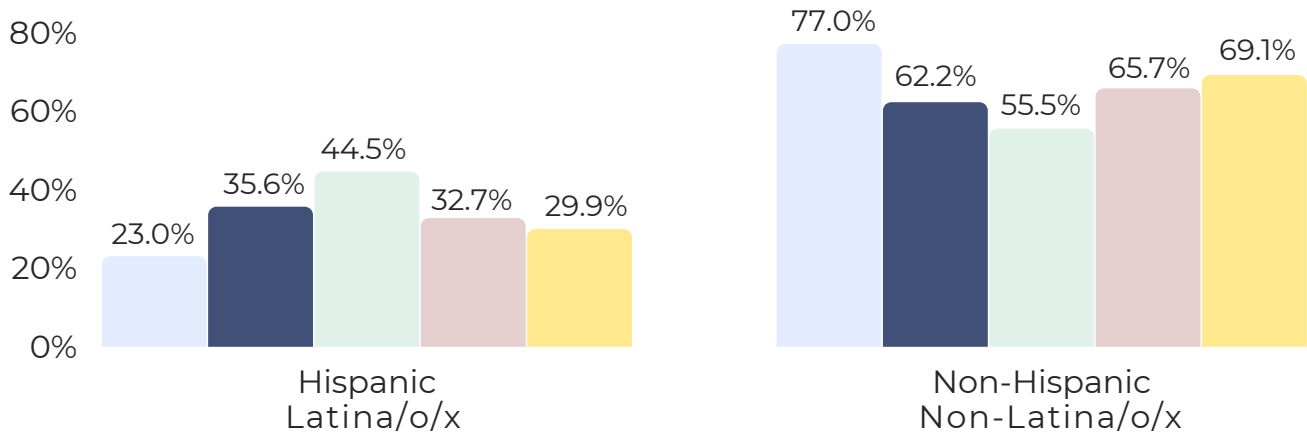
AGE	YOUTH
0 to 17	26.1%
18 to 24	73.9%

GENDER	YOUTH
Male	61.1%
Female	36.0%
Nonconforming	1.6%
Transgender	1.3%

View an [Interactive Dashboard](https://www.mdhl.org/PIT) of the 2022 Point in Time Data or [reports](https://www.mdhl.org/PIT) at [MDHL.org/PIT](https://www.mdhl.org/PIT).

ETHNICITY ACROSS SOURCES

■ Census ■ HMIS ■ PIT ■ VI-SPDAT ■ RHY



YOUTH VI-SPDAT DATA

This data represents the number of youth aged 24 and under assessed for Metro Denver's Coordinated Entry System at OneHome Partner Agencies between July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022.

322 YOUTH
 ASSESSED FOR COORDINATED ENTRY

GENDER	YOUTH
Female	52.8%
Male	38.8%
Nonconforming	5.3%
Transgender	3.1%

AGE	YOUTH
17	1.2%
18	13.4%
19	16.5%
20	14.9%
21	12.4%
22	14.0%
23	13.4%
24	14.3%

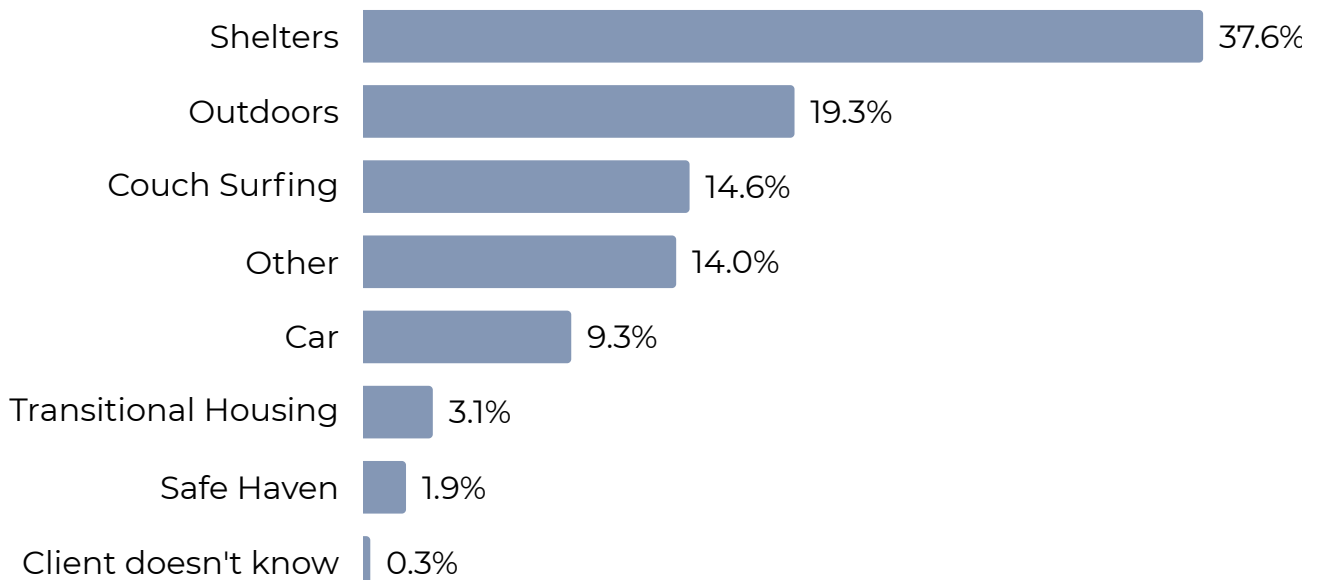
“I was taught to survive first; I didn’t even know about mental health, let alone safe and stable housing. There needs to be someone who steps in before it gets to that point. There is a lack of supports that make underage people feel unsafe when they come from abusive homes. I came from an abusive home. I came from a different country and none of the supports available to me made me feel safe.”

YOUTH WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

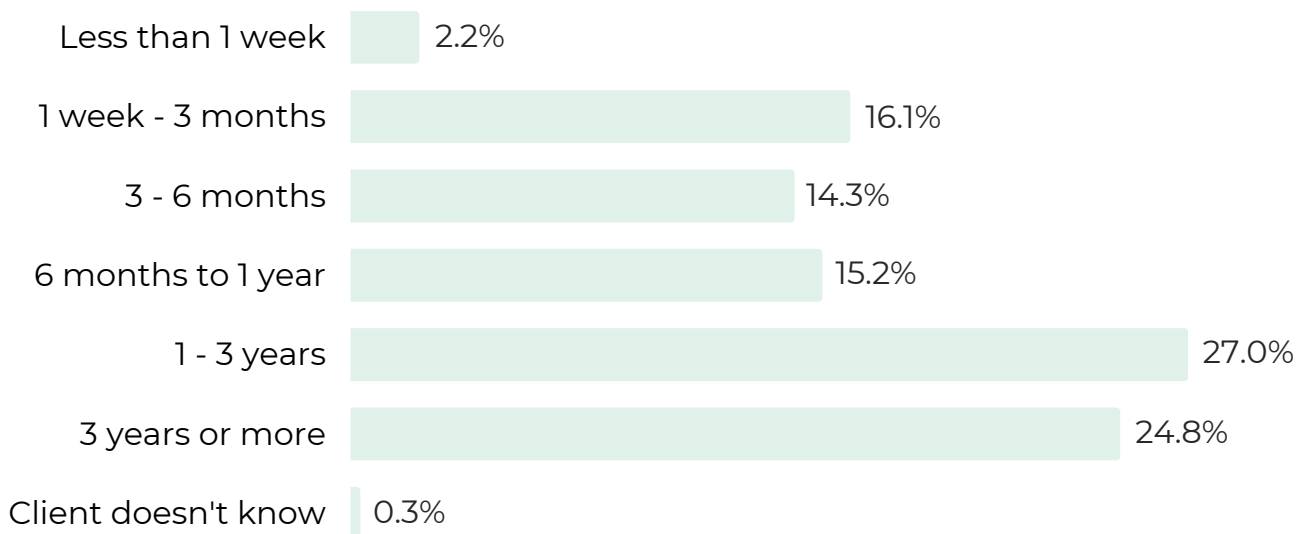
YOUTH VI-SPDAT DATA

322 YOUTH
ASSESSED FOR COORDINATED ENTRY

WHERE DO YOU SLEEP MOST FREQUENTLY?

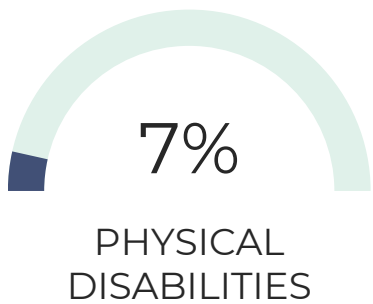
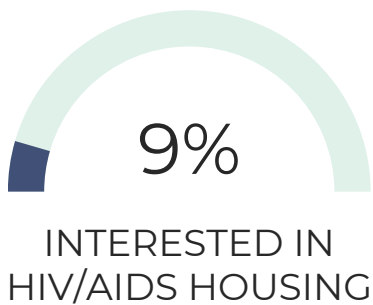
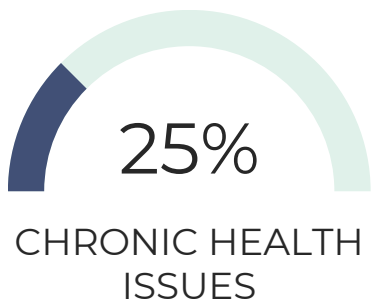
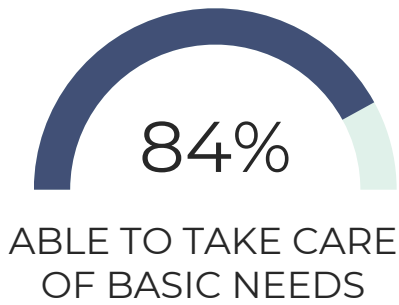


HOW LONG SINCE YOU LIVED IN PERMANENT, STABLE HOUSING?



YOUTH VI-SPDAT DATA

322 YOUTH
ASSESSED FOR COORDINATED ENTRY



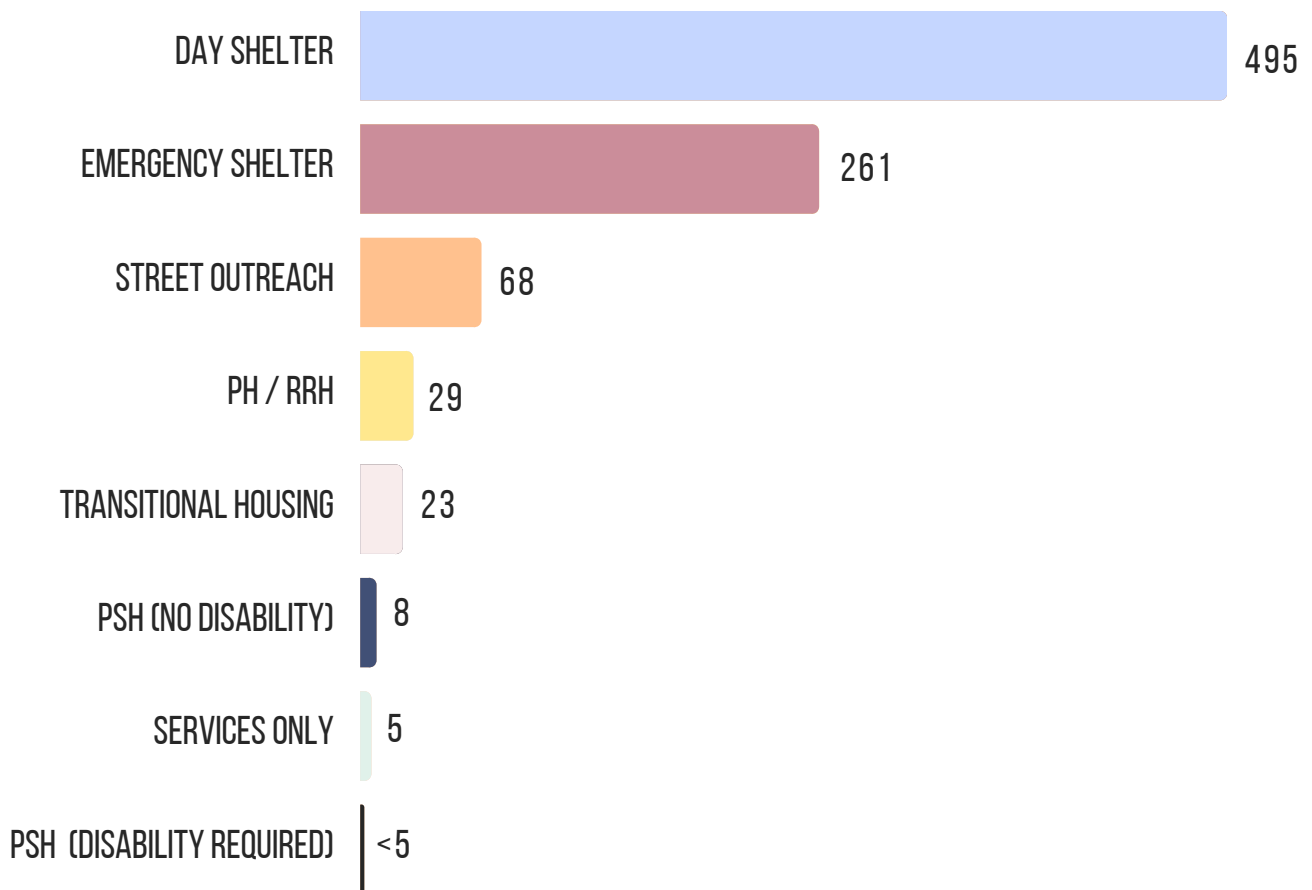
TIMES HOMELESS IN PAST 3 YEARS	YOUTH
0 times	1.9%
1 time	34.8%
2 times	23.9%
3 times	8.1%
4 times	6.8%
5 or more times	24.2%
Client doesn't know	0.3%

PRIOR LIVING	YOUTH
Adams County	13.4%
Arapahoe County	11.5%
Boulder County	5.3%
Denver County	28.0%
Douglas County	1.2%
Jefferson County	10.2%
Other	30.4%

YOUTH RUNAWAY & HOMELESS

632 YOUTH
IN RHY PROJECTS

PEOPLE SERVED BY PROJECT TYPE



**While people in housing are no longer considered homeless, those in Permanent Housing were counted because they were experiencing homelessness at the time of enrollment.*

YOUTH RUNAWAY & HOMELESS

632 YOUTH
IN RHY PROJECTS

PROJECT TYPE BREAKDOWNS

- SHELTERED
- SUPPORTIVE SERVICES
- UNSHELTERED
- COORDINATED ENTRY
- PERMANENT HOUSING

EMERGENCY SHELTER 855
 TRANSITIONAL HOUSING 138

DAY SHELTER 639
 SERVICES ONLY 175

STREET OUTREACH 645

COORDINATED ENTRY 411

RAPID RE-HOUSING 193
 HOUSING ONLY 54
 PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE 45
 HOUSING WITH SERVICES 29

*1063 TOTAL RHY
PROJECT
ENROLLMENTS*

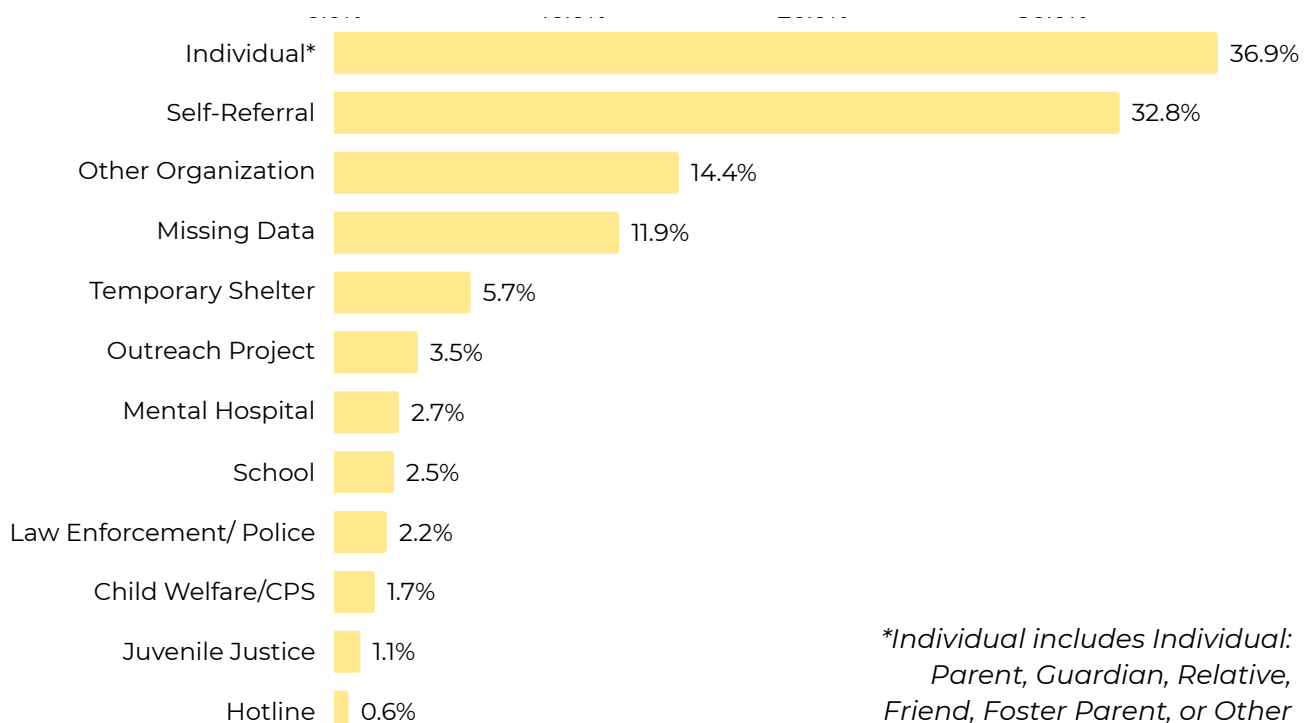
YOUTH RUNAWAY & HOMELESS

632 YOUTH
IN RHY PROJECTS

AGE	PEOPLE
0 to 9	0.8%
10 to 15	2.7%
16 to 17	14.1%
18	18%
19 to 20	32.8%
21 to 24	35.4%

GENDER	PEOPLE
Male	56.0%
Female	36.2%
Transgender	5.1%
Nonconforming	2.7%

RHY REFERRAL SOURCE



**Individual includes Individual: Parent, Guardian, Relative, Friend, Foster Parent, or Other*

YOUTH RUNAWAY & HOMELESS

632 YOUTH
IN RHY PROJECTS

The following data breaks down each prior living situation for total youth enrolled in RHY projects and their length of stay in their prior living situation. Half of youth were homeless (50.6%), entering the project from an emergency shelter, place not meant for human habitation, or safe haven.

PRIOR LIVING SITUATION CATEGORY	YOUTH
Homeless Situations	50.6%
Emergency shelter, including motel or host home	19.6%
Place not meant for habitation	33.1%
Safe Haven	0.6%
Temporary Housing Situations	41.2%
Institutional Situation	7.6%
Permanent Housing Situations	5.2%
Missing Data	0.6%
Other	0.6%

Length of Stay in Prior Living Situation	YOUTH
One night or Less	17.4%
Two to six nights	22.2%
One week or more, but less than one month	21.5%
One month or more, but less than 90 days	18.5%
90 days or more, but less than one year	19.6%
One year or longer	14.7%
Missing Data	1.9%

STUDENTS MCKINNEY-VENTO

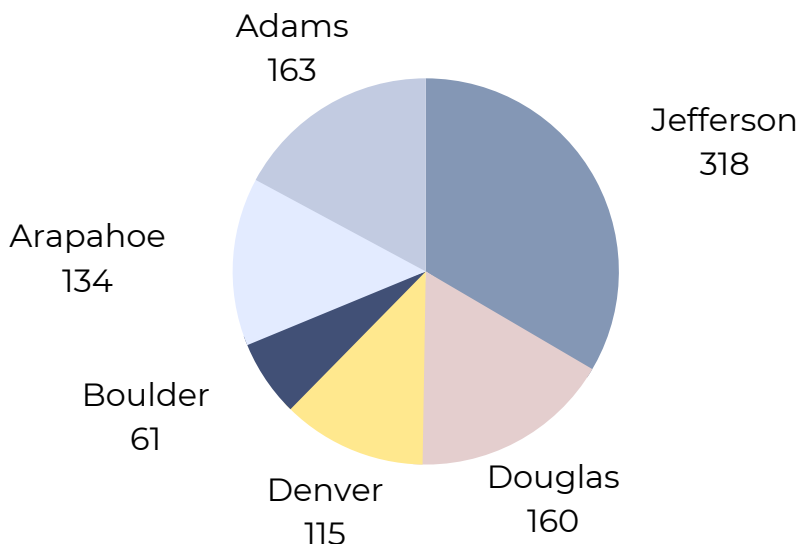
951 STUDENTS
UNACCOMPANIED & HOMELESS

Unaccompanied youth are included in this count and must also fit the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness to qualify for assistance. Under this definition, homeless refers to lacking a “fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence” [42 U.S.C. § 11434a(2)(a)]. The term “unaccompanied” refers to a youth “not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian” [42 U.S.C. § 11434a(6)].

TOTAL COUNT OF UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH BY COUNTY

2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR

Schools identified 951 students that were unaccompanied and homeless across metro Denver.

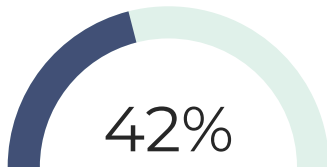


“My biggest problem with me personally experiencing homelessness is mental health as well as family issues. I was constantly kicked out every time I was allowed back home with no care about my well-being at all. The mental health part of it was not getting the right treatment or any treatment at all and addiction also played a part in that story.”

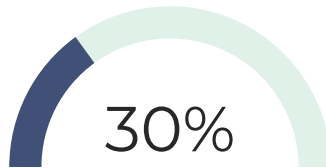
YOUNG ADULT WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

YOUTH COMMUNITY OUTREACH

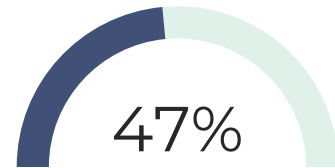
57 YOUTH
RESPONDED TO SURVEY



42%
PREGNANT OR
PARENTING



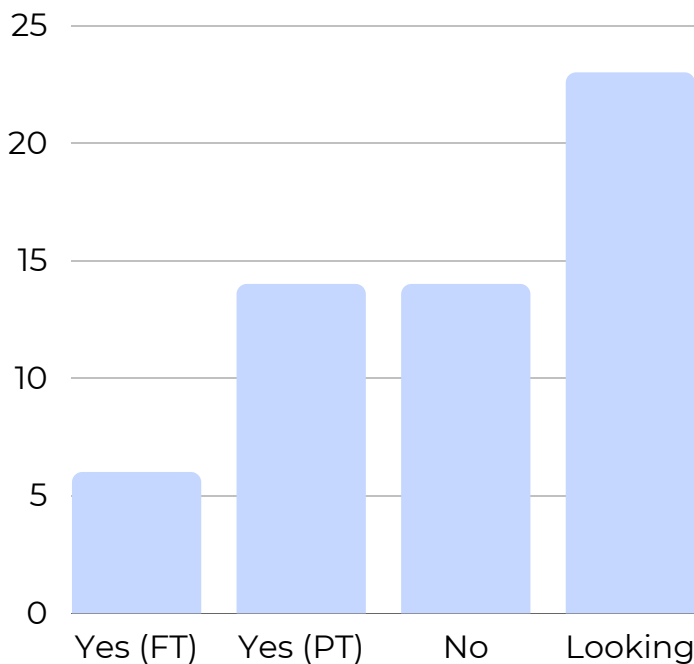
30%
FOSTER CARE
INVOLVEMENT



47%
CRIMINAL JUSTICE
INVOLVEMENT

AGE	0-17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25+
YOUTH	8.8%	10.5%	17.5%	8.8%	10.5%	8.8%	7.0%	5.3%	22.8%

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

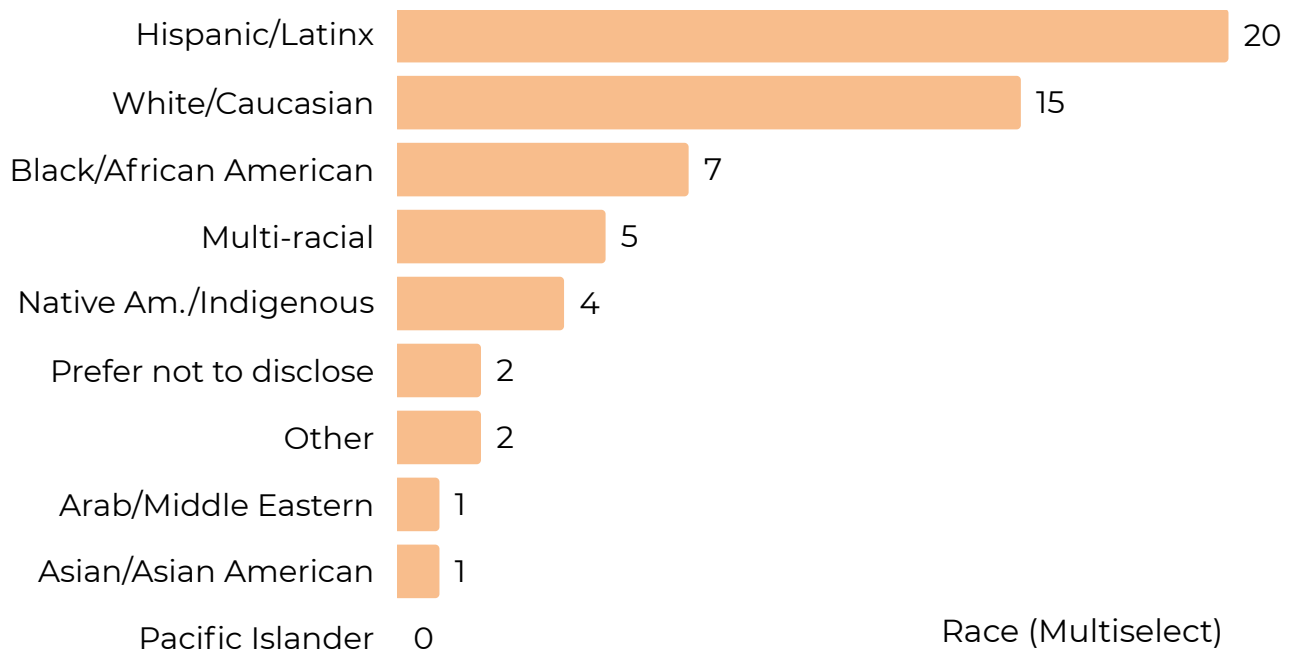
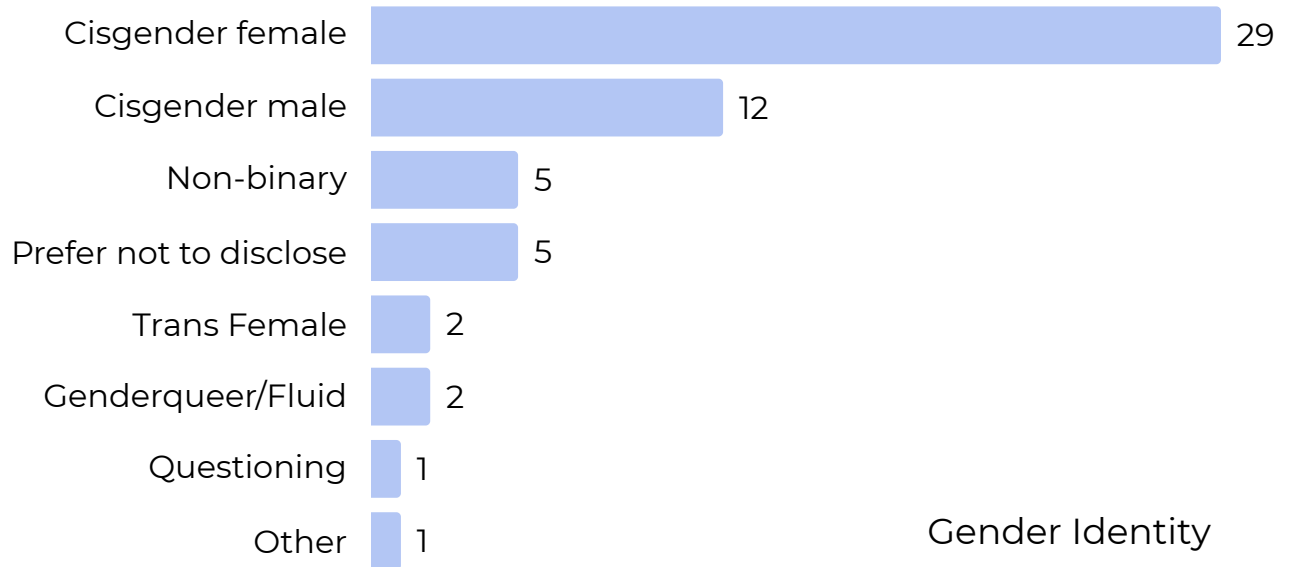


COUNTY	YOUTH
Adams	7.0%
Arapahoe	14.0%
Boulder	28.0%
Denver	61.4%
Jefferson	5.3%
Other	1.8%

EDUCATION	YOUTH
In School	28.6%
Not In School	58.9%
Obtaining GED	12.5%

YOUTH COMMUNITY OUTREACH

57 YOUTH
RESPONDED TO SURVEY



Please note that this does not include information about the 10 youth lived experts who participated in our qualitative listening space.

05

KEY FINDINGS

All the data collected from youth experiencing homelessness tell a compelling story that goes against most of the common stereotypes. This data has been organized in the following three parts so that our community can better understand the causes, disparities, and needs of young people experiencing homelessness in Metro Denver.

1

CAUSES

The factors contributing to youth homelessness as reported by youth and local providers, as well as those identified at the system-level

2

DISPARITIES

The disparities and overrepresentation experienced by historically marginalized youth, such as LGBTQ+ and Black, Indigenous, Youth of Color

3

NEEDS

The self-reported needs, preferences, and barriers to housing of young people experiencing homelessness and those who serve them locally

KEY FINDINGS

CAUSES



There are many causes of homelessness, and no list is exhaustive. Sometimes there is no singular cause, but rather several contributing factors. The following data comes from different sources that don't always frame this question of cause in the same exact way, but when viewing data side-by-side, we can start to see the bigger picture: **Young people are rarely the cause of their own homelessness.**

Across sources, the **primary cause or contributing factor of youth homelessness is family critical issues or breakups.** When coupled with rising rents and low wages, it becomes increasingly difficult for young people to secure stable housing in one of the most expensive metro areas in the country. Lack of support, domestic violence, difficulty finding work, and issues with mental health or substance use also commonly contribute.

"I did everything right, I graduated early from high school and even graduated from trade school by the age of 16. I lived life to the fullest potential, and I still ended up experiencing something so life-changing. I guess all I really want others to know is that the Universe already has set paths for us, and some things are inevitable, and those paths are no ideal to the unspoken standards we hold each other to as a society. Which is absolutely okay. You can start helping those experiencing homelessness by realizing that it is just an experience, not an identification."

SAVANNAH, YOUNG ADULT LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

CAUSES SELF-REPORTED

The top 5 factors contributing to homelessness according to HMIS and Youth Survey data.

Youth across data sources were asked some variation of the optional question: *Would you like to share the reasons or factors you feel contributed to your homelessness?* The following table displays the number of responses from young people aged 24 and under followed by the top 5 contributing factors for each data source.

	HMIS DATA	YOUTH SURVEY
#	1,787 Youth	57 Youth
1	Relationship or Family Breakup	Relationship or Family Breakup
2	Asked to Leave or Evicted	Lack of Support
3	Abuse or Violence in My Home	Mental or Behavioral Health
4	Lost a Job / Could Not Find Work	Domestic Violence
5	Unable to Pay Rent Mortgage	Substance Use

While clients had the option to choose multiple responses for HMIS based on their number of enrollments, only one positive response was recorded per unique client.

CAUSES SELF-REPORTED

The full data set from HMIS on factors contributing to youth homelessness locally.

#	FIELDS	YOUTH
1	Relationship Problems or Family Break-up	40%
2	Asked to Leave or Evicted	33%
3	Abuse or Violence in My Home	28%
4	Lost a Job or Could Not Find Work	22%
5	Unable to Pay Rent Mortgage	20%
6	Alcohol Substance Abuse Problems	20%
7	Mental Illness	19%
8	PTSD	14%
9	Family Member or Personal Illness	14%
10	Unable to Pay Utilities	12%
11	COVID-19	10%
12	Moved to Find Work	9%
13	Client Choice	8%
14	Legal Problems	7%
15	Bad Credit	7%
16	Problems with Public Benefits	7%
17	Discharged from Jail	6%
18	Disabling Conditions	6%
19	Reasons Related to My Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity	5%
20	Discharge from Foster Care	4%
21	Medical Expenses	3%
22	Reasons Related to my Race or Ethnicity	3%
23	Traumatic Brain Injury	3%
24	Language Barrier	2%
25	Discharged from Prison	1%

CAUSES SELF-REPORTED

The full data set from the Youth Survey on self-reported causes of youth homelessness

#	FIELDS	YOUTH
1	Relationship Problems or Family Breakup	88%
2	Lack of Support	76%
3	Mental or Behavioral Health	64%
4	Domestic Violence	55%
5	Substance Use	55%
6	Lost a Job or Could Not Find Work	43%
7	Loss of Family	38%
8	Involvement in Justice System	33%
9	Pregnancy or Parenting Challenges	24%
10	Disabling Conditions	21%
11	Gender ID or Sexual Orientation	14%
12	Aging Out of Foster Care	14%
13	Human Trafficking	2%

Our Homeless Youth Survey asked young people with lived experience of homelessness the following optional question to better understand the cause(s) of their homelessness: ***In your experience, what factors contributed to your homelessness?*** Respondents had the option to select as many answers as they wanted. Of the 57 youth who completed the survey, 42 responded to this question.

The following page compares youth responses to those from youth homelessness providers. A total of 42 providers completed the survey and identified the top factors contributing they believe are to youth homelessness locally. Youth and Providers agree that 'Relationship or Family Breakup' is the top factor contributing to youth homelessness.

CAUSES SELF-REPORTED

The top 5 factors contributing to homelessness identified by Youth and Providers.

#	YOUTH	PROVIDER
1	Relationship or Family Breakup	Relationship of Family Breakup
2	Lack of Support	Mental or Behavioral Health
3	Mental or Behavioral Health	Aging Out of Foster Care
4	Domestic Violence	Lack of Support
5	Substance Use	Substance Use
5	N/A	Gender ID or Sexual Orientation

There was also some variation between their responses:

- Providers identified 'Mental or Behavioral Health' as the second contributing factor, while youth identified this as the third
- Providers identified 'Aging Out of Foster Care' as the third contributing factor, which was 12/13 on our youth survey. It is possible Providers are observing from a systems-level perspective.
- This might also be true for 'Gender ID or Sexual Orientation', which was identified fifth by Providers and 11/13 by youth.

Providers were also asked to identify the top 3 factors contributing to homelessness for BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and parenting youth, who experience higher rates of homelessness than their peers.

#	BIPOC	LGBTQ+	PARENTING
1	Relationship or Family Breakup	Relationship or Family Breakup	Lack of Support
2	Lack of Support	Gender ID or Sexual Orientation	Relationship or Family Breakup
3	Mental or Behavioral Health	Lack of Support	Pregnancy or Parenting Challenges

CAUSES SELF-REPORTED

A question from the VI-SPDAT assessing self-reported causes of youth homelessness.

Young people aged 24 and under assessed for Coordinated Entry are asked about the reasons for their homelessness. They have the option to respond YES, NO, DOESN'T KNOW, or REFUSED.

Is your current lack of stable housing because of the following:

#	VI-SPDAT	YES
1	Unhealthy or abusive relationship, either at home or elsewhere	70.2%
2	Family or friends caused you to become homeless	38.2%
3	Violence at home between family members	28.3%
4	Ran away from your family home, a group home, or foster care	12.7%
5	A difference in religious or cultural beliefs from your parent, guardians, or caregivers	12.4%
6	Conflicts around gender identity or sexual orientation	9.3%

Fields 2-6 are only asked on the TAY-VISPDAT, which includes 180 responses. Parenting youth aged 24 and under assessed with the Family VI-SPDAT were only asked about the first field (142 responses).

CAUSES SELF-REPORTED

A question from the RHY Intake assessing Family Critical Issues, which contribute to homelessness.

FAMILY CRITICAL ISSUES

1 out of 3 Youth Report Insufficient Family Income

Data from the HMIS, PIT, Youth Survey, and VI-SPDAT all indicate relationship and family breakup as the leading cause of youth homelessness. Data about Family Critical Issues from Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) projects can help us better understand this contributing factor. Runaway and Homeless Youth assessed for RHY projects are asked to respond YES or NO to the following six *Family Critical Issues*. This data includes a total of 991 enrollments in RHY projects who responded between 07/01/21 - 06/30/22.

FAMILY CRITICAL ISSUES	YES	NO
UNEMPLOYMENT - FAMILY MEMBER	31%	69%
INSUFFICIENT INCOME - FAMILY MEMBER	33%	67%
MENTAL HEALTH - FAMILY MEMBER	40%	60%
PHYSICAL DISABILITY - FAMILY MEMBER	18%	82%
SUBSTANCE USE - FAMILY MEMBER	35%	65%
INCARCERATED PARENT	22%	78%

Of the Runaway and Homeless Youth surveyed:

- 1 out of 3 unhoused youth came from families dealing with economic issues such as **unemployment** or **insufficient income**
- 40% had a family member with a **mental health** issue
- 1 out of 5 unhoused youth had an **incarcerated parent**

CAUSES

SYSTEM-LEVEL

FOSTER CARE INVOLVEMENT

1/3 of the region’s unhoused youth were in Foster Care

Child welfare involvement is one of the primary causes of youth homelessness. The data below is self-reported from youth across three data sources and indicates their foster care involvement. Foster care can include residential childcare facilities, group homes, or out-of-home placement. Responses labeled as "missing" or "unsure" were discluded from the total responses.

SOURCE	QUESTION	YES	NO	RESPONSES
RHY INTAKE	Formerly a ward of child welfare/foster care agency	34%	66%	598
TAY-VISPDAT	Have you ever been in foster care?	38%	62%	232
PIT YSS	Have you ever been in foster care?	34%	66%	129

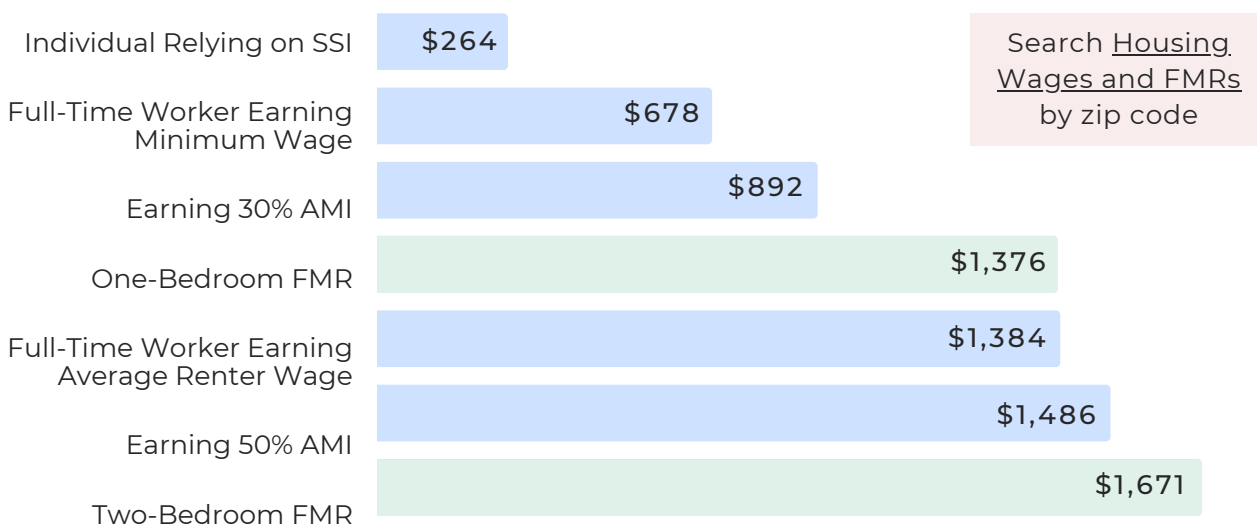
Youth in foster care often feel unheard by the system and unprepared for adulthood. There are currently no laws requiring foster parents to prepare these youth for adulthood. Many of these young people turn 18 and lack financial literacy, basic vital documentation such as a birth certificate or social security card, and a plan for job training or higher education. The system has failed to prepare them for success. This doesn't even account for the trauma many young people experience while in foster care, which only makes stable housing more difficult.

CAUSES SYSTEM-LEVEL

RENT IS UNAFFORDABLE

4

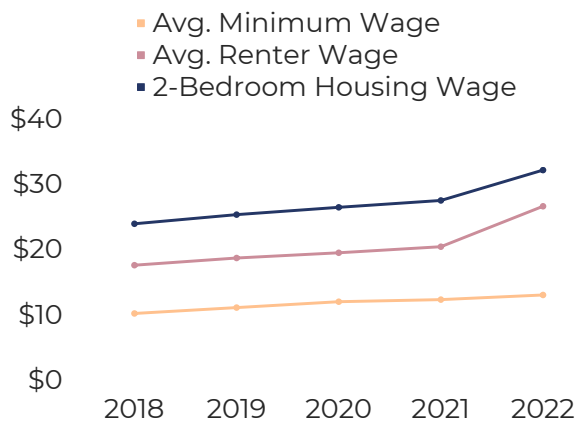
About 34% of households in Metro Denver are renters. The **blue** represents the rent people can afford at different incomes, and the **green** is the 2022 Fair Market Rent (FMR) for 1 and 2-bedroom rentals in Metro Denver. Anyone relying on Social Security Income (SSI), working full-time and earning minimum wage, or earning 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI) is at risk of homelessness due to housing affordability. Those earning 30% AMI account for 22% of all renters.



WAGES ARE TOO LOW

In 2022, the average minimum wage in Metro Denver was **\$13.03** and the average renter wage was **\$26.61**, yet the housing wage for a 2-bedroom Fair Market rental is **\$32.15**.

Data: National Low Income Housing Coalition, Averaging totals for the 7-county region



Fair Market Rent for a one-bedroom apartment in the Denver metro area is \$1,376. In order to afford this level of rent and utilities — without paying more than 30% of income on housing — a household must earn \$55,032 annually. Assuming 40 hours a week for 52 weeks, this translates to a housing wage of \$26.46 an hour. For a two-bedroom, this increases to \$34.83.

\$26.46

PER HOUR

METRO DENVER
HOUSING WAGE

ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

Low wages create barriers to affording our basic needs, and while the cost of living in metro Denver has risen rapidly, wages have not. This has made it increasingly difficult for people to afford the housing available. This is how many hours per week someone would have to work making the \$13.03 minimum wage to afford housing:

- 99 Work Hours/Per Week to Afford a 2-Bedroom FMR Rental⁴
- 82 Work Hours/Per Week to Afford a 1-Bedroom FMR Rental⁴

This is one reason why someone can have one or more jobs and still experience homelessness. Many full-time positions do not pay a wage in which people can afford the housing available.

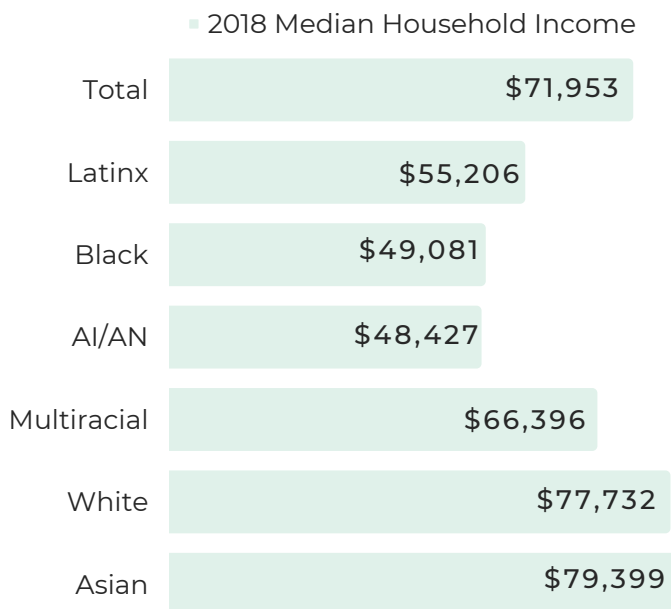
“[We need] more funding to create affordable housing. We have gentrified poor neighborhoods and left many low-income and lower-middle-class citizens homeless. As we create more housing for the rich when they are only 2 percent of this nation. Nonetheless, a better housing market that helps specifically African Americans and doesn’t operate under the umbrella of minority.”

YOUNG ADULT WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

RACIAL INCOME INEQUALITY

Household incomes in Colorado vary tremendously depending on race or ethnicity. The median incomes for Latinx, Black or African, American Indian or Alaska Native (AI/AN), and multiracial households were significantly less than the state median, while White and Asian households were slightly above.

Colorado Center on Law and Policy (CCLP).⁵



While middle-income Coloradans tends to hold constant across racial and ethnic groups, the highest and lowest income categories have a strong correlation with race and ethnicity. For example, while over 20% of Asian and White households fell into the upper-income category, less than 10% of Black/African₅ and American Indian/Alaska Native households were upper-income. Nearly half of Black households were considered lower income, even though they only represent one-third of Colorado households overall. These disparities demonstrate the relationship between race and income that make it difficult to rent or purchase housing.

SYSTEMIC RACISM

In metro Denver and across the country, people of color continue to experience homelessness and housing instability at disproportionate rates. The overrepresentation of Black and Indigenous people in the homeless population results from a centuries-long history of oppression, ongoing systemic racism, and inequitable public policy decisions in healthcare, criminal justice, education, housing, child welfare, and income. The following section offers some insight into the scope of systemic racism and how it directly contributes to people experiencing homelessness.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE INVOLVEMENT

The convergence of homelessness and the criminal justice system can perpetuate a cycle of disadvantage, where vulnerable young individuals face increased risks of arrest and legal entanglement due to survival-related activities. Factors such as lack of stable housing, limited access to education and employment opportunities, and exposure to violence can contribute to their involvement in minor offenses. To break this cycle, a holistic approach is essential, focusing on preventative measures, social support, mental health services, and targeted interventions that address both the immediate legal concerns and the underlying challenges these youths face.

27%

HAVE BEEN IN JAIL
OR PRISON

TAY-VISPDAT

24%

FORMERLY A WARD
OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

RHY INTAKE

18%

INCARCERATED
YOUNGER THAN 18

TAY-VISPDAT

25%

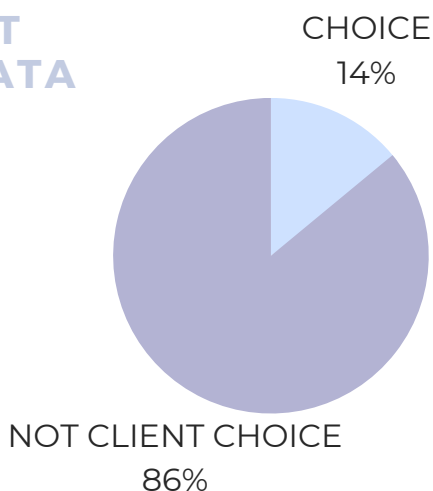
CRIMINAL JUSTICE
INVOLVEMENT

POINT IN TIME YSS

HOMELESSNESS IS RARELY A CHOICE

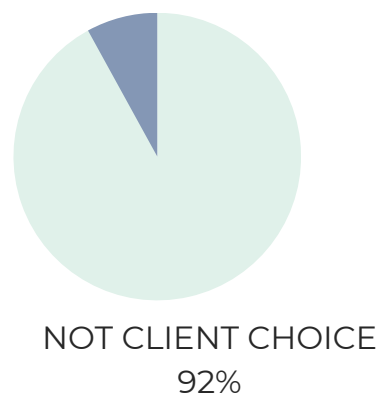
There is also a misconception about homelessness being a matter of 'personal choice.' However, our HMIS and Point in Time data indicate otherwise: the vast majority of youth did not choose to experience homelessness.

**PIT
DATA**



**CLIENT CHOICE
8%**

**HMIS
DATA**



In our recent Point in time and HMIS data, 86% and 92% of respondents did not choose to experience homelessness, respectively.

It is important to note that respondents were allowed to select multiple reasons or factors they feel contributed to their homelessness. So while some indicated that 'Client Choice' was a factor, this does not necessarily mean that it was the sole or primary cause of their homelessness. Homelessness may have been the safer option. There are many reasons people do not trust the system, specifically those who have been historically harmed by it. If rent were more affordable, higher wages were more attainable, and family units were more stable, then maybe fewer youth would have to experience homelessness. We must reflect on our society and the systems within it that are causing children, youth, and young adults to 'choose' homelessness because a decision made out of survival with no viable alternatives is hardly a choice.

KEY FINDINGS DISPARITIES

2

Intersectionality significantly influences the disparities faced by youth experiencing homelessness from marginalized backgrounds. When considering the convergence of factors such as race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status, these young individuals often confront a complex web of challenges. Discrimination and systemic biases can exacerbate their vulnerability, making it harder to access housing, support services, and employment opportunities.

For instance, LGBTQ+ youth may experience family rejection leading to homelessness, while Black and Indigenous youth often encounter racial profiling that puts them at higher risk of homelessness. The interplay of these identities creates unique barriers and requires tailored, culturally competent interventions to address the specific needs of these marginalized youth, making it imperative for advocacy efforts and support services to be sensitive to the intricate dynamics of intersectionality in homelessness.

“When I was constantly hurting people who are family to me over and over, I left. I decided that leaving and getting help somewhere else would be better for me especially if they were certified, so I became homeless because when I turned 18, I believed it would be easier.”

YOUTH OF COLOR WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

DISPARITIES

RACE

These racial groups are overrepresented in homelessness relative to their makeup of the general population per census data. These disparities are not the result of personal failures; they stem from centuries of systemic racism and inequities that directly cause homelessness and perpetuate generational trauma.

3.8 X

**OVERREPRESENTED
IN HOMELESSNESS**

**BLACK OR AFRICAN
AMERICAN**

3.7 X

**OVERREPRESENTED
IN HOMELESSNESS**

**NATIVE HAWAIIAN
OR PACIFIC ISLANDER**

3.1 X

**OVERREPRESENTED
IN HOMELESSNESS**

**AMERICAN INDIAN
OR ALASKA NATIVE**

2.6 X

**OVERREPRESENTED
IN HOMELESSNESS**

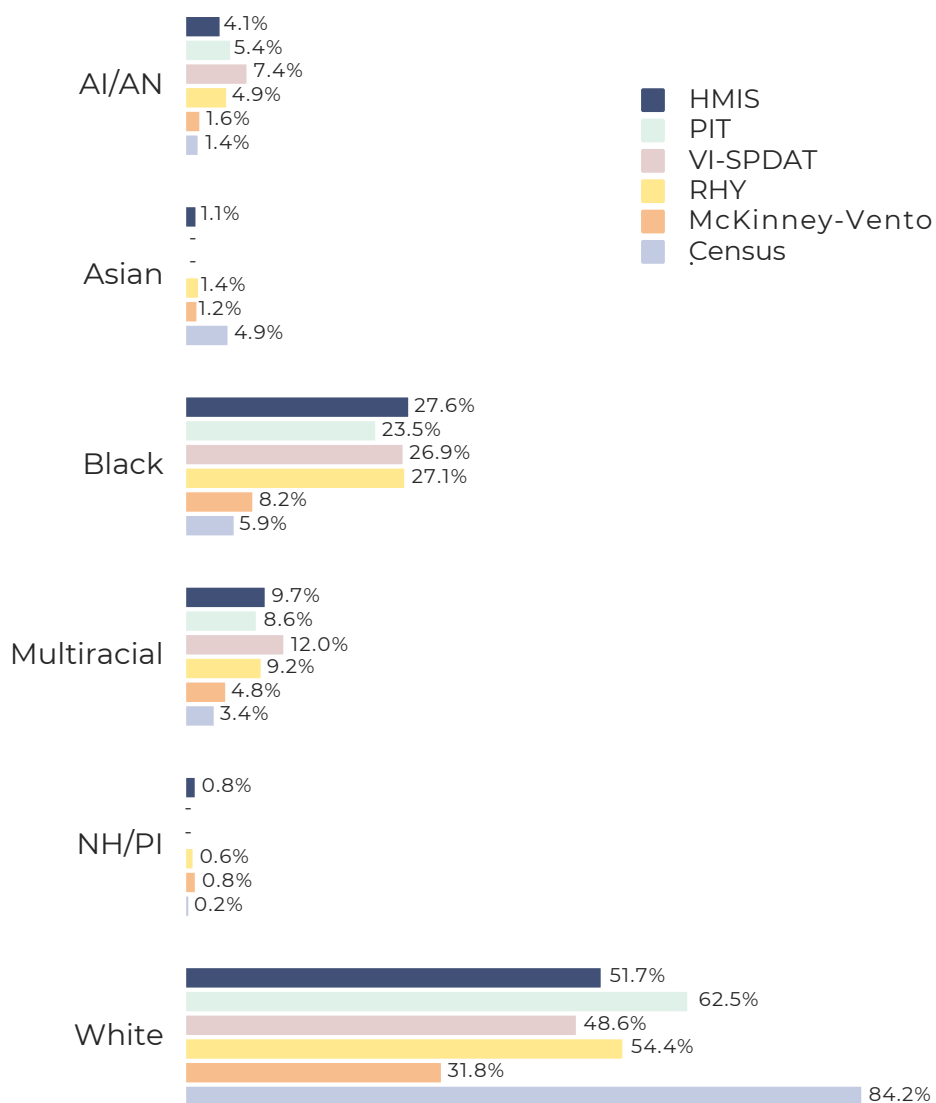
MULTI-RACIAL

One statistically significant disparity that is consistent across data sources over time is the overrepresentation of Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native (AI/AN), Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (NH/PI), and multiracial people experiencing homelessness. These groups experience higher rates of homelessness compared to their relative makeup of the general population.



RACE DATA

Note that McKinney-Vento race data is only available for all students experiencing homelessness, not just unaccompanied and parenting youth.



DISPARITIES

LGBTQIA+

LGBTQIA+ youth and young adults disproportionately experience homelessness compared to their straight and cisgender peers. According to the [National Network for Youth](#), up to 40% of the 4.2 million youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ+ while only making up 9.5% of the U.S. population. Family conflict due to a lack of acceptance of a youth's sexual orientation and gender identity is a common cause of homelessness for LGBTQIA+ youth. Aging out of the foster care system, poverty, and insufficient shelter and housing are some other causes. LGBTQIA+ unhoused youth are at higher risk for assault, trauma, mental health conditions, and suicide. Inclusive and affirmative housing and supportive services that provide transition-related care, healthcare access, legal services, and mental/behavioral support systems are crucial to the housing stability of LGBTQIA+ youth.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION	RHY	General
HETEROSEXUAL	63.8%	74.8%
BISEXUAL	16.9%	11.6%
OTHER	5.7%	4.1%
GAY or LESBIAN	5.1%	3.6%
QUESTIONING	3.5%	4.2%
ASEXUAL	-	1.7%
MISSING DATA	8.5%	-

Data from the [Healthy Kids Colorado Survey](#) is displayed as "General" on pages 57-58 for a baseline comparison to measure disparities. Runaway and homeless youth who identify as Bisexual, Gay or Lesbian, and 'Other' experience higher rates of homelessness than their makeup of the general population of youth.

DISPARITIES

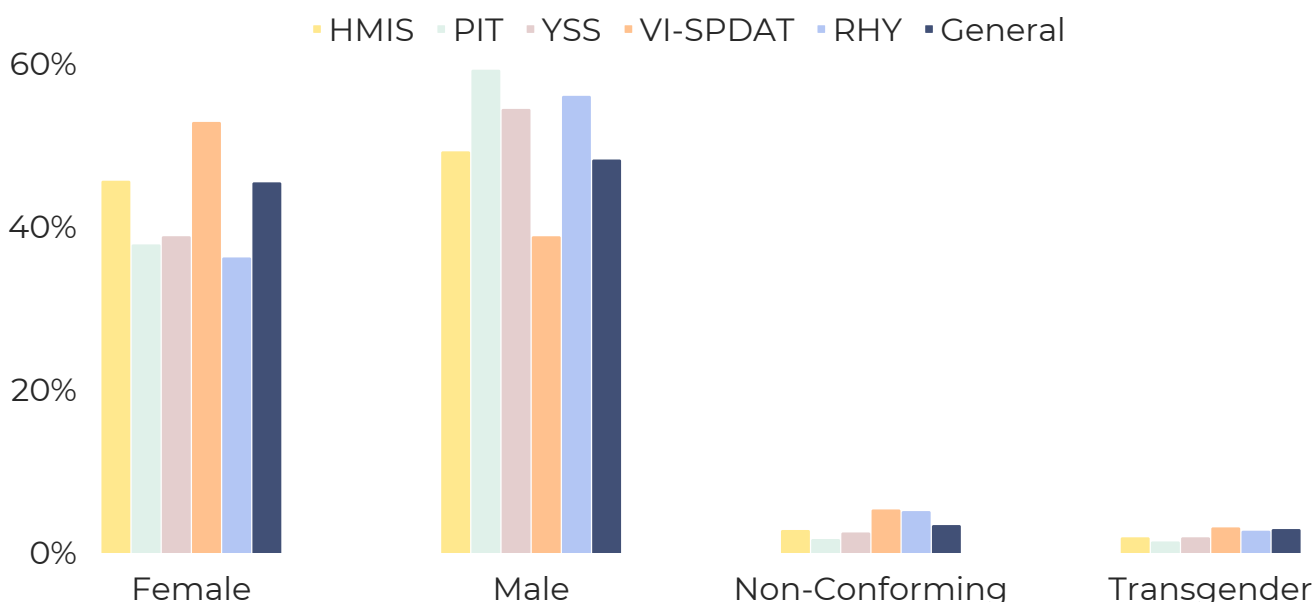
LGBTQIA+

Cisgender youth are those whose gender identity corresponds with their sex assigned at birth. These youth are underrepresented in homelessness when comparing VI-SPDAT data to the general population (91.6% vs. 94.2%). In contrast, youth who identify as transgender (3.1% vs. 2.9%) or genderqueer (5.3% vs. 3.4%) are overrepresented in homelessness. The Healthy Kids Colorado Survey also measured housing instability as “the percentage of students who usually slept somewhere other than their home during the past 30 days.” Youth who identify as transgender, genderqueer, or ‘not sure’ experienced higher rates of housing instability than their cisgender peers.

Gender Identity	Housing Instability
Total	5.5%
Cisgender	5.3%
Transgender	9.1%
Genderqueer	7.3%
Not Sure	9.0%

GENDER IDENTITY

Information about gender identity is collected from HMIS, PIT Count, YSS, VI-SPDAT, RHY Program, and Healthy Kids Colorado Survey.



DISPARITIES

MENTAL HEALTH

Youth experiencing homelessness report psychiatric disorders such as depression, anxiety, substance use, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and dissociative behavior. The trauma of experiencing homelessness can make a young person more vulnerable to mental health conditions, and living with a mental health disorder is a risk factor for someone to become unhoused. Young people's mental health can also be impacted by poverty, family conflict, and "aging out" of the foster care or juvenile justice system. Providers can support young people living with a mental health disorder through trauma informed case management, assistance in navigating the health care system and helping youth to understand their health care needs.

Youth across data sources were asked if they have a mental health disorder. The responses are summarized below for sources where data is available.

MENTAL HEALTH DISORDER	PIT	RHY	VI-SPDAT
No	70.3%	47.3%	85.1%
Yes	29.7%	55.1%	13.4%

The trauma experienced by homeless youth is often twofold, encompassing the trauma from their home environments and the trauma of homelessness itself. Many of these young individuals have fled abusive or neglectful households.

Homelessness, with its constant uncertainty, exposure to danger, and lack of basic necessities, compounds this trauma. Living on the streets or in shelters exposes them to violence, exploitation, and the constant stress of survival.

DISPARITIES

MENTAL HEALTH

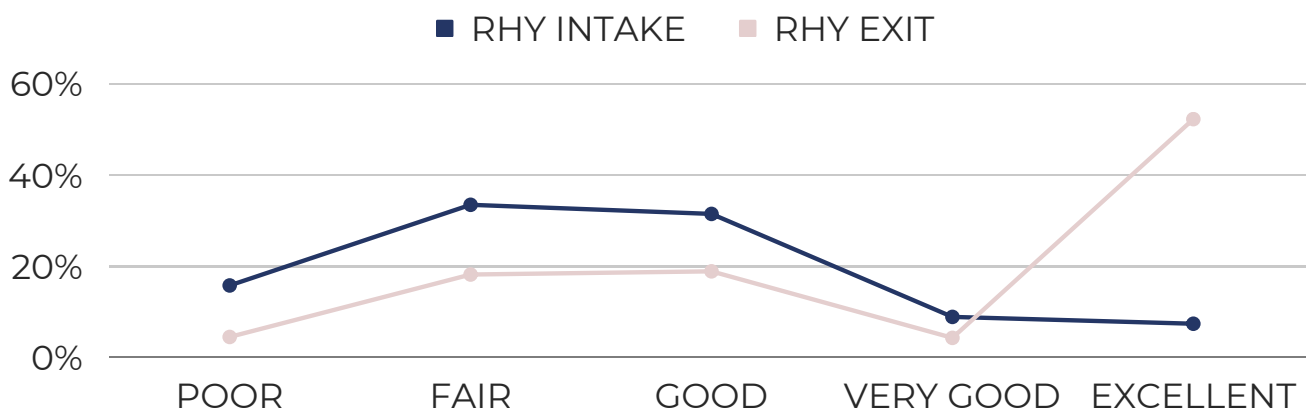
ACUTE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR YOUTH

Youth in our Needs Assessment specifically stated a need for acute mental health services that specialize in trauma, substance use, and mental illness. Data from RHY programs in the metro area shows a 72% decrease in poor mental health from intake to exit. There was also a 606% increase in mental health during the same period. With a relatively large sample size of 632 youth, the data shows the benefits of trauma-informed housing and services on overall mental health.

MENTAL HEALTH	INTAKE	EXIT
Poor	15.8%	4.5%
Fair	33.5%	18.2%
Good	31.5%	18.9%
Very good	8.9%	4.3%
Excellent	7.4%	52.3%
Missing Data	16.3%	11.9%

72% DECREASE
 Poor Mental Health
 from RHY Intake to Exit

606% INCREASE
 Excellent Mental Health
 from RHY Intake to Exit



DISPARITIES

DISABLING CONDITIONS

According to a 2020 report from the Institute for Educational Leadership, the prevalence rate for youth and young adults (ages 18-24) with disabilities is 5.5% in Colorado.^[1] Youth experiencing homelessness disproportionately live with disabling conditions. This can include mental health, substance use, chronic health conditions, physical health, and intellectual or developmental disabilities. Disabled youth are at a higher risk for violence and exploitation while unhoused. Shelters and other services may be inaccessible and staff may be inadequately trained to address the young person’s needs. They may face discrimination in housing, healthcare, employment, or wages. Living with a disability can impact a young person’s ability to obtain or maintain steady employment, making it more difficult to resolve their homelessness on their own. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) can be difficult to obtain and does not cover the the cost of living in Metro Denver.

CONDITION	RHY	ONEHOME
DISABLING CONDITION	61.9%	-
PHYSICAL DISABILITY	14.1%	6.5%
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY	20.4%	12.4%
CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITION	23.3%	24.8%
SUBSTANCE USE	17.7%	14.6%
MENTAL HEALTH	55.1%	13.4%

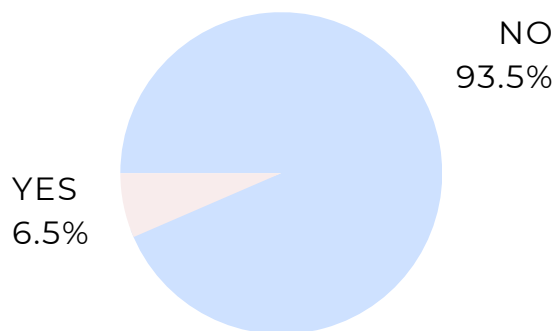
DISPARITIES DISABLING CONDITIONS

HOUSING FOR DISABLING CONDITIONS

Youth with disabling conditions that experience homelessness needs housing that supports the unique challenges they face. Providing specialized housing ensures access to essential medical care and support services that are crucial for their well-being. offering a foundation for education, employment, and independence.

VI-SPDAT DATA

322 young people assessed for Coordinated Entry were asked: *Do you have any physical disabilities that would limit the type of housing you could access, or that would make it hard to live independently because you'd need help?*



RUNAWAY & HOMELESS YOUTH DATA

Those who responded YES to the 'Physical Disability' (14.1%) and 'Chronic Health Condition' (23.3%) questions were asked the follow-up question: *Is this expected to be of long-continued and indefinite duration and substantially impair the client's ability to live independently?*

CONDITION	YES	NO	MISSING
PHYSICAL DISABILITY	77.5%	25.8%	1.1%
CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITION	69.3%	36.1%	2.0%

KEY FINDINGS NEEDS

3

Our Needs Assessment included a Youth Survey, Provider Survey, and Youth Listening Space aimed at collecting quantitative and qualitative data to better understand the needs of our community. We asked young people with lived experience of homelessness and the providers who serve them, *“What types of resources or services do you need to secure safe and stable housing?”* While their responses identified many gaps in the current system, three common needs emerged:

1. Better Housing
2. Comprehensive Case Planning
3. Authentic Connections

The following section explains these needs from a youth perspective, along with provider input and some barriers to meeting them. While this list is by no means exhaustive, it is youth-directed, tangible, and intended to inform local improvements that would make the homeless system better for youth.

“They’re aren’t enough resources that are given. We shouldn’t have to ask. Youth are more aware there are different cultures, people, and religions. There should be more resources presented for all people. It’s hard when you get here to ask for things. A big problem is you feel like it’s selfish to ask for anything, it’s definitely a problem. We don’t know what to ask for; it’s hard to advocate.”

YOUTH WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

NEEDS BETTER HOUSING

Housing is the solution to homelessness; for youth, there is simply not enough to meet their needs. Youth were adamant about better options for emergency shelter, foster care, affordable housing, and permanent supportive housing. When asked about their needs, youth advocated for better housing that considers the following:

Housing Specific for Youth Aged 18-24

- "Aged 18-24 specific shelter is needed. If I'm still considered a youth, those services should be inclusive. After you turn 21 you are screwed. You're still in the early stage of homelessness. I don't feel comfortable at adult shelters; that's chronic homelessness."
- "It would be great if this shelter could just service people 15-20 and somewhere else could handle people 18-24. These are different groups of people. I have nothing in common with people 18 or under."

Alternatives to Foster Care for Youth Under 18

- "As a youth currently going through the foster care system, it sucks having nowhere else to go, literally nowhere. DHS pointed me to this shelter, and this shelter is the reason I got placed. They couldn't keep me any longer."
- "I've talked to a few pregnant women, one under the age of 18. Because she isn't 18 they cannot help her. She isn't housed here and not getting any resources here. Another one is 19 and also not getting resources and I'm not exactly sure why but they aren't getting the healthcare or the care they need even though they're pregnant. This building is supposed to be open and helping everyone, but there is a specific group not getting the help that they need."

NEEDS BETTER HOUSING

Housing and Services Based on Length of Time Homeless

- "It would be helpful to have buildings and programs less based on age and more about being newly homeless. Being newly homeless at any age is different. This place is definitely built for people newly homeless, but if you have been homeless for a while, it's different types of help and assistance needed."

Safer Shelters

- "When I got here last August, I was prey. It's dangerous here."
- "All my clothes were stolen in the laundry room."
- "I've seen people being discouraged because of stealing and the conditions in the building; they don't want to be gone all day because something will go missing. How are they going to get the resources during the time they are available (education, documents, and job)? There is always someone starting a fight with someone else, and always a lot of problems keeping people from feeling safe. Someone stole half of my clothes in the laundry room as well."
- "I've heard people here have been threatened to be kicked out if they don't have their meds. There should be no medicine compliance to be in a shelter. What people can do is be more attentive towards their medication, but do they have the access or resources to get it?"

While more research needs to explore how to combine best practices with current resources available and in development, one thing is clear: youth need better housing that meets their needs. The following data highlights youth housing preferences and eligibility from our OneHome Coordinated Entry Enrollment form and is among many factors used to determine the allocation of housing resources.

NEEDS BETTER HOUSING

IMPORTANT FOR LOCATION	YES	NO
Transit	39.8%	60.2%
Work	22.7%	77.3%
Community Resources	17.7%	82.3%
Close to School	14.9%	85.1%
Medical Care	12.1%	87.9%

HOUSING NEEDS	YES	NO
Animal in Possession	9.9%	90.1%
Elevator	2.2%	97.8%
Wheelchair Accessible	1.2%	98.8%
Extra Bedroom for Live-In Care	0%	100%
Smoking	0%	100%

SHARED HOUSING PREFERENCE	NO
Not Interested in Shared Housing	63.4%
Would Consider Shared Housing	23.3%
Neutral	8.7%
Null	3.4%
Client Doesn't Know	0.9%
Prefers Shared Housing	0.3%

NEEDS BETTER HOUSING

PREFERRED HOUSING TYPE	YES	NO
Sober Living	30.4%	69.6%
Work Program	16.8%	83.2%
Project Based	5.3%	94.7%
Scattered Site	2.5%	97.5%
Other	0.6%	99.4%
Single Room Occupancy (SRO)	0%	100%

CRIMINAL JUSTICE INVOLVEMENT	YES	NO
Interactions with Criminal Justice	27.3%	71.7%
Have you ever been in jail or prison?	27.3%	71.7%

The diverse needs of this vulnerable population must be taken into account when creating better housing, ranging from immediate shelter and safety to long-term stability and support. Homeless youth often seek housing options that provide a sense of security, privacy, and a supportive community environment. Eligibility criteria should consider factors such as age, vulnerability, and the presence of minors, recognizing that homeless youth often come from backgrounds of trauma, abuse, or neglect. Access to educational and vocational resources is crucial to empower these young individuals to break the cycle of homelessness. Additionally, mental health services, substance abuse support, and life skills training are essential components to address their unique challenges and promote successful reintegration.

NEEDS

BETTER HOUSING

16.1% of youth assessed for Coordinated Entry indicated they would have trouble taking care of basic needs such as bathing, changing clothes, using a restroom, and getting clean water.

BASIC NEEDS	YES	NO
Are you able to take care of basic needs such as bathing, changing clothes, using a restroom, and getting clean water?	83.9%	16.1%

Youth were also asked if the following conditions would make it difficult for them to stay housed, indicating where they may need extra supportive services. Over a quarter of youth indicated that mental health issues would affect their ability to maintain stable housing.

TROUBLE MAINTAINING HOUSING	YES	NO
Mental Health Issue	28.6%	70.2%
Learning or Developmental Disability	12.4%	87.0%
Past Head Injury	8.7%	90.7%
Drinking or Drug Use	3.4%	95.3%

MAINTAINING HOUSING - CONTINUED	YES	NO
Has drinking or drug use led to getting kicked out in the past?	14.6%	85.4%

Note: Totals that do not add up to 100% are because “Client doesn’t know” was selected.

NEEDS

CASE PLANNING

Comprehensive case planning plays a pivotal role in effectively addressing and housing youth experiencing homelessness. These services provide a structured framework to understand each youth's needs, circumstances, and aspirations, enabling tailored solutions for their unique situations. Case managers can identify the underlying factors that contribute to homelessness and develop personalized action plans that encompass housing stability, access to healthcare, educational opportunities, life skills training, and employment prospects. Continual case management ensures that progress is tracked, challenges are addressed, and goals are adjusted as necessary, fostering a supportive environment that empowers homeless youth to overcome obstacles and achieve long-term self-sufficiency. Ultimately, these services serve as a lifeline for young individuals, offering not only a pathway to safe and stable housing but also a chance to rebuild their lives with the guidance and resources they need.

Youth Input on Case Planning

- "I wish there was a specific area that had appointments for education, mental health, and employment, where that's all they worry about. No fights or mace in the building. Just focused on those three services. It would improve structure and life balance."
- "With my case manager, there are steps: education starts, then working on getting a job and those vital documents. Then you can start looking at housing; you have to start with these other things first and it may not be the process or order that people always want to go; not everyone wants to get their GED before they work on housing. I think there are definitely steps that we need to do first; it depends on the case manager."
- "They say they can help you out and they just point you in different directions. It's a loop of resources."

NEEDS

AUTHENTIC CONNECTIONS

Building authentic connections and support networks is crucial for homeless youth. Homelessness often comes with feelings of isolation and disconnection, which can contribute to mental health struggles and a sense of hopelessness. Authentic connections with caring individuals provide youth with emotional support, a sense of belonging, and the knowledge that they are not alone in their struggles. These relationships can serve as platforms for education, skill-building, and mentorship, helping them develop the tools they need to transition out of homelessness successfully.

For individuals who belong to specific cultural, racial, or marginalized communities, finding providers who are knowledgeable and sensitive to their unique challenges is vital. This support can bridge gaps in communication, minimize harm, and ensure that services are tailored to their cultural context, ultimately enhancing their effectiveness. Culturally competent providers can also offer information about relevant community organizations, government assistance programs, and specialized services that cater to the specific needs of these youth.

Youth Input on Authentic Connections

- "It helps to have a place that you can access that has a support system and staff that you're comfortable with and that can put you on some type of schedule, and have you motivated to meet with them, and they keep you in line and reach out to you so that it's not just you reaching out to them and not getting what you need."
- "It seems in a lot of those situations, the shelters are really quick to kick youth to the streets, or they point them to groups, programs, or services that could or couldn't help them."
- "I'm seeking connection to Black church representatives and black community leaders; connections to black movements; more black leadership and staff; more black-specific services."

BARRIERS

YOUTH SUPPLEMENTAL SURVEY

On the night of the Point in Time count, young people were asked about the following barriers to housing they experienced in the past year on the Youth Supplemental Survey (YSS). Their responses are ranked below from most common to least common barrier.

#	BARRIERS TO HOUSING IN THE PAST YEAR	YOUTH
1	Lack of Income	53.8%
2	Lack of Affordable Housing	45.6%
3	Mental Health	26.3%
4	Lack of Vital Docs	20.0%
5	Age	19.4%
6	Did not know where to go for help	16.3%
7	Substance Use	14.4%
8	Currently on Waitlist	12.5%
9	Missed Appointments	10.0%
10	Background Check	9.4%
11	Did not have issues/barriers	6.3%
12	Lack of Transportation	6.3%
13	Disability	4.4%
14	Did not qualify for help	3.8%
15	Discriminated Against	3.1%
16	Asked to leave program	1.9%
17	Languge Barrier	1.9%
18	Citizenship	0.6%

BARRIERS

HOMELESS YOUTH & PROVIDER SURVEYS

Our community surveys asked homeless youth and the providers who serve them the optional question: *What do you believe are the 5 most significant barriers experienced by homeless youth trying to access and maintain stable housing?* 55 youth and 42 providers responded.

BARRIERS TO HOUSING IN THE PAST YEAR	YOUTH	PROVIDERS
Affordable Housing	53.8%	69.0%
Employment/living wage job	45.6%	52.4%
Transportation	26.3%	11.9%
Mental or Behavioral Health	20.0%	45.2%
Government assistance (SNAP, TANF, SSI, etc)	19.4%	4.8%
Poor or no credit	16.3%	21.4%
Lack of caring adult support	14.4%	38.1%
Difficult navigating systems	12.5%	57.1%
Criminal History	10.0%	28.6%
Childcare care expenses and challenges	9.4%	4.8%
Life skills/Financial literacy	6.3%	38.1%
Poor/limited rental history	6.3%	35.7%
Disabling Conditions	4.4%	9.5%
Not old enough to sign a lease	3.8%	23.8%
Obtaining vital docs	3.1%	31.0%
Health care access	1.9%	9.5%
Discrimination based on sexuality or gender	1.9%	2.4%
Discrimination based on race	0.0%	9.5%

BARRIERS

YOUTH-LED LISTENING SPACE

We asked young people with lived experience of homelessness: *What barriers have been most challenging to finding and maintaining safe and stable housing?* Their responses are highlighted below.

VITAL DOCUMENTATION

- “Majority of housing vouchers require a state ID specifically, big issue getting this. They require a lot of documents, but there's a lot of issues with obtaining those documents.”
- “Some people are told to get a job to get housing, which is hard when you don't have an ID, birth certificate, or social; how are you supposed to get a job if you don't even have those? We need to get off the streets before we can worry about getting a job.”
- “There are a lot of youth out here who were super close to getting housing, and then something got in their way (job, refill out paperwork because of documentation issue) setting people back because people are working hard.”

MEETING BASIC NEEDS & EMPLOYMENT

- “There is a theory in psychology, the pyramid theory; the way humans are setup you can only think about 1 thing at a time, and our priorities are food, water, and shelter. If you don't have these, the brain cannot focus on anything else; that against basic human psychology to try to get a job without having a place to stay.”
- “If I don't have an adequate place to eat, bathe, and shower, then I can't focus on getting a job. I sleep on the train, I do day labor, I have to make a choice between getting resources and applying to vouchers OR going to work. I cannot do both. When I show up to work, I'm not well-rested. The dude next to me is going to be a better employee.”
- “Biggest barriers are getting a job when you're homeless because people don't want to employ you if you're homeless”

BARRIERS

YOUTH-LED LISTENING SPACE

BEING COMFORTABLE IN YOUR OWN SKIN

- “A barrier to work and getting a job is making sure that I’m comfortable in my own body first. Having the clothing and appearance down. Clothing that doesn’t have holes or that is clean. If you don’t have nice clean clothes, you aren’t going to get the job or go to the interview to get the job. I see a lot of people struggle with their appearance because it’s embarrassing when you think that you look bad.”

MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE USE

- “Mental health, with a job that you like, and education.”
- “Quality, specialized mental health; finding affordable and free mental health resources, there are less resources that we can get now because we are homeless that fit with what they need; I need a deep-trauma specialist; a lot of people need someone who is really good at their job; need a diversity of options.”
- “Drugs; people prioritize drugs over everything; when I first started that was the one thing that I did. I had to have it. I had to be there. A lot of people on the streets are also struggling with housing because all the money is spent on drugs.”
- “A lot of drug use is also related to mental health; a lot of people turn to it because they’re not getting what they need mental health-wise”

LIMITED OPTIONS

- No affordable housing options
- Difficult to meet voucher requirements
- Can't sign a lease until 18+

BARRIERS PROVIDER SURVEY

We asked local providers that serve unhoused youth aged 24 and under the following question to better understand the needs of disproportionately impacted subpopulations. Highlights are below.

Are there specific barriers experienced by homeless youth of color and black homeless youth trying to access and maintain stable housing?

- *An overwhelming disproportionate number of youth of color and black homeless youth who are systems involved (juvenile justice, child welfare)*
- *Unfair policing and discrimination, leading to criminal records*
- *Mass incarceration, stereotyping, and racial profiling in rental selection*
- *In my experience, my clients of color do tend to prefer to be close to their families. This can be difficult to find a place where their family lives, or even close to it. For my Black clients specifically, one of the big challenges is finding a complex/neighborhood where they feel safe. It's not uncommon for me to get more complaints from landlords/neighbors when it applies specifically to my clients of color, especially Black clients.*
- *Not that I have seen, most of my clients are youth of color (which may speak to a bigger issue than just homelessness), and I've been able to locate affordable housing for all of them, except for those that have a concerning criminal history.*
- *Systemic racism and continued poverty even after ending episodes of homelessness*
- *The carceral system, even within our nonprofits, is consistently pushing against our BIPOC youth more than others. The bias I have seen these youth face in our spaces (the spaces meant to provide help) is an enormous barrier to accessing/maintaining stable housing.*
- *They are usually pushed into bad neighborhoods*
- *Difficulty navigating systems, lack of support, systemic racism, not having the knowledge about available resources*
- *Discrimination with landlords and increased chances of criminal history*
- *Race discrimination in housing is absolutely still a major issue, particularly intersecting with age, financial status, etc.*
- *Trauma, racism, trying to navigate a world full of whiteness*

BARRIERS

PROVIDER SURVEY

We asked local providers that serve unhoused youth aged 24 and under the following question to better understand the needs of disproportionately impacted subpopulations. Highlights are below.

Are there specific barriers experienced by homeless LGBTQIA+ youth trying to access and maintain stable housing?

- *Discrimination upon entry*
- *Obtaining vital documents that all match their preferred gender marker, and name. Mental health barriers that face this community, and with that lack of support*
- *Gender and sexual identity discrimination, low-paying jobs for youth, substance use, mental health, criminal history*
- *Not enough safe and embracing spaces specifically for these youth*
- *Equality for LGBTQIA+ people, some neighborhoods aren't as welcoming of these populations*
- *Being discriminated by sexual orientation or presentation. Not having the same support systems as those not in their community*
- *Safety*
- *Lack of a trusted adult in their life*
- *Trauma, homophobia, living in a heteronormative society*
- *Fear of being judged and rejected, lots of work is done under the table in these areas so it's hard to hold parties responsible.*
- *Not having support when they enter the rental market; may be timid about pursuing housing based on previous experiences*
- *Lack of support, difficulty understanding documents/process for housing. Financial stress*
- *Lack of ongoing family support due to their gender identity or sexual orientation. They might limit the areas of their housing search due to states or areas with certain legal protections*
- *Discrimination, lack of familial support, elevated risk factors in regard to safety*

BARRIERS

PROVIDER SURVEY

We asked local providers that serve unhoused youth aged 24 and under the following question to better understand the needs of disproportionately impacted subpopulations. Highlights are below.

Are there specific barriers experienced by homeless pregnant or parenting youth trying to access and maintain stable housing?

- *Their greatest challenge is finding reliable, safe, and affordable childcare so they can work and afford housing and other needs.*
- *Not enough family supports, few resources for pregnant youth*
- *Financial barriers and livable wages to accessing housing*
- *All of my clients are pregnant or parenting youth - their main issue is finding a place that is close to their kiddo's school that will also be affordable long term. As a Rapid Re-Housing program, they only have up to 24 months until they're exited. Most of them struggle with childcare and employment that can work around their childcare, leading to instability in their finances.*
- *Many vouchers don't allow both parents to live together with a child*
- *Finding a safe place where they can afford to be a working single parent*
- *The support doesn't exist to help youth build capacity for a better future while maintaining housing for a young family.*
- *Requiring parents to work and pay rent while their child is a newborn*
- *Inability to work due to child's or parent's disability*
- *Child-safe living spaces and stability for their child*
- *Transportation, child care, not having knowledge of available resources*
- *Being discriminated against based on pregnancy*
- *Being discriminated against or looked down upon for being on rental or housing assistance with a large family*
- *Lack of a trusted adult in their life*
- *No emergency shelter is available for a parenting youth to go to. Parenting youth even 18-24 often do not feel safe to go to a shelter with their child. So instead, they end up choosing to stay in an unsafe environment for the sake of their child.*
- *Lack of stable housing for minor parents or access to health insurance*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report and its Homeless Youth Needs Assessment would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of our Young Adult Leadership Committee and other youth who continue to share their lived experiences with the hope of making the homeless system better for youth.

We extend this thank you to the staff at Urban Peak who supported our survey outreach efforts and hosted us for our listening space, as well as the dozens of agencies, direct-service staff, people with lived expertise, elected officials, and local stakeholders working each day to create real solutions to the issue of homelessness. Their services and data collection contributed heavily to the data and metrics contained within this report.

This includes each of the partner organizations that participate in data collection for our region's HMIS (Homeless Management Information System), OneHome Coordinated Entry, as well as our partners in each county who

assisted in completing the region's Point-in-Time count in January of 2022. We cannot solve homelessness or improve the systems that intersect with it without quality, regional data.

MDHI would also like to thank the Colorado Department of Education for their contribution to the number of students experiencing the educational definition of homelessness, as well as our partners at Community Solutions for their investments in our region. With each of these key partners and interested readers like you, we are hopeful for a future where youth homelessness is solvable. We appreciate your support.

THE METRO DENVER HOMELESS INITIATIVE

Consider supporting our work by visiting mdhi.org/donate.

DEFINITIONS

Built for Zero (BFZ) - A movement of more than 100 cities and counties using data to radically change how they work and the impact they can achieve -and proving that it is possible to make homelessness rare and brief.

Child(ren) - Includes anyone 17 and under (not yet 18). *Please note, this can include both accompanied and unaccompanied youth; this report does not include parents/guardians of accompanied children.

Chronic Homelessness - HUD defines persons experiencing chronic homelessness as those who (a) are homeless, (b) are living in a place not meant for human habitation, in a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter, (c) have been homeless and living in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or an emergency shelter continuously for at least 1 year or on at least four separate occasions in the last 3 years where the combined length of time homeless across those occasions is at least 12 months, and (d) have a disability.

Continuum of Care (COC) - A Continuum of Care is a regional or local planning body that leads and advances collaboration and coordinates housing and services funding for households experiencing homelessness so that it is rare, brief, and nonrecurring. This includes street outreach, emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid rehousing, prevention, diversion, and supportive housing. MDHI is the Metro Denver CoC for Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson Counties.

Coordinated Entry (CE) - Coordinated Entry is a coordinated system whereby all providers allocate housing and services through a single process and according to shared protocol. A coordinated entry system must contain three core components; 1) Access – must be access points by which people experiencing homelessness can enter a shared response system. 2) Assessment – must be standardized assessment/data collection across the system. 3) Prioritization – must have shared prioritization policies in place to enable matching to housing supports and services.

Cumulative - Describes a methodology of counting that occurs continuously where people can be included in the count as soon as they are identified as homeless. The data provided generally represents a year time period.

DEFINITIONS

Literal Homelessness (HUD Homelessness) - An Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, (i) Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation; (ii) is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter (including safe haven or transitional living program).

McKinney-Vento Homelessness (US Department of Education) - Includes anyone meeting the Literal Homelessness definition and children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; and migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described herein.

Newly Homeless - Defined as a person who has been experiencing homelessness for less than one year and this was their first episode of homelessness.

Point in Time (PIT) - Describes a methodology of counting that occurs at a singular point in time, generally over the course of only a few days. The data presented only provides data on those that were identified as homeless during that point in time.

Permanent Supportive Housing - Offers permanent housing and supportive services to assist persons experiencing homelessness who have a disabling condition (either individuals with disabilities or families in which one adult or child has a disability) to live independently.

Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) - Defines youth experiencing homelessness as individuals who are “not more than 21 years of age...for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative and who have no other safe alternative living arrangement.” This definition includes only those youth who are unaccompanied by families or caregivers.

DEFINITIONS

Safe Haven - A project that offers supportive housing that (1) serves hard-to-reach homeless persons with severe mental illness who came from the streets and have been unwilling or unable to participate in supportive services; (2) provides 24-hour residence for eligible persons for an unspecified period; (3) has an overnight capacity limited to 25 or fewer persons; and (4) provides low demand services and referrals for the residents.

Shelter - A project that offers temporary shelter (lodging) for the homeless in general or for specific populations of the homeless. In metro Denver, there are variations of shelter types, including family shelters where households may stay for 14- 90 days on average, and nightly

Transitional Housing - A project that provides temporary lodging and is designed to facilitate the movement of homeless individuals and families into permanent housing within a specified period of time, but typically no longer than 24 months. In transitional housing, there are generally higher eligibility and program requirements than in an emergency shelter. Participants may be asked to pay rent or fees to stay in these programs.

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (HUD) - a person below the age of 25 who is experiencing homelessness while not in the physical custody of a parent or legal guardian. For purposes of this report refer to the data source for the definition of homelessness.

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (Dept. of Education) - youth who are "not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian"

ACRONYMS

AI/AN - American Indian or Alaska Native

BIPOC - Black, Indigenous, People of Color

CoC - Continuum of Care

CDE - Colorado Department of Education

CE - Coordinated Entry

CES - Coordinated Entry System

HMIS - Homeless Management Information System

HUD - Department of Housing and Urban Development

LEA - Local Education Agency

NAI - Native American or Indigenous

NH/PI - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

PIT - Point in Time

PSH - Permanent Supportive Housing

TAY-VI-SPDAT - Transition Age Youth Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool

VI-SPDAT - Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool

APPENDIX

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[4] National Low Income Housing Coalition, *Out of Reach, Colorado* (2022)

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