



Youth Homelessness Needs Assessment

Compiled by the Housing and Homeless Coalition of Central New York

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Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Central New York Youth Homelessness Needs Assessment.....	6
Introduction	6
Prevalence of Homelessness and Housing Vulnerability in Central New York	7
HMIS Data:	7
Department of Education Data:	8
Census Data:	10
Summary of Data on Youth Experiencing Homelessness and Housing Vulnerability:	11
System Utilization of Youth Experiencing Homelessness	11
Coordinated Entry Data	16
Main Findings From System Utilization Data:	25
Racial Disparities	19
Prevalence of LGBT Groups, Child Welfare Involvement, and Juvenile Justice Involvement.....	25
System Modeling.	27
Inventory Modeling.....	29
Comparison to current inventory	30
Key takeaways of System modeling	31
Survey.....	32
Conclusions and Recommendations:	32
List of partners	35
References	36
Appendix A. System models for each population type.....	37
Oswego County System Models	37
Onondaga County System Models.....	40
Oswego County System Models	43
Appendix B. Youth Homelessness Needs Assessment Survey.....	46
Appendix C. Youth Homelessness Needs Assessment Survey Form.	71

Executive Summary

Introduction

Homelessness and housing instability are urgent issues facing large numbers of youth in Central New York. While the Central New York community has resources dedicated to assisting youth with housing, the number of youth experiencing housing vulnerability and homelessness continues to be large. This needs assessment describes estimates of youth who are at-risk of homelessness in CNY, administrative data from programs who serve at-risk and homeless youth in CNY, racial disparities in how youth move through the homelessness system, and results of a survey of youth barriers to accessing housing services. The assessment concludes with six recommendations to improve the homelessness response system for youth. The area covered by this assessment is Onondaga, Cayuga, and Oswego counties of New York State.

Prevalence of Homelessness and Housing Vulnerability in Central New York

Thousands of young people in Central New York were at risk of homelessness or experienced literal homelessness in the year 2020. 15,969 youth between the ages of 18 and 24 live in poverty in Onondaga, Oswego, and Cayuga Counties. The number of youth flagged as homeless or at-risk of homelessness by school districts was 3,211 in 2020. Of the youth at-risk of homelessness, a relatively small proportion of youth are currently assisted by homelessness response services. The number of youth enrolled in homelessness prevention programs in 2020 was 258 across all three counties. The number of youth enrolled in emergency shelter was 465. These numbers were recorded during the COVID-19 pandemic at a time when there were strong protections against eviction for renters in New York State, which dramatically lowered the total number of people utilizing emergency shelter in Central New York. The 2020 data nevertheless suggest that there is a substantial unmet need for services targeted at youth.

In all three counties, almost as many youth utilize adult services as utilize services targeted at youth, suggesting that there is an unmet need for youth-targeted services that would more effectively serve transition-aged youth. In all three counties, almost no youth utilize street outreach services. This may be because none of the counties have youth-specific street outreach programs, and youth may not be comfortable engaging with street outreach that normally targets adults.

Analysis of Racial Disparities

The needs assessment examined disparities for racial groups. Compared to the overall population of youth in the CoC's geographic area, Black/African-American youth make up a disproportionate amount of youth under 25 who use shelter. 12% of the overall population is Black/African-American and 29% of youth under 25 in shelter identified as Black/African-American. Hispanic youth are also disproportionately represented among youth under 25 in emergency shelter. 7% of the overall population under 25 years old is Hispanic, but 18% of the youth under 25 in emergency shelter identified as Hispanic.

The assessment also looked at racial disparities on 3 system performance measures for each geographic area: Length of Time Homeless, Exits to Permanent Housing Destinations, and Returns to homelessness. Black/African American unaccompanied youth and single young adults aged 18-24 were more likely to return to homelessness within 6 months than white unaccompanied youth and single young adults in all three counties. Black/African-American single young adults stayed an average of 18 days longer in shelter in Onondaga County. In Oswego County, White Hispanic/Latino single young

adults stayed in shelter an average of 31 days longer than White Non-Hispanic/Latino single young adults.

System Gap Analysis

Based on the number of youth enrolled in shelter and data from the coordinated assessment system, the number of service slots required to assist those youth with diversion, emergency shelter, and permanent housing assistance was calculated using a technique called system modeling. System modeling is a framework for communities to quantify their vision of an ideal system for responding to homelessness. Using the idealized system model, it was found that least 1304 new units of housing assistance directed at youth are required in Central New York to adequately serve the need of youth experiencing homelessness. The quantity and type of assistance required is described in detail in Appendix B.

Survey of Youth Program Participants

A survey of housing vulnerable and formerly homeless youth was conducted to analyze barriers to housing, risk factors, and service utilization. The survey focused on common characteristics, risk factors, and barriers to housing for youth receiving housing assistance, life needs that are not being met, and services that are currently being utilized. The survey found that the most common risk factors in the sample were home violence and dating violence. Other common risk factors reported included struggles with mental health, unhealthy relationships, and difficulties in school. Stigma about homelessness was the most reported barrier to seeking services for youth. The most reported needs were employment resources, education resources, transportation, and childcare, though it is important to note that most youth surveyed were not literally homeless at the time they responded to the survey. The most utilized services were food pantries, primary care physicians, SNAP benefits, and rapid re-housing programs. The least utilized services included substance abuse counseling services, peer support groups, and 2-1-1. Results of the survey suggest that additional resources around employment, education, transportation, and documentation would be helpful additions to the supportive services that clients receive while in rapid re-housing programs.

Recommendations for the Community

The assessment concludes with six recommendations for improvements in the youth homelessness system, which are as follows:

1. Improve outreach to at-risk youth including marketing about how to access shelter and housing services.
2. Develop clear protocols for triage and admission into shelter in all geographic areas and set up clear processes to determine how clients are provided with assistance to avoid staying in shelter.
3. Focus on ending racial disparities by iteratively developing and assessing changes in policy by looking at policy effects on key indicators that show racial disparities.
4. Increase inventory of housing services available to youth and develop Transitional Housing Programs linked with Rapid Rehousing subsidies.
5. Provide training to frontline staff and managers on unique risks faced by LGBT, foster-care involved youth, and justice-involved youth.

6. Collect data on sexual orientation and Improve data collection on gender identity.

In summary, youth homelessness in Central New York demands coordination and investment in housing services from all levels of government and all members of the community.

Central New York Youth Homelessness Needs Assessment

Introduction

This report describes the best available data to assess the amount of youth experiencing homelessness, the capacity of the homelessness system, and the barriers that youth experience in the homelessness system in Central New York. This report was compiled by the Housing and Homeless Coalition of Central New York, with input from the Youth Homelessness Workgroup and the Youth Advisory Board.

When youth and young adults experience homelessness, it is typically a different experience and for different reasons than for adults. While the experience of homelessness is often traumatic for people of all ages, youth are especially vulnerable because they are at a developmentally sensitive period of their lives. When young people are in shelters or on the street, they have had less experience living on their own. They may have never had their own apartment. They may not have had a full-time job. Some are still working on completing high school or college.

Studies of youth homelessness in the United States have estimated that 1 in 30 youth between 13 and 17 and 1 in 10 young adults between 18 and 25 experienced homelessness in a given year in the United States (Morton, Dworsky & Samuels, 2017). The youth experiencing homelessness across the country are also disproportionately black or Hispanic. LGBTQ+ youth are also disproportionately represented among youth that are at risk of homelessness (Morton, Dworsky & Samuels, 2017). These studies found that about half of those youth that experienced homelessness were those doubled up with friends or family. Interviews conducted with youth experiencing homelessness in nearby Upstate New York communities have found that youth approach shelter services with apprehension and suggest that many more youth are in precarious housing situations than utilize shelters (Independent Living Survey 2019; Bowen et al., 2018).

In the advent of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the systems that normally would have identified youth at risk of homelessness like schools and other service providers were hampered by social distancing requirements. The extent to which youth homelessness was affected by COVID-19 in Central New York is not fully known and the effects are still playing out. The COVID-19 pandemic's effect on housing underscores the fact that ending homelessness for youth is an urgent priority and requires a set of services and approaches that are unique to that population.

First, we describe the number of youth experiencing literal homelessness and the number of youth reported by local school districts to be in housing vulnerable situations. We also describe racial disparities in key system performance measures for homeless young adults. Second, we describe the number of resources available to youth, and the number of youth currently utilizing services targeted at older adults. We also include data from the Coordinated Entry System to describe how many youth get assessed and what those assessments indicate about their vulnerability. Third, based on the current program and system models that are in place, we describe the optimal inventory to serve all eligible youth experiencing homelessness with appropriate resources, given the number of youth that are currently experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Lastly, we present the results of a survey given to local youth who have reported experiences of homelessness that describe gaps in the current service system to inform changes in the quality of services.

For the purposes of this report, we consider three categories of homeless youth: Unaccompanied literally homeless Minors, Unaccompanied literally homeless Transition-Age Youth, and Youth At-Risk of Homelessness. We make the distinction between literal homelessness and at-risk of homelessness. Literally homeless minors or transition-aged youth are youth who have lived in a place not meant for human habitation or in an emergency shelter that provides temporary living arrangements. Youth at risk of homelessness are defined as youth who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, are fleeing domestic violence, or are living in other dangerous situations. This distinction smooths over several important nuances in the individual situations facing homeless youth, because many youth may switch between emergency shelter, living outside, and staying with friends or family.

It should be noted that numbers reported in this report are from the calendar year 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic had many far-reaching effects on the economy and society at large, including on youth homelessness. Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in lower than normal shelter utilization in NY-505, which may have been a result of New York's strong protections against evictions and safety concerns for clients who may have otherwise sought out shelter services.

Prevalence of Homelessness and Housing Vulnerability in Central New York

HMIS Data:

Table 1 shows the number of youth that experienced literal homelessness and the number of youth that were enrolled in homelessness prevention programs in each county in the continuum. Literal homelessness refers to either staying in an emergency shelter, in transitional housing, or in an unsheltered location. The total number of youth served in 2020 refers to the unduplicated number of youth that were in an emergency shelter, in transitional housing, or seen by street outreach in an unsheltered location. The Point-in-Time number of youth refers to the number of literally homeless youth that were recorded during the continuum's annual Point-In-Time count on January 27th, 2020. Onondaga County has the highest number of youth experiencing homelessness, followed by Oswego county and Cayuga County.

Homelessness prevention programs included programs funded through the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Runaway and Homeless Youth Program (RHY), and the Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness Program (PATH). Each of these federal programs can provide housing stability services to youth at-risk of homelessness, though the definition of at-risk of homelessness differs slightly from program to program. The number of youth enrolled throughout 2020 is included as well as youth on the night of the point-in-time count. Oswego county had the highest number of unaccompanied minor youth enrolled in homelessness prevention programs. Onondaga county had the highest number of youth ages 18-24 enrolled in homelessness prevention programs.

Table 1. Number of youth experiencing literal homelessness and served by prevention projects in NY-505		
Number of Unaccompanied Minor Youth (under 18) Experiencing Literal Homelessness		
	Total Served in 2020	Point-in-time Number of youth
	Source: HMIS	Source: PIT Count
Cayuga County	3	0
Onondaga County	104	5
Oswego County	16	2
Number of Transition-Age Youth (18-24) Experiencing Literal Homelessness		
	Total Served in 2020	Point-in-time Number of youth
	Source: HMIS	Source: PIT Count
Cayuga County	63	10
Onondaga County	213	26
Oswego County	66	10
Number of Unaccompanied Minor Youth (under 18) Enrolled in Homelessness Prevention		
	Total Served in 2020	Point-in-time Number of youth
	Source: HMIS	Source: HMIS
Cayuga County	0	0
Onondaga County	0	0
Oswego County	73	35
Number of Transition-Age Youth (18-24) Enrolled in Homelessness Prevention		
	Total Served in 2020	Point-in-time Number of youth
	Source: HMIS	Source: HMIS
Cayuga County	3	0
Onondaga County	138	52
Oswego County	44	41
Note: The date used for Point-in-time counts was January 29, 2020.		

Department of Education Data:

Table 2 shows data for the number of youth that were recorded as either experiencing literal homelessness or had severe housing instability by the New York State Department of Education. The statistics are derived from student contacts with McKinney-Vento Liaisons who are staff at the local school districts. These counts show that there is a much larger number of high-school age youth who are experiencing housing instability than is accounted for by the data from HMIS on literal homelessness.

Table 2. Education Data on Homelessness in Central New York		
Cayuga County	NYS TEACHS Data	Number of Youth
	High School Grades 9-12	28
	Doubled up	84
	Hotel	36
	Emergency Shelter	50
	Unsheltered	0
	Total	170
	Point-In-Time count from School Liaisons	
	Total Unaccompanied Youth	6
Onondaga County	NYS TEACHS Data	
	High School Grades 9-12	633
	Doubled up	1851
	Hotel	49
	Emergency Shelter	340
	Unsheltered	5
	Total	2245
	Point-In-Time count from School Liaisons	
	Unaccompanied youth under 18	98
	Unaccompanied youth over 18	23
	Total Youth	121
Oswego County	NYS TEACHS Data	
	High School Grades 9-12	261
	Doubled up	692
	Hotel	54
	Emergency Shelter	50
	Unsheltered	0
	Total	796
	Point-In-Time count from School Liaisons	
	Unaccompanied youth under 18	75
	Unaccompanied youth over 18	14
	Total Youth	89
Source: NYS TEACHS : https://nysteachs.org/topic-resource/data-on-student-homelessness-nys/		

Census Data:

A broader view of housing instability may be taken from the census data on young people experiencing poverty in each of the three counties. Table 3 shows the population of Males and Females aged 16-17 and 18-24 who were recorded as living in poverty by the US Census in 2018. In each county, there are a higher number of 18-24 year olds living in poverty than 16-17 year olds for both males and females. Overall, 15,969 youth are estimated to live in poverty in the geographic area.

In the entire population living in poverty in the CoC, 3.7% experience homelessness in a given year. Assuming that the youth population follows a similar pattern to the overall population, we might expect that 590 youth would experience homelessness in a year. The observed number of single youth that utilized shelter in 2020 is 465, suggesting that youth may underutilize shelter compared to other populations.

Table 3. ACS Estimates of youth living in poverty in Central New York				
		Male	Female	Total
Cayuga County				
	16-17 Years old	116	129	245
	18 -24 years old	443	395	838
	Cayuga County Total	559	524	1083
Onondaga County				
	16-17 years old	978	974	1952
	18-24 years old	4452	4921	9373
	Onondaga County Total	5430	5895	11325
Oswego County				
	16-17 years old	339	392	731
	18-24 years old	1448	1382	2830
	Oswego County Total	1787	1774	3561
	NY-505 Total	7776	8193	15969
Source: American Community Survey 5 year estimates. Retrieved from https://datausa.io/				

Summary of Data on Youth Experiencing Homelessness and Housing Vulnerability:

National advocates have noted that youth experiencing unsheltered homelessness likely do not follow the same patterns as adults who are unsheltered. They may transition between living with friends or family and staying in cars, parks or other places not meant for habitation. They may also not stay in encampments that are mainly populated by older adults. For this reason, census efforts like the CoC's Point-in-Time count likely miss several youth that are sleeping outside.

The discrepancy between the data in Table 1 and the data in Table 2 suggest that youth experiencing homelessness are a small fraction of the population at risk of homelessness. Data from HMIS show that very few youth were flagged as unsheltered when they entered emergency shelter, even among transition aged youth. This is true in the education data. As noted above, the unique challenges of locating unsheltered youth may have led to undercounting of youth who are unsheltered. In addition, no community in the CoC has a dedicated youth outreach team.

The data described also leaves out other youth who could fall under HUD's definition of "at-risk of homelessness" who might be captured in statistics from child welfare agencies, departments of social services, and juvenile justice agencies.

The county-level data show Onondaga county, the most populous in the NY-505 continuum of care, has the highest number of homeless youth. Cayuga county does not have a shelter for youth under the age of 18 and does not have a robust street outreach system, so shelter data for that county may undercount youth who are experiencing homelessness. While the number of Transition-Age youth experiencing homelessness in shelter in Cayuga County and Oswego County are similar, the amount of youth at risk of homelessness is higher in Oswego County based on data from the US Census and the NY TEACHES database.

System Utilization of Youth Experiencing Homelessness

The next section describes the how many youth use each of the types of services available through the homelessness response system in each of the geographic regions of NY-505.

The types of services that are available that are targeted at youth experiencing young adults fall into 5 categories: Diversion, Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, Rapid Re-Housing, and Permanent Supportive Housing. Detailed descriptions of each of the project types are listed in Table 4.

Enrollment in Diversion programs is not listed here. There are several projects that operate as homelessness prevention projects, which has a broader definition than the definition used here for diversion. The CoC does not systematically track all projects that divert people who are requesting shelter to safe living situations. For this reason, the report does not report on current enrollment in diversion projects as part of system utilization.

Data were taken from the Housing Inventory Count Report, the annual Point-In-Time Count report, and from the Homeless Management Information System. The tables describe the number of beds, point-in-time enrollment in each project type and the target population of the project type. Dedicated beds indicated that those beds are only allowed to be used for members of that particular population. For example, only youth under 18 can utilize a program where the beds are dedicated to youth under 18. Non-dedicated beds can be utilized by any adult.

Table 4. Types of programs available to literally homeless youth		
Program Type	Description	Length of Stay for program model
Front Porch: Services to prevent literal homelessness		
Diversion	Services to prevent people from entering shelter or an unsheltered location, providing housing relocation and stabilization services, financial assistance or facilitating housing with family or friends	0-30 days
Interim Housing: Temporary shelter or housing that provides for the household's immediate safety while they are assessed, search for permanent housing, and receive services.		
Emergency Shelter	Safe, basic lodging where individuals and families can stay temporarily while they	30 days
Transitional housing	Temporary housing for people who have specific service needs and prefer a communal, structured program. Services focus on obtaining permanent housing with the goal of providing the shortest length of stay needed for a positive permanent housing outcome.	6 months – 1 year
Permanent Housing: Housing that is safe and stable, in which a household can stay for as long as they choose. May provide a temporary or permanent subsidy and voluntary services (as determined by assessment) to help the household to retain the housing		
Rapid Re-housing	Services to move people as quickly as possible into permanent housing without preconditions through a combination of housing identification, short- to medium-term rental assistance, and case management tailored to the needs of the household.	3 months – 2 years.
Permanent Supportive Housing	Permanent tenant-based subsidies or dedicated units combined with supportive services focused on tenancy, with intensity of the services appropriate to the needs of the participant.	2 years- Indefinite.

In Cayuga County, no youth under 18 were served in emergency shelter, because there are no beds dedicated to serving youth under 18 or youth under 24. In non-dedicated emergency shelter beds, 58 single youth, and 10 parenting youth were served. For Transitional housing, 2 single youth and 9 parenting youth were served in beds not dedicated to youth. For Rapid re-housing, 6 parenting youth and no single youth were served in non-dedicated slots. For Permanent Supportive Housing, 2 single youth and 2 parenting youth were served in non-dedicated beds.

For Onondaga County, Table 5 shows that for emergency shelter, 173 single youth utilized shelter that was targeted to adults and 39 parenting youth used shelter that was targeted to adult families. For Rapid Re-housing, 104 people in youth-headed households were enrolled in programs targeted to youth, and 55 people in youth-headed households were in programs for adults. For permanent supportive housing, 9 youth were served in the program dedicated to single youth, 20 single youth were served in programs targeted to people experiencing chronic homelessness, and 7 parenting youth were served in programs targeted to families.

In Oswego county, 38 single youth used shelter not targeted towards youth and 13 parenting youth used shelter that was targeted to adult families. For Transitional Housing, the only available units in Oswego County are targeted to youth, and 16 single youth utilized this service in 2020. For Rapid Rehousing, there are no dedicated youth Rapid Re-housing programs and 12 youth utilized Rapid Re-housing not dedicated to serving youth.

Looking at beds alone shows how many youth successfully gained admission to programs and made their way through the homeless services system in each county. There may have been many more youth who could have been eligible for those programs but were not connected with them due to a lack of available beds, lack of appropriate assessment, or the youth not being interested in the program.

Table 5. Youth Homelessness System Utilization in Onondaga County, NY			
Program Name	Number of beds /spots	Point-in Time Numbers (from PIT) (1/27/2020)	Annual Youth Numbers
Emergency Shelter			
Dedicated Beds - Youth Under 18	15	5	93
Dedicated Beds - Youth 18-24	6	3	39
Nondedicated Beds for Single adults	316	14	173
Nondedicated Beds for Families	117	3 households	32 households
Transitional Housing			
Dedicated Beds – Youth 18-24	7	4	13
Dedicated Beds – Parenting Youth 18-24	0	0	0
Nondedicated Beds – Single Adults	59	1	3
Nondedicated Beds - Families	52	4 households	19 households
Rapid Re-Housing			
Dedicated Beds – Youth 18-24	82	19 households	27 households
Nondedicated Beds – Youth 18-24	482	23 households	28 households
Permanent Supportive Housing			
Permanent Supportive Housing for Single Youth	6	6	9
Permanent Supportive Housing for Single Adults	862	14	26
Permanent Supportive Housing for Families	264	4 households	7 households
*Included children of parenting youth			

Table 6. Youth Homelessness System Utilization in Oswego County, NY			
Program Type	Number of beds	Point-in Time Numbers of youth (from PIT) (1/27/2020)	Annual Youth Numbers (from Dashboard/APR)
Emergency Shelter			
Dedicated Beds - Youth Under 18	10 (youth under 24)	4	13
Dedicated Beds - Youth 18-24	10 (youth under 24)	0	24
Nondedicated Beds for Single Adults	74 non-dedicated	0	38
Nondedicated Beds for Families	63	0	13 households
Transitional Housing			
Dedicated Beds – Youth 18-24	10	8	16
Dedicated Beds – Parenting Youth 18-24	0	0	0
Nondedicated Beds – Single Adults	0	0	0
Nondedicated Beds - Families	0	0	0
Rapid Re-Housing			
Dedicated Beds – Youth 18-24	0	0	0
Nondedicated Beds – Youth 18-24	97	2 households	12 households
Permanent Supportive Housing			
Permanent Supportive Housing for Single Youth	0	0	0
Permanent Supportive Housing for Single Adults	20	1	1
Permanent Supportive Housing for Families	34	0	0

Table 7. Youth Homelessness System Utilization in Cayuga County, NY			
Project Type/ targeting	Number of beds	Point-in Time Youth Numbers (from PIT) (1/27/2020)	Annual Youth Numbers (from Dashboard/APR)
Emergency Shelter			
Dedicated Beds - Youth Under 18	0	0	0
Dedicated Beds - Youth 18-24	0	0	0
Nondedicated Beds for Single adults	60	9	58
Nondedicated Beds for Families	10	0	10 households
Transitional Housing			
Dedicated Beds – Youth 18-24	0	0	0
Dedicated Beds – Parenting Youth 18-24	0	0	0
Nondedicated Beds – Single Adults	9	1	2
Nondedicated Beds - Families	40	0	9 households
Rapid Re-Housing			
Dedicated Beds – Youth 18-24	0	0	0
Nondedicated Beds – Youth 18-24	39	5 households	6 households
Permanent Supportive Housing			
Permanent Supportive Housing for Single Youth	0	0	0
Permanent Supportive Housing for Single Adults	45	0	2
Permanent Supportive Housing for Families	70	1	2 households

Coordinated Entry Data

The Coordinated Entry System in NY-505 operates so that clients can, with the help of their case managers at emergency shelters and street outreach teams, select the housing interventions that will be of the most help to them and for which they are eligible. The case managers also perform a vulnerability assessment using the Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT). Once the clients select project types and undergo a vulnerability assessment, clients are prioritized for housing openings based on objective criteria such as length of time homeless, VI-SPDAT score, and medical vulnerability. When we refer to a client “expressing interest” in a type of program, we mean that they have had a discussion with their case manager and determined that they would likely be eligible for that project type and they were interested in enrolling in that project type.

To determine the extent to which system utilization was determined by assessment of youth and interest in programs, we include data from the coordinated entry system. Data from the coordinated entry system in each county reveals how many youth were assessed in the 2020, what program types they expressed interest in, and what level of need was assessed for them using the vulnerability index. Tables 7 through 9 show the number of youth assessed in the coordinated entry system, how many were enrolled in the programs, and how many were housed through those programs. Table 10 shows the level of vulnerability assessed using the TAY-VISPDAT or the VI-F-SPDAT for families.

In Onondaga County in 2020, 131 out of 212 youth households who entered shelter were assessed using the coordinated entry system. Of those 131 youth, 104 were single youth and 27 were

parenting youth. 33 single youth expressed an interest in Permanent Supportive housing, and 75 single youth expressed an interest in Rapid Re-housing. 6 Parenting youth expressed an interest in Permanent Supportive Housing, and 24 Parenting Youth expressed an interest in Rapid Re-housing.

In Oswego County in 2020, a total of 19 youth households were assessed using the coordinated entry system. Of those 19 youth 6 single youth expressed interest in Permanent Supportive Housing, and 2 single youth expressed interest in Rapid Rehousing. 2 Parenting youth expressed an interest in Permanent Supportive Housing and 2 Parenting youth expressed an interest in Rapid Re-housing.

In Cayuga County in 2020, a total of 12 youth households were assessed using the coordinated entry system. Of those 12 youth 6 single youth expressed interest in Permanent Supportive Housing, and 2 single youth expressed interest in Rapid Rehousing. 2 Parenting youth expressed an interest in Permanent Supportive Housing and 2 Parenting youth expressed an interest in Rapid Re-housing.

In all counties, the number of assessments performed for youth was substantially lower than the number of youth who were served in emergency shelters. As is shown in the tables, many clients who expressed interest in projects may not have been prioritized for housing projects based on the criteria that the Coordinated Entry system uses for adult-focused programs.

The data from VI-SPDAT assessments shows that in each county except Onondaga County, the majority of Youth score in the “High Vulnerability / Permanent Supportive Housing Suggested” range. In Onondaga County, a nearly equal number of youth score in the Moderate Vulnerability and High Vulnerability ranges. This suggests that of the youth who are assessed in NY-505, the majority are highly vulnerable, as assessed by the VI-SPDAT.

Table 7. 2020 Cayuga County Coordinated Entry System Data				
	Total On CES List interested in this intervention	Youth assessed for intervention in 2020	Youth enrolled in intervention in 2020	Youth Housed in 2020
PSH	Single Youth	6	2	2
PSH	Parenting Youth	2	2	2
RRH	Single Youth	2	0	0
RRH	Parenting Youth	2	6	5
Total		12	10	9

Table 8. 2020 Onondaga County Coordinated Entry System Data				
Assessed Intervention	Total On CES List interested in this intervention	Youth assessed for intervention in 2020	Youth enrolled in intervention in 2020	Youth Housed in 2020
PSH	Single Youth	33	14	14
PSH	Parenting Youth	6	5	5
RRH	Single Youth	75	31	26
RRH	Parenting Youth	24	18	18
Total		131 total youth , 27 families		

Table 9. 2020 Oswego County Coordinated Entry System Data				
Assessed Intervention	Total On CES List interested in this intervention	Youth assessed for intervention in 2020	Youth enrolled in intervention in 2020	Youth Housed in 2020
PSH	Single Youth	7	1	1
PSH	Parenting Youth	2	0	0
RRH	Single Youth	2	4	4
RRH	Parenting Youth	5	8	8
Total		19		

Table 10. VI-SPDAT Data by County					
		TAY-VISPDAT Vulnerability Score			Total
		No Intervention	Moderate Vulnerability / Rapid Re-Housing Suggested	High Vulnerability / Permanent Supportive Housing Suggested	
Onondaga	Percentage	15%	43%	42%	
	Count	17	50	49	116
Oswego	Percentage	13%	20%	67%	
	Count	2	3	10	15
Cayuga	Percentage	8%	31%	62%	
	Count	1	4	8	13

Racial Disparities

Racial equity is a priority for the Housing and Homeless Coalition of Central New York. Structural and interpersonal racism both contribute to higher rates of homelessness among racial and ethnic minorities. Across the United States, data from HUD's Point-In-Time Counts of people experiencing literal homelessness have shown that the racial make-up of people experiencing homelessness is disproportionately Black and Hispanic when compared to the population of people living in poverty (HUD Exchange, 2020). If homelessness were exclusively an economic issue, we would expect the racial makeup of the population experiencing poverty and the population experiencing homelessness to be about equal.

For youth, it is not possible to compare the racial distribution of youth in shelter to the racial distribution of youth in poverty. The American Community Survey does not report data on youth living in poverty that is disaggregated by race, so we can only look at the disparity between the distribution of race in the overall population and the distribution of race among youth experiencing homelessness.

Figures 1 and 2 show the disparity between the overall racial and ethnic makeup of youth under 25 in the overall geographic area of the CoC and the racial and ethnic makeup of youth under 25 experiencing homelessness. For Black youth there is a 17% disparity (12% in the total population, and 29% in the homeless population). For Hispanic youth there is an 11% disparity (7% in the total population, and 18% in the homeless population).

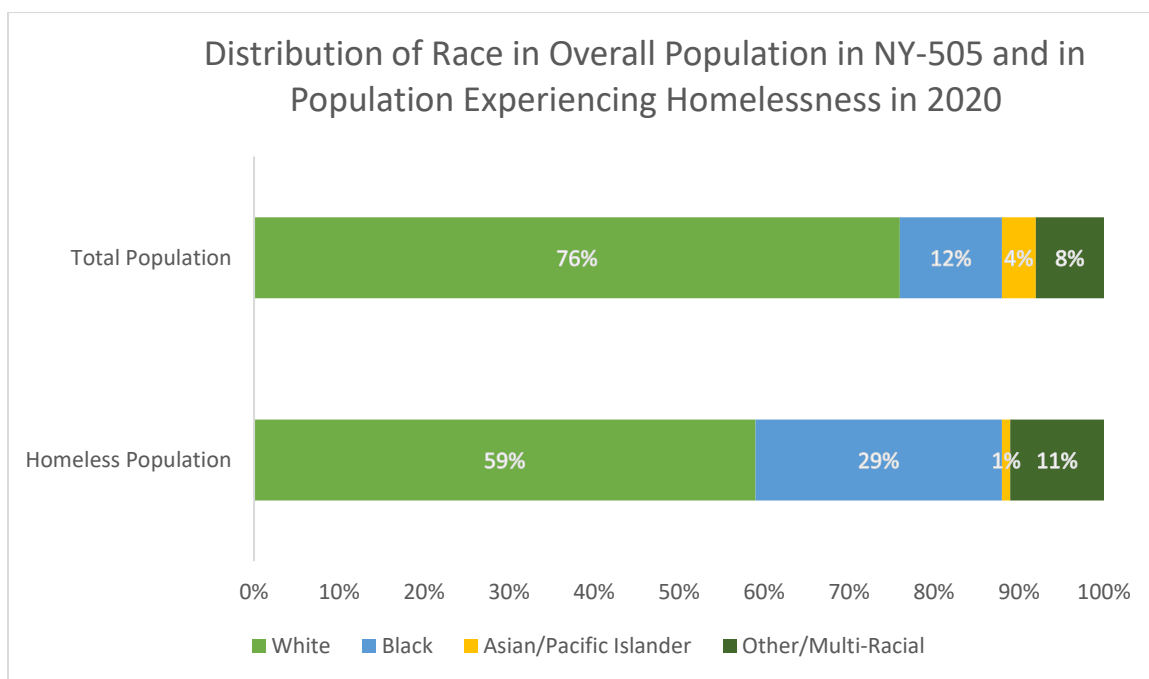


Figure 1. Racial Disparity between total population in NY-505 and population experiencing homelessness in January 2020.
Source: <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5787/coc-analysis-tool-race-and-ethnicity/>

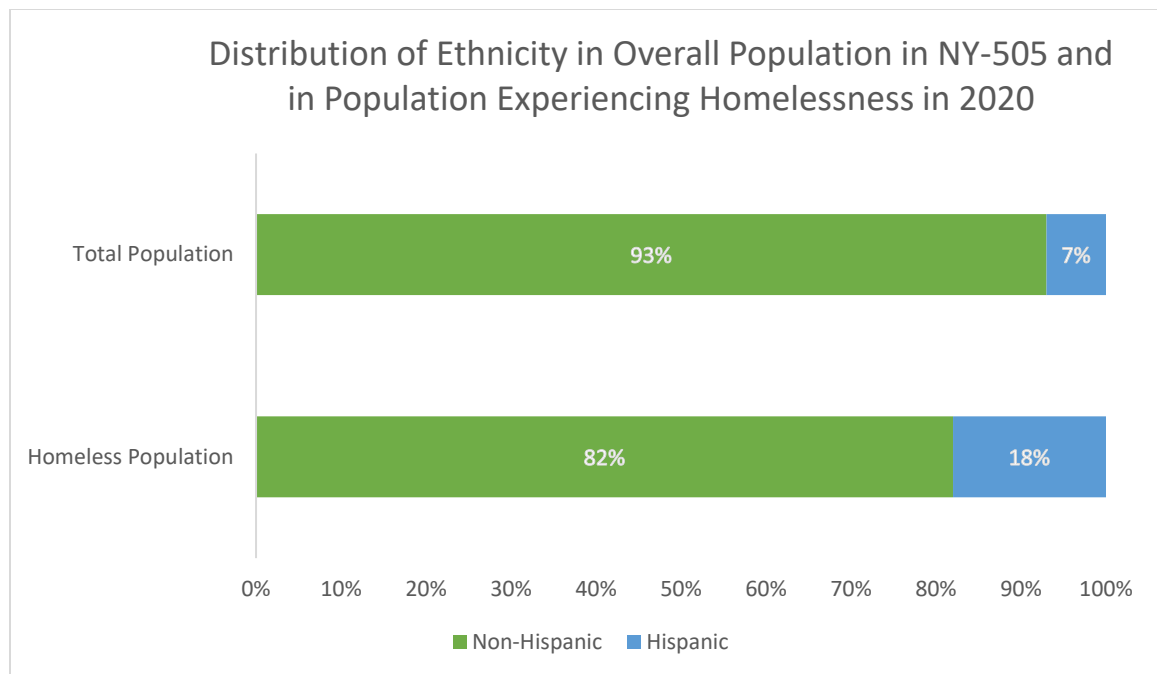


Figure 2. Distribution of ethnicity for total population in NY-505 and population experiencing homelessness in January 2020. Source: <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5787/coc-analysis-tool-race-and-ethnicity/>

Disparities in the racial makeup of the overall population compared to the population in shelter suggest that there are upstream causes of homelessness that may differ for each racial group. These do not necessarily reflect disparities in the way the homeless services system functions after people are already in shelter.

In 2016, an analysis of HMIS data by the Supporting Partnerships for Anti-racist Communities Initiative found that statistically significant racial disparities existed in exits to homelessness and in other aspects of the homeless response system. Following that approach, we used the data from the HUD Longitudinal System Analysis (LSA) Report for the year 2020 to analyze racial disparities in the performance of the homelessness system for young adults. The three performance measures that are reported in the LSA are 1) Length of Time Homeless, 2) Permanent Housing Placement, and 3) Returns to homelessness. The population groups can be broken down into single adult youth ages 18-24 and unaccompanied youth under age 18. Race data for parenting youth is not available in the LSA at this time.

Length of Time Homeless. Length of time homeless refers to the average cumulative days that households were served in Emergency Shelter or Transitional Housing projects. It also records time in Rapid Re-Housing or Permanent Supportive Housing Projects when households were enrolled but not moved in to their permanent housing unit. Rapid Re-Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing are programs that assist people who are exiting homelessness with rent subsidies and case management services. Figure 3 shows the difference in the number of days homeless single youth experienced homelessness. In Onondaga and Cayuga Counties Black/African-American young adults had the longest average length of time spent in shelters and transitional housing. Young adults identifying multiple races and White Hispanic/Latino Young Adults had the lowest average length of time homeless. In Oswego county White Hispanic/Latino young adults had the longest average length of time spent in shelters.

In Onondaga county, Black/African-American unaccompanied minor youth stayed in shelter slightly longer than White unaccompanied minor youth. In Oswego County, youth identifying as multiple races had substantially longer stays in shelter than all other races. It is important to note that very small group numbers in the multiple race and White Hispanic/Latino Groups may have led to unstable estimates of average number of days homeless in Oswego County.

Exits to Permanent Housing. Exits to permanent housing refers to the percentage of youth that exited the homeless service system to permanent destinations. Their exit refers to their last exit in the year 2020 from either an Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing Project, Rapid Re-Housing Project, or Permanent Supportive Housing project. Permanent destinations include independent rentals (subsidized or unsubsidized), supportive housing, or staying with friends or family on a permanent basis. In Onondaga and Oswego Counties, White Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino young adults had the lowest percentage of exits to permanent housing. In Cayuga County Black/African-American Young Adults had the lowest percentage of exits to permanent housing.

For unaccompanied youth under 18 in Onondaga County, Hispanic/Latino youth had the lowest rates of exits to permanent housing, and youth identifying as multiple races had the highest rates of exits to permanent housing. For unaccompanied youth under 18 in Oswego County, Hispanic/Latino youth and youth identifying as multiple races had the highest rates of exit to permanent housing.

Returns to Homelessness After Exits to Permanent Housing. Returns to homelessness after exits to permanent housing refers to the percent of households who returned to the homeless system within six months of exiting to a permanent destination. The denominator for the returns calculation is all households in the population group that exited the homeless system to permanent destinations during the specified time period. We looked at returns to homelessness within six months after households had exited the homeless services system to permanent housing during 2019. Figures 7 and 8 display this measure for each racial group in each county. In all counties, Black/African American Young Adults have the highest rates of return after exits to permanent housing. In Onondaga county, unaccompanied minor youth identifying as multiple races have the highest rate of returns to homelessness within 6 months, and Black/African-American unaccompanied minor youth have the second highest rate of returns within 6 months.

The LSA data show that Black/African-American Young Adults, on average, stay in shelters longer, and return to homelessness more often than Young Adults in other racial groups.

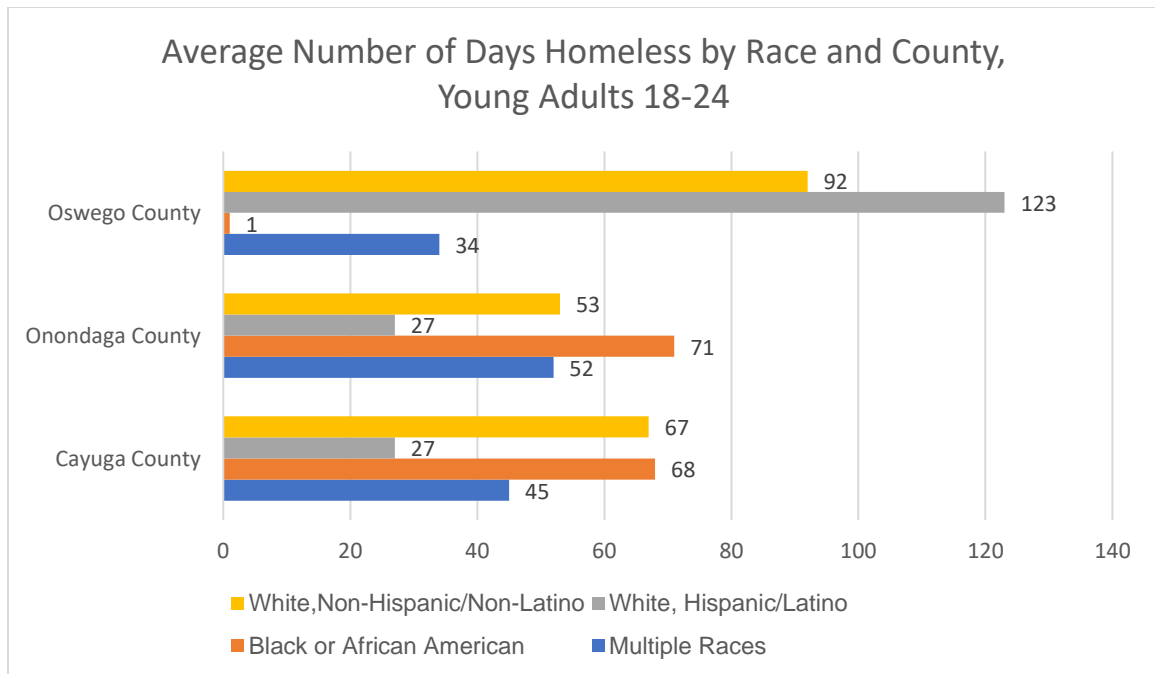


Figure 3. Average number of days homeless by race and county, Single Young Adults 18-24 in 2020. Rows with Zero values had no participants in that category. Source: HMIS, Stella P dashboard

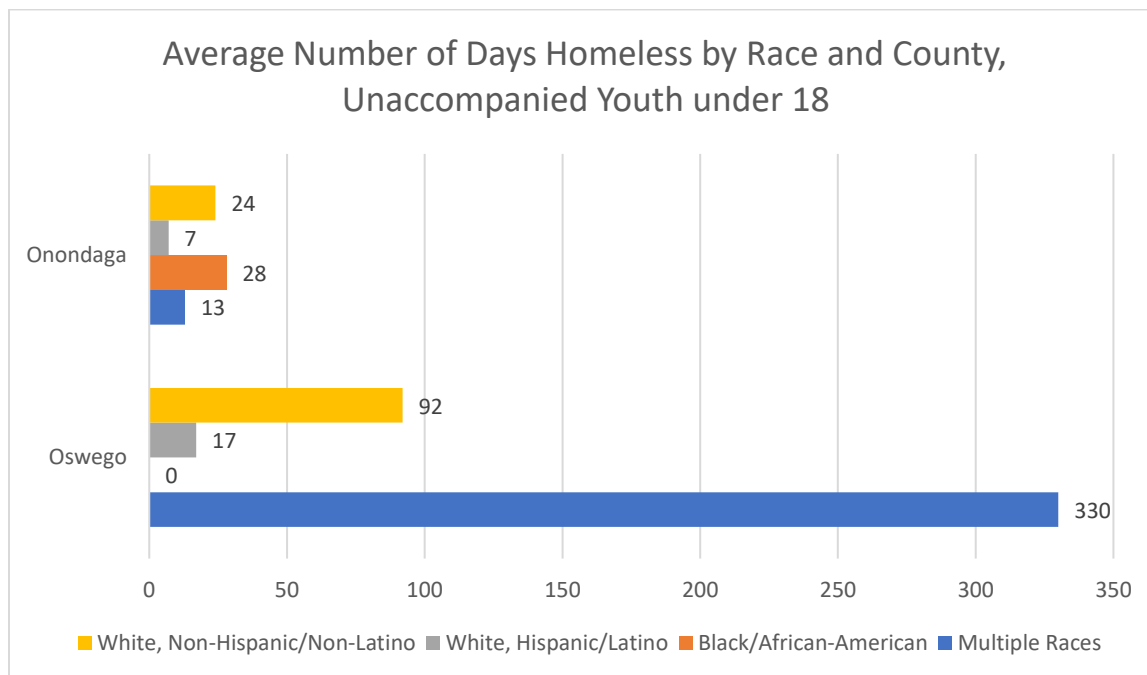


Figure 4. Average number of days homeless by race and county, Unaccompanied Youth under 18 in 2020. Rows with Zero values had no participants in that category. Source: HMIS, Stella P dashboard.

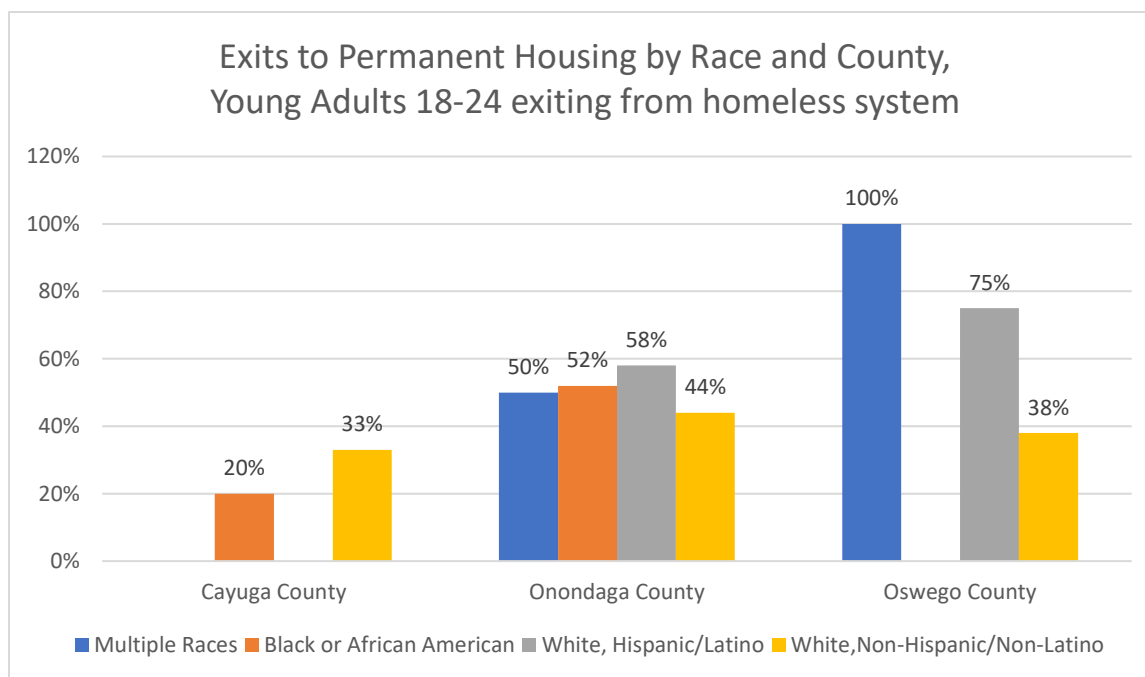


Figure 5. Exits to Permanent Housing by race and county, Young Adults 18-24 in 2020. Rows with Zero values had no participants in that category. Source: HMIS, Stella P dashboard.

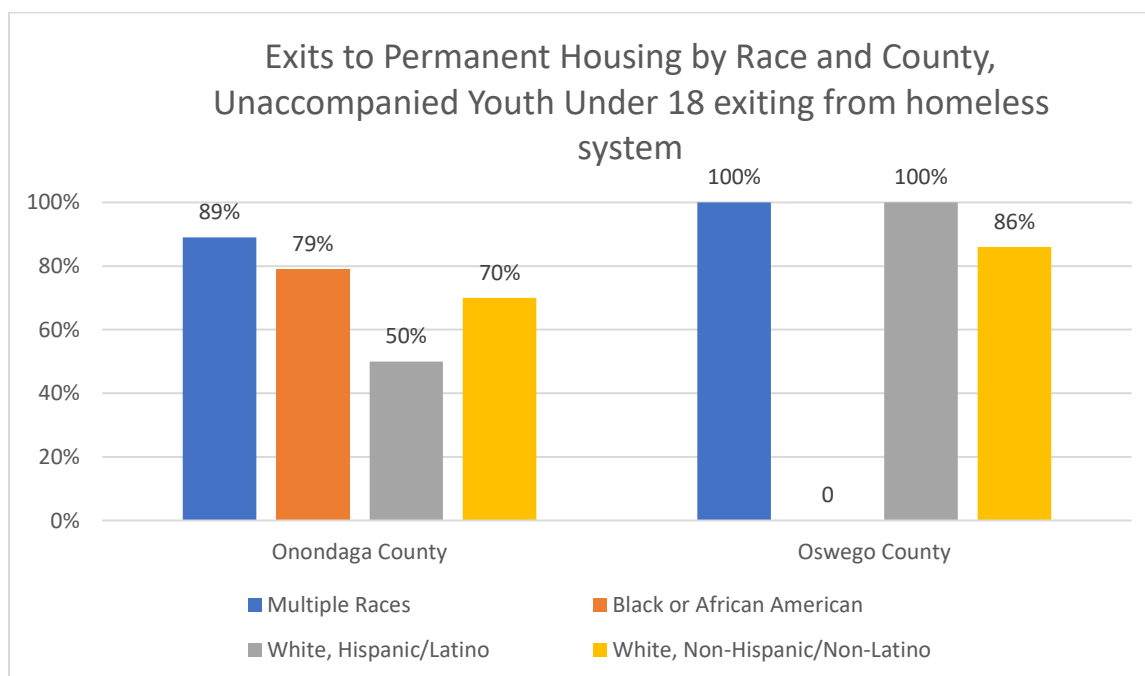


Figure 6. Exits to Permanent Housing by race and county, Unaccompanied Youth under 18 in 2020. Rows with Zero values had no participants in that category. Source: HMIS, Stella P dashboard.

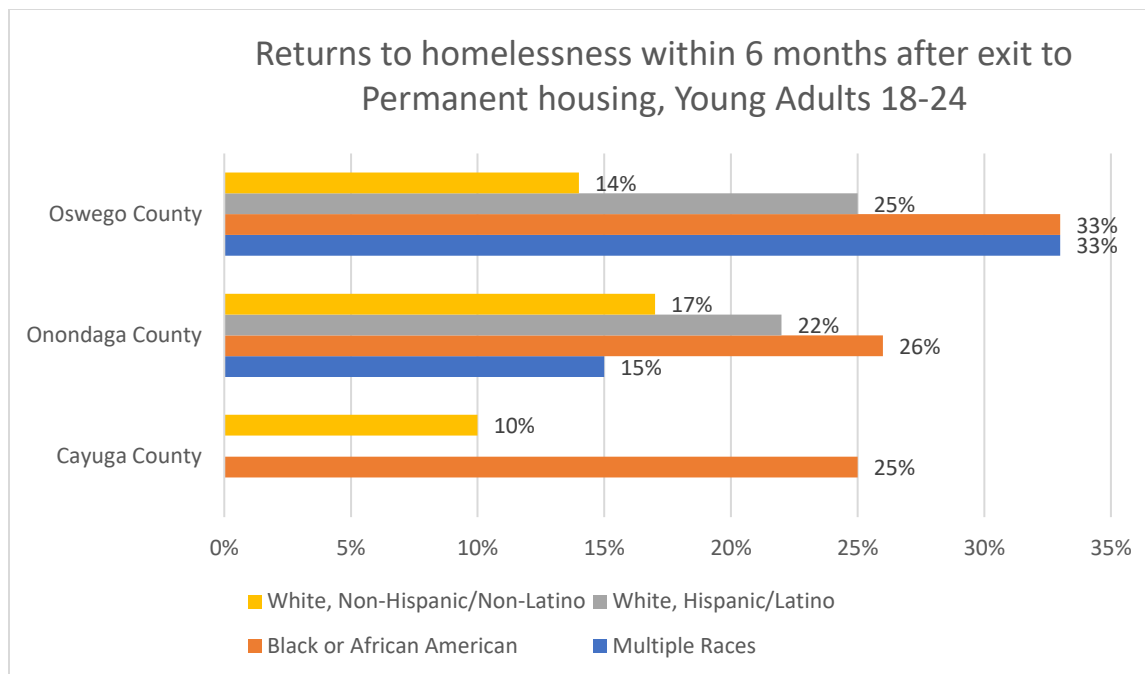


Figure 7 Returns to homelessness within 6 months after exit to permanent housing by race and county, Young Adults 18-24 in 2020. Rows with Zero values had no participants in that category. Source: HMIS, Stella P dashboard.

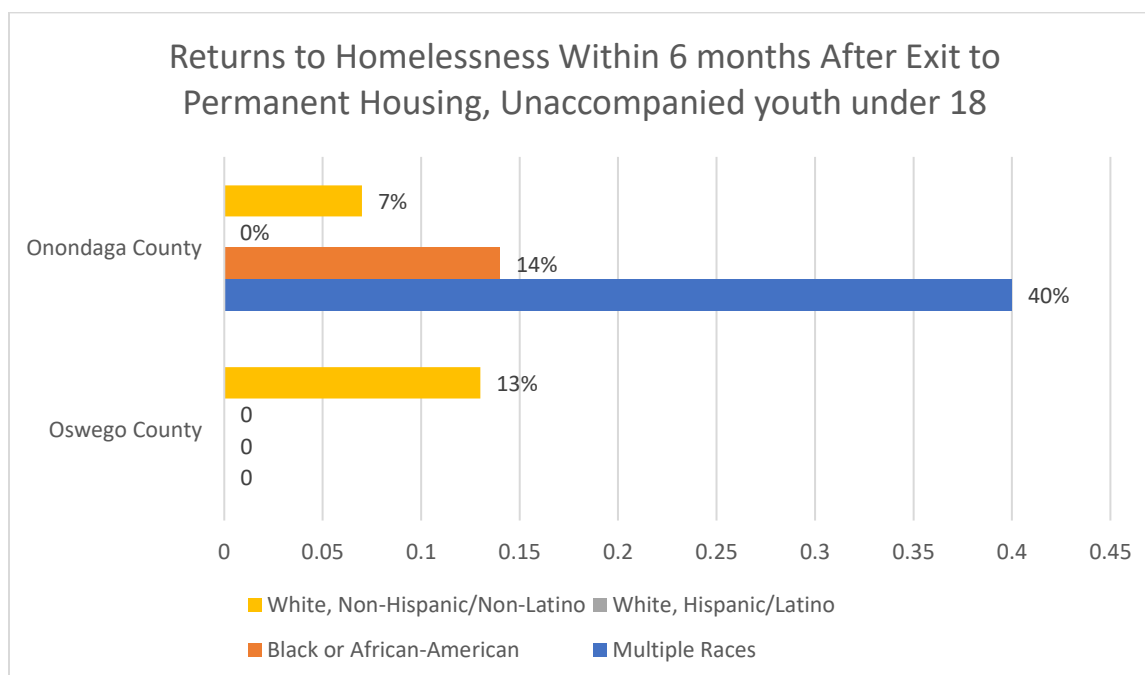


Figure 8. Returns to homelessness within 6 months after exit to permanent housing by race and county, Unaccompanied Youth under 18 in 2020. Rows with Zero values had no participants in that category. Source: HMIS, Stella P dashboard.

Prevalence of LGBTQ Groups, Child Welfare Involvement, and Juvenile Justice Involvement

The CoC collects some information about sexual orientation, history of child welfare involvement, and juvenile justice involvement.

LGBTQ Youth Among youth under 25 who experienced homelessness in 2020, 3% of youth (5 youth) identified as Transgender, and 10% of youth (16 youth) reported on their coordinated entry assessments in 2020 that they are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or have another sexual orientation not listed. Of those youth, 38% reported on their coordinated entry assessment (the TAY-VISPDAT) that they ran away from home because of conflicts around gender identity or sexual orientation.

The HMIS in Central New York does not systematically track sexual orientation for youth ages 18-24, so there is no comprehensive estimate of the disparities in the entire population of youth utilizing shelter and street outreach services. National data from youth homelessness counts suggest that homeless youth are 120% more likely to identify as LGBTQ than the general youth population, so it is likely that there is a larger group of youth who identify as LGBTQ among youth experiencing homelessness and housing vulnerability in Central New York than the Coordinated Entry Data suggest (Morton, Dworsky & Samuels, 2017)).

Child Welfare involvement Youth experiencing homelessness may be more likely than stably housed youth to have been involved with the child welfare system. In NY-505, youth experiencing homelessness are asked whether they have ever been involved in the foster care system. In 2020, 14% of youth (46 out of 334) that used shelter and street outreach services reported that they had some involvement with the foster care system. In the entire population of people experiencing homelessness, 12% had been involved with the foster care system.

National-level research has found that families experiencing homelessness are more likely to be involved with the child welfare system because of health or safety risks posed by inadequate housing, abuse or neglect induced by the stress of parents experiencing homelessness, mental health and substance abuse problems exacerbated by homelessness, and increased scrutiny of parents living in shelters (Fowler, Toro, & Miles, 2009).

Juvenile Justice Involvement In 2020, 9 youth in Runaway and Homeless Youth programs in Central New York were formerly wards of Juvenile Justice. 13 youth were referred to Runaway and Homeless Youth shelters from law enforcement or juvenile justice programs. Youth involved in Juvenile Justice may have behavioral challenges that put them at risk of housing vulnerability when they are young adults. The extent of overlap between homeless services and justice-involved clients is not known.

Main Findings From System Utilization Data:

In all counties, almost as many youth utilize services meant for adults as utilize services targeted at youth, suggesting that there is an unmet need for youth-targeted services that would more effectively serve the needs of transition-aged youth.

Cayuga County has no shelter, street outreach, transitional housing, or rapid rehousing dedicated to serving youth under 18 or transition-aged youth. The lack of available services in Cayuga make it difficult to estimate how many youth experience literal homelessness in that area.

Almost no youth utilize street outreach services. This may be because none of the counties have youth-specific street outreach programs, and youth may not be comfortable engaging with street

outreach that normally targets adults. For this reason, the number of youth experiencing street homelessness may not be accurate.

Coordinated Entry Assessments do not reflect the complete number of youth that are utilizing shelter services. This may be because many youth do not stay long enough in shelter to contact a case manager, or do not consent to performing coordinated entry assessments if they are not interested in the services. In addition, there is not a separate Coordinated Entry system in NY-505 that specifically targets youth for assessment. In Onondaga County, Youth are prioritized for youth-targeted permanent housing project. Youth-targeted beds are not available in Oswego or Cayuga county and coordinated entry is not different for youth.

Most of the youth in all counties score in the High Needs range of the VI-SPDAT assessments. While this suggests that the youth that are assessed through the coordinated entry system have high needs, it cannot necessarily be extrapolated to the youth that did not receive an assessment. It does provide compelling evidence that youth who were assessed would benefit from additional housing services.

Racial disparity data indicates that racial disparities exist for upstream causes of homelessness and for indicators of client's movement through the homelessness system. There are concerning disparities in all three counties for both transition-aged youth and for youth under the age of 18.

There is little data available about LGBTQ youth in the homelessness system in Central New York, however preliminary information from the coordinated entry system suggests that at least 13% of youth experiencing homelessness are LGBTQ. Self-report data of foster care involvement suggests that there is a higher percentage of foster involved youth among people who experience homelessness than in the population of the CoC. Lastly, there were a number of youth that experienced homelessness and were simultaneously involved with juvenile justice.

System Modeling.

System modeling is an approach that uses information about the current homelessness response system to create an idealized community system of housing and services interventions needed to rapidly exit people to permanent housing. System modeling incorporates the service utilization numbers and maps them onto assumptions about the housing and services projects that youth could use to obtain and maintain stable independent housing. The present report is not an attempt to do comprehensive system modeling. It is intended to be a starting point to engage community partners in a conversation to create a comprehensive plan to end youth homelessness. The system modeling section aims to describe the youth homelessness response systems in Central New York as they currently exist and clearly articulate needed changes to make youth homelessness rare, brief, and one-time.

The first step in a system modeling exercise was to clearly define program models in the community that serve to provide housing and services for people experiencing homelessness. The program models do not necessarily represent housing programs and services as they currently exist in the CoC but represent idealized versions of programs based on best practices.

The focus of the current system modeling project is projects that provide beds, units, or subsidies to youth experiencing literal homelessness and rapidly exiting them to permanent housing. The youth homelessness system also includes projects like drop-in centers, outreach, and prevention, but they are not within the scope of this analysis.

Across each program, it is also assumed that projects will follow NY-505's written standards for practices, which include expectations that providers respect client autonomy, practice cultural competence, use trauma-informed care models, address the safety needs of victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, and other important provisions.

The program models chart in Table 4 gives a program description, expected length of stay in the program, and the system performance measure that the program will most likely affect.

Creating a system model involves assumptions about the pathways expected to help youth exit the homelessness system most effectively with the supports they need. We do not imply that more people could not utilize the assistance if it were available, nor that this analysis can pre-determine the type of assistance that a specific person would need. Referral to housing services and interventions should be based on the assessment process conducted through coordinated entry, the individual's preferences and resources, and the availability of beds at the time the individual presents for services. However, we start from the assumption that more youth would utilize the assistance if it was available to them. A general sense of the scope of eligibility, interest, and need must be assumed and implied from the current homeless system data to describe the overall need for the service. The following pathway charts were developed in concert with a group of youth homelessness providers from each geographic region represented.

We also analyzed current patterns of service use through the homeless services system with HMIS data to set a baseline that guides the creation of idealized rates of service use. The NY-505 CoC has a high rate of participation in HMIS for housing programs that target homeless people, which means that most people who used emergency shelter are included in the HMIS dataset. There are no youth street outreach programs in NY-505, so this dataset is likely missing youth that have slept outside and not requested crisis housing. In addition, the HMIS dataset used to calculate proportions of service use was collected during the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic. In New York State, increased protections for renters

resulted in drastic reductions in the number of people using shelters in all age groups and household types. Because of this reduction, we think that these numbers represent a conservative estimate of the need in NY-505.

System models were developed for three distinct subpopulations, reflecting their differing service needs: Single Youth aged 18-24, Pregnant and Parenting Youth aged 18-24, and Unaccompanied Youth below the age of 18. These models were also developed separately for each geographic region, reflecting that each community has a distinct ecosystem of services.

Once the Youth Homelessness Workgroup defined the set of pathways for NY-505, they then developed assumptions about the pathways that each household type and subpopulation would need. Pathway assumptions vary by need and were created in concert with information about the size of the population and the typical level of need, as informed by coordinated entry data. Selection of pathways should also be informed by local principles, such as adoption of a Housing First approach, emerging practices nationally, and funder's priorities. The Youth Homelessness Workgroup discussed all these factors in developing the pathways for the various households and subpopulations in Central New York. In addition, it was determined that improved outreach would increase the total number of youth that receive homelessness services by allowing them to leave unsafe situations. In Cayuga county, it was assumed that 5% of youth at-risk of homelessness would utilize services. In Onondaga and Oswego counties, it was assumed that 1% of youth at-risk of homelessness would utilize services. Estimates of youth at-risk of homelessness were determined through NYS education department data and US Census estimates of youth living in poverty.

Pathways developed for single youth aged 18-24 in Onondaga County are shown in Table 8. Pathways for all three subpopulations in all three geographic areas are shown in Appendix A.

Table 8. Pathways for Onondaga County Single Youth 18-24		
Pathway	Percentage of population based on 2020 data	Idealized system model
Diversion	0	10%
Emergency Shelter (ES) Only	57% (153/270)	25%
ES + Transitional Housing (TH)	9% (24/270)	10%
ES + TH + RRH at Exit	0	15%
ES + Rapid Rehousing – short term	0	10%
ES + Rapid Rehousing – long term	30% (81/270)	20%
ES + Permanent Supportive Housing	6% (15/270)	10%

To illustrate what each pathway means, they are described below. The main pathways are defined around the core project type that the person uses to exit to permanent housing.

Diversion: Immediate services intervention to divert youth that otherwise would have become homeless and entered emergency shelter. Diversion services might continue to support the youth to identify a permanent housing option after the initial diversion from homelessness. The expectation is that 10% of youth each year could be helped to find permanent housing prior to entering emergency shelter. The average length of stay is projected at 1 month per client.

Emergency Shelter only: Basic lodging and case management to provide for immediate safety needs for youth that could not be diverted from homelessness. 20% of youth are expected only to utilize emergency shelter and no other homelessness-targeted services. Length of stay in an idealized system is 1 month per client.

Emergency Shelter + Transitional Housing: Transitional housing Time-limited housing with services to stabilize the youth and prepare them for exit to permanent housing. 10% of youth are expected to need transitional housing. The average length of stay is projected at 1 month per client.

Emergency Shelter + Rapid Re-housing: Rapid re-housing refers to time-limited case management along with a rental subsidy. 50% of youth are expected to be able to utilize rapid re-housing. 40% would need medium-term assistance up to 2 years, and 10% would need short-term assistance up to 6 months.

Emergency Shelter + Permanent Supportive Housing: For youth with a disability and longer history of homelessness, permanent supportive housing provides indefinite rental assistance and supportive services to maintain housing. We expect that 10% of all homeless youth would be appropriate for Permanent Supportive Housing. While Permanent Supportive Housing is not time-limited by design, PSH projects that serve youth in NY-505 have lengths of stay of 3-4 years on average.

Length of stay goals are described with each pathway; however it is important to note that these are goals and may differ from the lengths of stay that we observe in currently operating projects. In addition, the lengths of stay in emergency shelter will depend on many other factors, including timeliness of assessment and the availability of appropriate units. While the community is transitioning to create additional services, it may take multiple years for the effects of these additional resources on emergency shelter lengths of stay to be realized.

Based on these pathway assumptions, inventory recommendations for each of the populations in each of the three counties were developed.

Inventory Modeling

Inventory modeling is conducted by calculating the number of units needed at any given point time using 1) the defined annual number of people experiencing homelessness, 2) the proportion of people expected to need that particular project type, and 3) the average length of stay for that project type. Using this information, the number of times a bed, unit, or subsidy “turns over” can be calculated, which can then be used to estimate a total number of units required for each project type.

For example, suppose youth need an average of one month of emergency shelter before they exit to permanent housing, and there an estimated 24 youth experiencing homelessness in the entire year. The system then needs 2 emergency beds for youth at any given time because each bed serves 12 youth a year. The bed is “turned over” 12 times and used by another youth, assuming even demand over the course of the year.

Once the number of beds, units, and subsidy slots is calculated through the inventory modeling process, the recommended inventory needed at a point in time was compared with the existing inventory of resources from the housing inventory count chart. Using this information, the community plans to target resources that align with the ideal system.

The inventory Recommendations for single youth 18-24 in Onondaga County are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Inventory Recommendations for Onondaga County Single Youth 18-24: 383 youth projected to experience homelessness with increased outreach		
Program Type	Inventory Recommendation at a point in time	Youth served in a year
Diversion	32 slots (3 months LOS)	384
Emergency Shelter	29 beds (1 month average length of stay)	378
Transitional Housing	230 beds (1.5 year average LOS)	287
Rapid Rehousing - short term	19 slots (6 month average LOS)	58
Rapid Rehousing – long term	115 slots (1.5 year average LOS)	191
Permanent Supportive Housing	115 beds (3 year average LOS)	38 new each year, 153 total

Comparison to current inventory

Table 10 compares the idealized inventory for Single Youth ages 18-24 with the current inventory in Onondaga County targeted to youth as reported on the 2020 Housing Inventory Count Chart.

Table 10. Comparison of current inventory to ideal inventory for Single Youth ages 18-24 in Onondaga County			
Program Type	Current System Inventory	Ideal Inventory	Inventory Difference (Current vs Ideal)
Diversion	0	0	0
Emergency Shelter	10 beds (1 month avg length of stay)	10 beds	0
Transitional Housing	0	20 beds	(20 beds)
TH-RRH	0	230	(58)
Rapid Rehousing- Short Term	0	19	(19)
Rapid Rehousing – Medium Term	82 slots	191 slots	(80 slots)
Permanent Supportive Housing	6 beds	115 beds, 38 available each year	(84 beds)

After considering the differences between the current system inventory and the ideal inventory. This document is focused on the needs of the current system, and recommends a plan be put in place to prioritize the creation of additional programs that will bring the system closer to the idealized system that has been established. Table 11 shows the sum of all new inventory recommendations in the CoC for each of the three population groups of youth.

Table 11. Total New Inventory Recommendations for Youth programs				
Program Type	Youth Under 18	Single Youth 18-24	Pregnant and Parenting Youth 18-24	Total Inventory Recommendations for Youth
Diversion	17	23	6	46
Emergency Shelter	2	20	10	32
Transitional Housing	24	108	13	145
TH-RRH	0	320	228	548
Rapid Rehousing- Short Term	0	69	12	81
Rapid Rehousing – Medium Term	0	184	45	229
Permanent Supportive Housing	0	155	32	187

Key takeaways of System modeling

The steering committee expressed a strong interest in developing transitional housing programs linked with rapid re-housing subsidies, and that is reflected in the high number of TH-RRH projects recommended in the analysis. TH-RRH is a promising program model that is expected to provide youth with more time and support to be successful after leaving transitional housing.

Rapid re-housing, or permanent supportive housing need to be expanded to meet the needs of single and parenting transition-age youth in all counties, especially considering the high vulnerability scores of many youths assessed through coordinated entry.

The program models described in this section and in Appendix A provide a starting point to plan more housing for youth and identify the types of resources for which the need is greatest in each geographic area for each population.

System modeling focuses on the total quantity of services provided but smooths over many details about the unique qualities and lived experiences of people receiving those services. To obtain information about the quality of services, a survey of housing vulnerable and homeless youth was conducted.

Survey

To gather data about the quality of the current services offered and about barriers that clients face in obtaining housing, a detailed survey was conducted to investigate gaps in the homeless service system.

The purpose of the survey was to provide rich data around the needs of youth at risk of and experiencing homelessness to inform recommendations to improve the youth homelessness system. Detailed results of the survey are included in Appendix B.

Highlights of the results of the survey are that the most common risk factors in the sample were home violence and dating violence. Stigma about homelessness was the most reported barrier to seeking services for youth. The most common risk factors reported included struggles with mental health, violence in the home, unhealthy relationships, difficulties in school, and other unspecified housing instability. The most reported needs were employment and education resources, transportation, and childcare (It is important to note that most youth surveyed were not literally homeless at the time they were responding). The most utilized services were food pantries, primary care physicians, SNAP benefits, and rapid re-housing programs. The least utilized services included substance abuse counseling services, peer support groups, and the 2-1-1 human services referral line.

Limitations of the survey included the low number of responses to the survey. Recruitment took place across the entire area of the CoC, but most of the respondents lived in Oswego County. The survey also relied on a web-based platform to administer the survey, and no paper forms were administered due to concerns about COVID-19. This may have biased the sample toward youth who have access to technology. Future youth surveys should offer incentives for participation and focus more heavily on outreach to the target population.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

Youth homelessness is an urgent issue in Central New York. Data described in the first part of this assessment suggest that a much larger number of youths are at-risk of homelessness compared to the number that are served by shelters. Racial disparities in youth experiencing homelessness compared to the general population were described, along with racial disparities in outcomes of homeless services. Black, Hispanic, and Multiple Race youth tend to experience longer lengths of stay in shelter, fewer exits to permanent housing, and more returns to shelter than White youth. System modeling was described to assess the extent to which new programs and housing units are needed to adequately serve youth who are in shelter. Finally, a survey of young people who experienced homelessness or housing vulnerability shed light on the need for more and better connections with employment, education, and transportation resources. This data led to the following recommendations for the youth homelessness system:

- **Improve outreach to at-risk youth, including marketing about coordinated entry.**
Youth in Central New York may not know about services available to help with housing, as evidenced by the large number of youths living in doubled up situations tracked by local schools. Youth may put themselves in vulnerable or unsafe situations out of a lack of knowledge about emergency shelter and housing resources that are available. 36% of youth in our survey said they lived in a situation where they were at serious risk of having to stay in a shelter or outside. Youth who responded to the survey also noted that they had trouble knowing how to access shelter services when they needed it and were hesitant to use shelter because of the stigma around homelessness. Youth should

have the option of shelter available to them if they do not have friends, family, or other community resources that they feel safe staying with. Marketing and communications efforts for coordinated entry could make it easier for youth to know how to access shelter resources.

- **Develop clear protocols for triage and admission into shelter in all geographic areas and set up diversion processes.** An improvement in outreach would mean that more youth may be interested in shelter than there are beds available. Local shelters should include their admissions criteria in materials that are shared with referral sources like 2-1-1, McKinney-Vento Liaisons in schools, and other community agencies. Admissions protocols should be trauma informed and be in line with housing first and positive youth development principles. The CoC should advocate for development of a youth-specific diversion project in each county that offers crisis case management and flexible funds for prevention when youth need emergency housing services.
- **Actively focus on ending racial disparities in system functioning** Collect qualitative data about the reasons behind racial disparities in youth homelessness through mechanisms like the Youth Action Board, and further youth focus groups. These findings should be shared with service providers on a regular basis. The CoC should also continue to assess disparities in system functioning by race on a regular basis. The CoC, local government agencies, and service providers should proactively implement policies that are aimed at ending racial disparities and assess their effectiveness on a regular basis.
- **Increase the inventory of housing services targeted to Transition-Aged youth and Parenting youth in all geographic regions and develop Transitional Housing programs linked with Rapid Rehousing.** All geographic regions of the CoC need more youth-targeted housing to adequately serve the number of youths experiencing homelessness. The number of youths experiencing homelessness described in this report is likely a conservative estimate, given that the COVID-19 pandemic reduced the number of youths in emergency shelter. Transitional Housing linked with Rapid Rehousing is a compelling intervention for youth because the average length of stay in youth-focused permanent supportive housing is between 3 and 4 years in NY-505. TH-RRH can provide support services while allowing youth to move forward with independent living at their own pace.
- **Provide training on special risks faced by LGBTQ youth, Foster Care involved youth, and Justice-involved youth.** It is clear from the data that there are disproportionate numbers of LGBT youth experiencing homelessness. It is also clear from the data that there are a larger number of former foster care involved youth and justice-involved youth that experience homelessness than in the general population. Housing program staff need specialized training to ensure that they provide the highest quality of services that respects youth's identities and needs. They also need to be able to effectively advocate for youth within complex systems of child welfare and criminal justice.
- **Collect data on Sexual Orientation and improve data collection on gender identity.** Without comprehensive data on the sexual orientation and gender identity of transition-age youth experiencing homelessness, it is impossible to identify disparities in the functioning of homelessness services. The CoC should consider collecting data on sexual orientation and more nuanced data on gender identity.

This needs assessment is provided for the purposes of describing the need for increased housing and services for in Cayuga, Onondaga, and Oswego counties in New York State. Community stakeholders should review this information when creating plans to create more housing services.

List of partners

ACR Health

Catholic Charities of Onondaga County

Cayuga County Department of Social Services

Center for Community Alternatives

The Chadwick Residence, Inc.

Oncare – Onondaga County Youth System of Care

Onondaga County Department of Social Services

Oswego County Department of Social Services

Oswego County Opportunities

Onondaga County Department of Probation

Oswego County Department of Probation

Onondaga County Department of Children and Family Services

The Salvation Army, Syracuse Area Services

United Way of Central New York

Youth Action Board of the Housing and Homeless Coalition of Central New York

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Appendix A. System models for each population type.

Oswego County System Models

Table A1 Cayuga County, Unaccompanied youth under 18 Idealized System Model	
Pathway	Idealized model
Diversion	100% participate, 10% diverted
Emergency Shelter Only	100%
ES + Transitional Housing	10%
ES + Transitional Housing + RRH	0%
ES + Rapid Rehousing	0%
ES + Permanent Supportive Housing	0%
Diversion	0%

Table A2. Cayuga County, Unaccompanied youth under 18, Inventory recommendation based on idealized system models		
Program Type	Inventory Recommendation at a Point in Time	Youth Served in a Year
Diversion	2 (1 month LOS)	24
Emergency Shelter	2 (1 month LOS)	24
Transitional Housing	4 (1.5 year LOS)	6
TH + RRH	0	0
RRH – Short Term	0	0
RRH – Medium Term	0	0
Permanent Supportive Housing	0	0
Note: TH + RRH: Transitional Housing with Rapid Re-housing subsidies included. RRH – Short Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 6 month time limit. RRH – Medium Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 24 month time limit. LOS=Length of Stay See Table 4 for in-depth descriptions of program models.		

Table A3. Cayuga County, Unaccompanied youth under 18, Difference between current inventory and ideal inventory			
Program Type	Current System Inventory	Ideal Inventory	Inventory Difference (Current vs Ideal)
Diversion	0	2	(2)
Emergency Shelter	0	2	(2)
Transitional Housing	0	4	(4)
TH + RRH	0	0	0
RRH – Short Term	0	0	0
RRH – Medium Term	0	0	0
Permanent Supportive Housing	0	0	0
Note: TH + RRH: Transitional Housing with Rapid Re-housing subsidies included. RRH – Short Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 6 month time limit. RRH – Medium Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 24 month time limit. See Table 4 for in-depth descriptions of program models.			

Table A4. Cayuga County, Single Youth Ages 18-24, System pathways in 2020 data and Idealized System Model

Pathway	Percentage of population (based on 2020 HMIS data)	Ideal Percentage
Diversion	0%	10 %
Emergency Shelter Only	94%	25 %
ES + Transitional Housing	4%	10 %
ES + Transitional Housing + RRH	0%	10%
ES + Rapid Rehousing	0%	10 %
ES + Permanent Supportive Housing	0%	25 %
Diversion	2%	10 %

Table A5. Cayuga County, Single Youth Ages 18-24, Inventory recommendation based on idealized system models

Program Type	Inventory Recommendation at a Point in Time	Youth Served in a Year
Diversion	9 slots (1 month LOS)	104
Emergency Shelter	5 beds (1 month LOS)	117
Transitional Housing	16 beds (1.5 year LOS)	26 (6 new each year)
TH + RRH	27 TH Beds + 27 RRH Beds	53 (10 new each year)
RRH - Short Term	6 slots (0.5 year LOS)	16 (11 new each year)
RRH - Medium Term	40 slots (1.5 year LOS)	66 (26 new each year)
Permanent Supportive Housing	31 beds (3 year LOS)	42 (11 new each year)

Note: TH + RRH: Transitional Housing with Rapid Re-housing subsidies included. RRH – Short Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 6 month time limit. RRH – Medium Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 24 month time limit. See Table 4 for in-depth descriptions of program models. LOS = Length of Stay

Table A6. Cayuga County, Single Youth Ages 18-24, Difference between current inventory and ideal inventory

Program Type	Current System Inventory	Ideal Inventory	Inventory Difference (Current vs Ideal)
Diversion	0	9	(5)
Emergency Shelter	0	5	(5)
Transitional Housing	0	16	(9)
TH + RRH	0	27 + 27	(27 TH + 27 RRH)
RRH - Short Term	0	6	(6)
RRH - Medium Term	0	40	(40)
Permanent Supportive Housing:	0	31	(31)

Note: TH + RRH: Transitional Housing with Rapid Re-housing subsidies included. RRH – Short Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 6 month time limit. RRH – Medium Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 24 month time limit. See Table 4 for in-depth descriptions of program models.

Table A7. Cayuga County, Parenting Youth Ages 18-24, System pathways in 2020 data and Idealized System Model

Pathway	Percentage of population (based on 2020 HMIS data)	Ideal percentage
Diversion	0%	10%
Emergency Shelter Only	49%	25%
ES + Transitional Housing	35%	25%
ES + Transitional Housing + RRH	0%	10%
ES + Rapid Rehousing – Short Term	0%	10%
ES + Rapid Rehousing – Medium Term	16%	10%
ES + Permanent Supportive Housing	0%	10%

Note: 2020 data is for all families with children, not all youth-headed families.

Table A8. Cayuga County, Parenting Youth Ages 18-24, Inventory recommendation based on idealized system models

Program Type	Inventory Recommendation at a Point in Time	Youth Served in a Year
Diversion	2 slot (1 month LOS)	10
Emergency Shelter	2 units (1 month LOS)	10 families
Transitional Housing	4 units (1.5 year LOS)	5 families (3 new)
TH + RRH	6 TH units + 6 RRH slots (4 year LOS)	3 families (2 new)
RRH – Short-term	2 (6 month LOS)	4
RRH – Long-term	10 (1.5 year LOS)	17
Permanent Supportive Housing	8 units (3 year LOS)	11 families (3 new)

Note: TH + RRH: Transitional Housing with Rapid Re-housing subsidies included. RRH – Short Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 6 month time limit. RRH – Medium Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 24 month time limit. See Table 4 for in-depth descriptions of program models.

Table A9. Cayuga County, Parenting Youth Ages 18-24, Difference between current inventory and ideal inventory

Program Type	Current System Inventory	Ideal Inventory	Inventory Difference (Current vs Ideal)
Diversion	0	(2)	(1 slot)
Emergency Shelter	0	(2)	(1 bed)
Transitional Housing	0	(4)	(4 units)
TH + RRH	0	(12)	(6 TH Units + 6 RRH slots)
RRH – Short-term	0	(2)	(2 slots)
RRH – Long-term	0	(10)	(10 slots)
Permanent Supportive Housing	0	(8)	(8 units)

TH + RRH: Transitional Housing with Rapid Re-housing subsidies included. RRH – Short Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 6 month time limit. RRH – Medium Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 24 month time limit. LOS = Length of Stay. See Table 4 for in-depth descriptions of program models.

Onondaga County System Models

Table A13. Onondaga County, Unaccompanied youth under 18, System pathways in 2020 data and Idealized System Model

Pathway	Percentage of population (based on 2020 HMIS data)	Idealized population percentage
Diversion Only	0	5%
ES only	95% (86/93)	85%
ES + TH	3% (3/93)	10%
ES + TH + RRH	0	0%
ES + RRH (Short-term)	0	0%
ES + RRH (Long-term)	2% (2/93)	0%
ES + PSH	0	0%

Table A14. Onondaga County, Unaccompanied youth under 18, Inventory recommendation based on idealized system models

Program Type	Inventory Recommendation at a point in time	Unaccompanied Youth served in a year
Diversion	10 slots	112 served, 5 successfully diverted
Emergency Shelter	10 beds	77
Transitional Housing	17 beds (1.5 year avg LOS)	28 (inflow 12 per year)
TH + RRH	0	0
RRH – Short Term	0	0
RRH – Medium Term	0	0
Permanent Supportive Housing	0	0
Note: TH + RRH: Transitional Housing with Rapid Re-housing subsidies included. RRH – Short Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 6 month time limit. RRH – Medium Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 24 month time limit. LOS = Length of Stay. See Table 4 for in-depth descriptions of program models.		

Table A15. Onondaga County, Unaccompanied youth under 18, Difference between current inventory and ideal inventory

Program Type	Current System Inventory	Ideal Inventory	Inventory Difference (Current vs Ideal)
Diversion	0	10 slots	(10 slots)
Emergency Shelter	10 beds (1 month avg length of stay)	10 beds	None
Transitional Housing	0	20 beds	(20 beds)
TH + RRH	0	0	0
RRH – Short Term	0	0	0
RRH – Medium Term	0	0	0
Permanent Supportive Housing	0	0	0
Note: TH + RRH: Transitional Housing with Rapid Re-housing subsidies included. RRH – Short Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 6 month time limit. RRH – Medium Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 24 month time limit. See Table 4 for in-depth descriptions of program models.			

Table A16. Onondaga County, Single Youth 18-24, Difference between current inventory and ideal inventory.

Pathway	Percentage of population (based on 2020 HMIS data)	Idealized system model
Diversion	0	10%
Emergency Shelter Only	57% (153/270)	20%
ES + Transitional Housing	9% (24/270)	10%
ES + Transitional Housing + RRH	0	15%
ES + Rapid Rehousing – Short Term	0	10%
ES + Rapid Rehousing – Medium Term	30% (81/270)	20%
ES + Permanent Supportive Housing	6% (15/270)	15%

Table A17. Onondaga County, Single Youth 18-24, Inventory recommendation based on idealized system models

Program Type	Inventory Recommendation at a Point in Time	Unaccompanied Youth served in a year
Diversion	32 slots (3-month average LOS)	384
Emergency Shelter	29 beds (1-month average LOS)	378
Transitional Housing	58 beds (1.5-year average LOS)	96
TH + RRH	115 beds (1.5-year average LOS) + 115 RRH slots (1.5-year average LOS)	54 new each year, 287 total new each year
RRH – Short Term	20 slots (6-month average LOS)	60
RRH – Medium Term	115 slots (1.5-year average LOS)	191
Permanent Supportive Housing	115 beds (3-year average LOS)	38 new each year, 1 total
Note: TH + RRH: Transitional Housing with Rapid Re-housing subsidies included. RRH – Short Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 6 month time limit. RRH – Medium Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 24 month time limit. LOS = Length of Stay. See Table 4 for in-depth descriptions of program models.		

Table A18. Onondaga County, Single Youth 18-24, Difference between current inventory and ideal inventory

Program Type	Current System Inventory	Ideal Inventory	Inventory Difference (Current vs Ideal)
Diversion	0	7	7
Emergency Shelter	6 beds	29 beds	(13 beds)
Transitional Housing	7	96 beds	(89 beds)
TH + RRH	0	115 beds + 115 RRH slots	(115 beds + 115 slots)
RRH – Short Term	0	58 slots	(58 slots)
RRH – Medium Term	82 slots	192 slots	(110 slots)
Permanent Supportive Housing	6 beds	115 beds, 39 available each year	(109 beds)
Note: TH + RRH: Transitional Housing with Rapid Re-housing subsidies included. RRH – Short Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 6 month time limit. RRH – Medium Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 24 month time limit. See Table 4 for in-depth descriptions of program models.			

Table A16. Onondaga County, Parenting youth ages 18-24, System pathways in 2020 data and Idealized System Model

Pathway	Percentage of population (based on 2020 HMIS data)	Idealized Percentage
Diversion	0	10%
Emergency Shelter Only	39% (104/268)	25%
ES + Transitional Housing	6 % (17/268)	10%
ES + Transitional Housing + RRH	0	25%
ES + Rapid Rehousing – Short Term	0	10%
ES + Rapid Rehousing – Medium Term	50% (135/268)	10%
ES + Permanent Supportive Housing	5% (11/268)	10%
Note: 2020 data is for all families with children, not all youth-headed families.		

Table A17. Onondaga County, Parenting youth ages 18-24, Inventory recommendation based on idealized system models

Program Type	Inventory Recommendation at a point in time	Unaccompanied Youth served in a year (39 youth total)
Diversion	13 slot	153 parenting youth
Emergency Shelter	13 beds	153 youth
Transitional Housing	23 beds (1.5 year avg LOS)	38 (2 new each year)
TH + RRH	76 TH beds + 76 RRH Slots (1.5 year avg LOS)	190 parenting youth (8 new each year)
RRH – Short Term	8 slots (1.5 year avg LOS)	23 parenting youth (8 new each year)
RRH – Medium Term	23 slots (6 months avg LOS)	38 parenting youth (16 new each year)
Permanent Supportive Housing	12 beds (3 year average LOS)	46 (16 new each year) parenting youth
Note: TH + RRH: Transitional Housing with Rapid Re-housing subsidies included. RRH – Short Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 6 month time limit. RRH – Medium Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 24 month time limit. LOS = Length of Stay. See Table 4 for in-depth descriptions of program models.		

Table A18. Onondaga County, Parenting youth ages 18-24, Difference between current inventory and ideal inventory

Program Type	Current System Inventory	Ideal Inventory	Inventory Difference (Current vs Ideal)
Diversion	0	13	1
Emergency Shelter	0 targeted beds	13	(5)
Transitional Housing	0 targeted beds	23	(3)
TH + RRH	0	76	(190)
RRH – Short Term	0	8	(8)
RRH – Medium Term	0	23	(23)
Permanent Supportive Housing	0 targeted beds	12	(12)
Note: TH + RRH: Transitional Housing with Rapid Re-housing subsidies included. RRH – Short Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 6 month time limit. RRH – Medium Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 24 month time limit. See Table 4 for in-depth descriptions of program models.			

Oswego County System Models

Table A19. Oswego County, Unaccompanied Children Under 18 – System pathways in 2020 data and Idealized System Model

Pathway	Percentage of population (based on 2020 HMIS data)	Ideal Percentage
Diversion	0%	5%
Emergency Shelter Only	80%	75%
ES + Transitional Housing	20%	20%
ES + Transitional Housing + RRH	0%	0%
ES + Rapid Rehousing – Short Term	0%	0%
ES + Rapid Rehousing – Medium Term	0%	0%
ES + Permanent Supportive Housing	0%	0%

Table A20. Oswego County, Unaccompanied Children Under 18, Inventory recommendation based on idealized system models

Program Type	Inventory Recommendation at a Point in Time	Youth Served in a Year
Diversion	2 slots (1-3 months LOS)	13
Emergency Shelter	2 beds (1 month LOS)	13
Transitional Housing	4 beds (1.5 year LOS)	4 (2 new)
TH + RRH	0	0
RRH – Short Term	0	0
RRH – Medium Term	0	0
Permanent Supportive Housing	0	0

Note: TH + RRH: Transitional Housing with Rapid Re-housing subsidies included. RRH – Short Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 6 month time limit. RRH – Medium Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 24 month time limit. LOS = Length of Stay. See Table 4 for in-depth descriptions of program models.

Table A21. Oswego County, Unaccompanied Children Under 18, Difference between current inventory and ideal inventory

Program Type	Current System Inventory	Ideal Inventory	Inventory Difference (Current vs Ideal)
Diversion	0	5	5
Emergency Shelter	5 targeted beds	5	0
Transitional Housing	10 targeted beds	4	0
TH + RRH	0	0	0
RRH – Short Term	0	0	0
RRH – Medium Term	0	0	0
Permanent Supportive Housing	0	0	0

Note: TH + RRH: Transitional Housing with Rapid Re-housing subsidies included. RRH – Short Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 6 month time limit. RRH – Medium Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 24 month time limit. See Table 4 for in-depth descriptions of program models.

Table A22. Oswego County, Single Youth 18-24, System pathways in 2020 data and Idealized System Model

Pathway	Percentage of population (based on 2020 HMIS data)	Ideal Percentage
Diversion	0%	10%
Emergency Shelter Only	80%	20%
ES + Transitional Housing	16%	10%
ES + Transitional Housing + RRH	0%	10%
ES + Rapid Rehousing – Short Term	0%	10%
ES + Rapid Rehousing – Medium Term	2%	25%
ES + Permanent Supportive Housing	2%	10%

Table A23. Oswego County, Single Youth 18-24, Inventory recommendation based on idealized system models

Program Type	Inventory Recommendation at a Point in Time	Youth Served in a Year
Diversion	8 slots (1-3 months LOS)	90 youth
Emergency Shelter	7 beds (1 month LOS)	90 youth
Transitional Housing	14 beds (1.5 year LOS)	22 (9 new youth each year)
TH + RRH	18 TH beds + 18 RRH slots (1.5 year LOS)	45 (9 new youth in TH each year)
RRH – Short Term	5 slots	14 (9 new youth each year)
RRH – Medium Term	34 slots	57 (9 new youth each year)
Permanent Supportive Housing	27 (3 Year LOS)	36 (6 new each year)
Note: TH + RRH: Transitional Housing with Rapid Re-housing subsidies included. RRH – Short Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 6 month time limit. RRH – Medium Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 24 month time limit. LOS = Length of Stay. See Table 4 for in-depth descriptions of program models.		

Table A24. Oswego County, Single Youth 18-24, Difference between current inventory and ideal inventory

Program Type	Current System Inventory	Ideal Inventory	Inventory Difference (Current vs Ideal)
Diversion	0 slots	8 slots	(7)
Emergency Shelter	5	7	(2)
Transitional Housing	10	14	(3)
TH + RRH	0	18 beds + 18 slots	(36)
RRH – Short Term	0	5	(5)
RRH – Medium Term	0	34	(34)
Permanent Supportive Housing	0	27	(27)
Note: TH + RRH: Transitional Housing with Rapid Re-housing subsidies included. RRH – Short Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 6 month time limit. RRH – Medium Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 24 month time limit. See Table 4 for in-depth descriptions of program models.			

Table A25. Oswego County, Parenting Youth 18-24, System Pathways In 2020 Data and Idealized System Model

Pathway	Percentage of population (based on 2020 HMIS data)	Ideal Percentage
Diversion	0%	10%
Emergency Shelter Only	66%	25%
ES + Transitional Housing	0%	10%
ES + Transitional Housing + RRH	0%	10%
ES + Rapid Rehousing – Short Term	0%	10%
ES + Rapid Rehousing – Medium Term	34%	25%
ES + Permanent Supportive Housing	2%	10%

Note: 2020 data is for all families with children, not all youth-headed families.

Table A26. Oswego County, Parenting Youth 18-24, Inventory Recommendation Based on Idealized System Models

Program Type	Inventory Recommendation at a Point in Time	Youth Served in a Year
Diversion	3 slots	39 youth served each year
Emergency Shelter	3 beds	39 youth served each year
Transitional Housing	6 beds	38 (16 new youth each year)
TH-RRH	13 TH units + 13 RRH units	32 (6 new youth in TH each year)
RRH – Short Term	2 slots	6 (4 new youth each year)
RRH – Medium Term	12 slots	21 (8 new youth each year)
Permanent Supportive Housing	12 units	62 (4 new youth each year)

Note: TH + RRH: Transitional Housing with Rapid Re-housing subsidies included. RRH – Short Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 6 month time limit. RRH – Medium Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 24 month time limit. LOS = Length of Stay. See Table 4 for in-depth descriptions of program models.

Table A27. Oswego County, Parenting Youth 18-24, Difference Between Current Inventory and Ideal Inventory

Program Type	Current System Inventory	Ideal Inventory	Inventory Difference (Current vs Ideal)
Diversion	0	(3)	(3)
Emergency Shelter	0	(3)	(3)
Transitional Housing	0	(6)	(6)
TH+RRH	0	(26)	(26)
RRH – Short Term	0	(2)	(2)
RRH – Medium Term	0	(12)	(12)
Permanent Supportive Housing	0	(12)	(12)

Note: TH + RRH: Transitional Housing with Rapid Re-housing subsidies included. RRH – Short Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 6 month time limit. RRH – Medium Term: Rapid Rehousing with a 24 month time limit. See Table 4 for in-depth descriptions of program models.

Appendix B. Youth Homelessness Needs Assessment Survey.

Survey Results.

To gather data about the quality of the current services offered and about barriers that clients face in obtaining housing, a detailed survey was conducted to investigate gaps in the homeless service system.

The components of the survey included:

- History of homelessness and housing vulnerability
- Barriers to permanent housing
- Service utilization
- Needs for non-housing services

The purpose of the survey was to provide rich data around the needs of youth at risk of and experiencing homelessness to inform recommendations to improve the youth homelessness system.

Methods

Survey Design: The survey used in this study was created by the Housing and Homeless Coalition with input from the Youth Advisory Board, who suggested revisions and additions to the survey. The survey was administered using SurveyMonkey software.

Data Collection Method: The survey link was emailed to over 100 partners in the Central New York area and responses were collected between February 2021 and May 2021.

Target Population and Sample: The target population of this study is all youth that had experienced housing vulnerability in Onondaga, Oswego, and Cayuga Counties in New York, which could constitute anywhere from the 3000-4000 youth reported as housing vulnerable through school datasets to more than 13000 youth living below the poverty line reported by the US Census. The sample that responded to the survey were 14 young adults who had experienced homelessness or housing insecurity in the last 3 years.

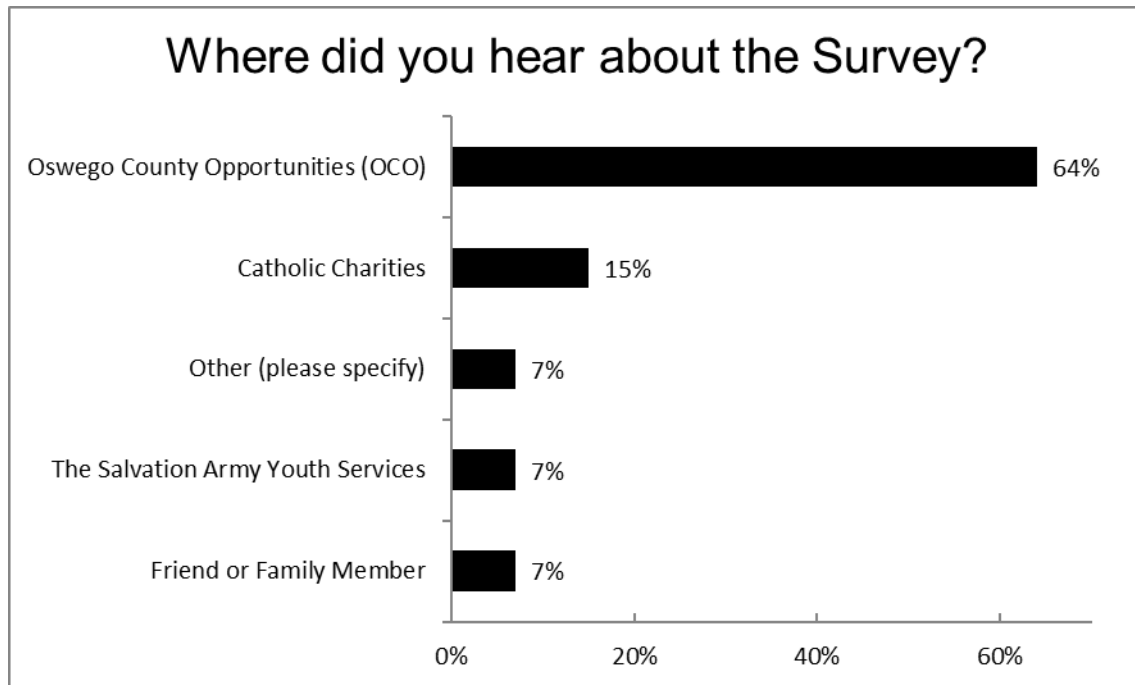
Representativeness: Given the small sample size, the sample population may not be an accurate representation of the target population, and some groups are overrepresented in the data.

Accuracy: Most of the questions on the survey assessed attitudinal data, but some respondents may have had an issue with understanding the names of the services that were described. Survey responses were anonymous, and respondents were able to respond privately, so there is a reduced risk of social desirability bias. User errors may have accounted for some answers if respondents were not familiar with online surveys.

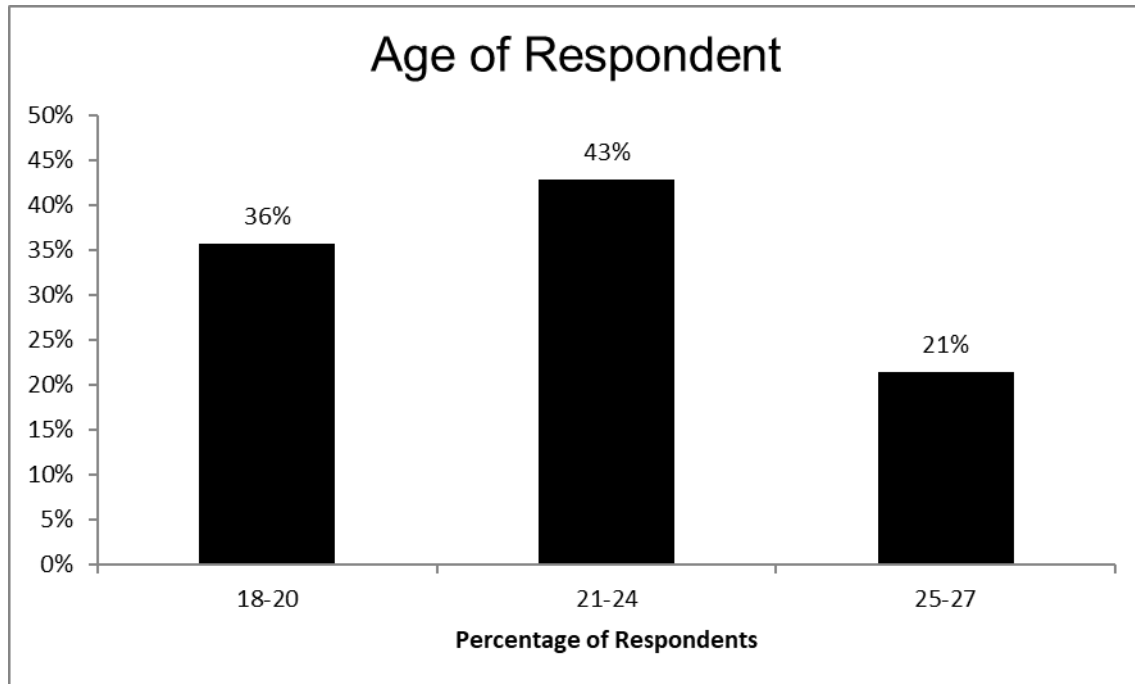
Results:

The responses to each question in the survey, along with a summary of open-ended responses are described in this section.

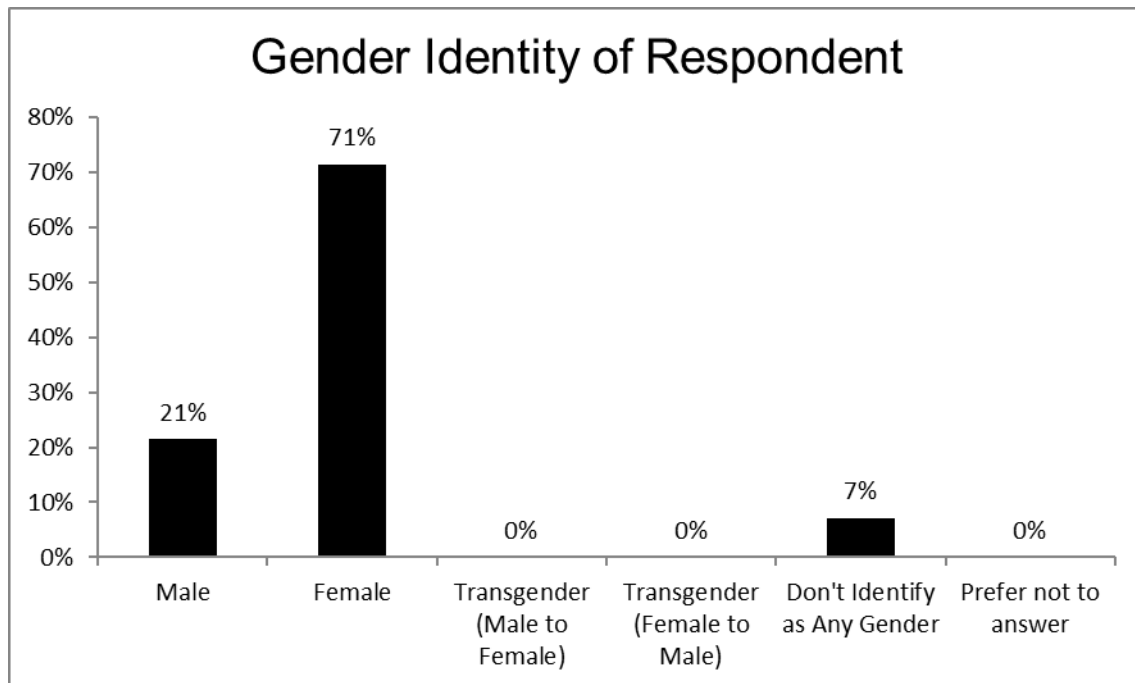
Where did you hear about the survey?: 64% of respondents were recruited through Oswego County Opportunities. One respondent stated they heard about the survey through the Youth Action Board.



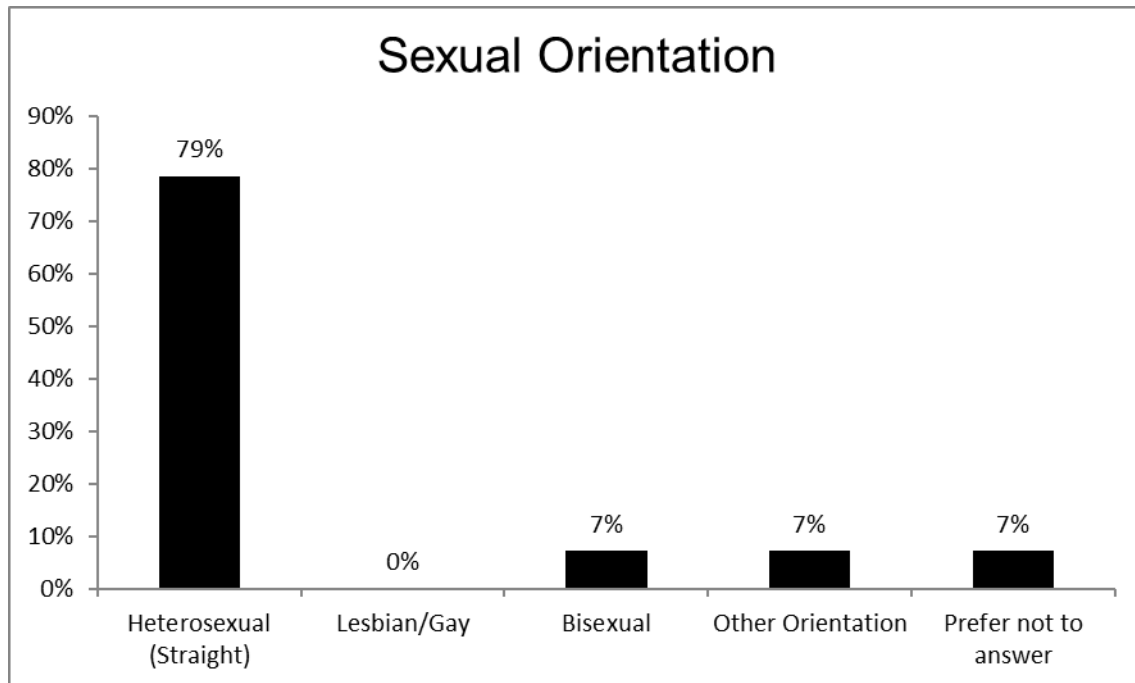
Age of Respondent: 43% of respondents were between the ages of 21 and 24 (n=14).



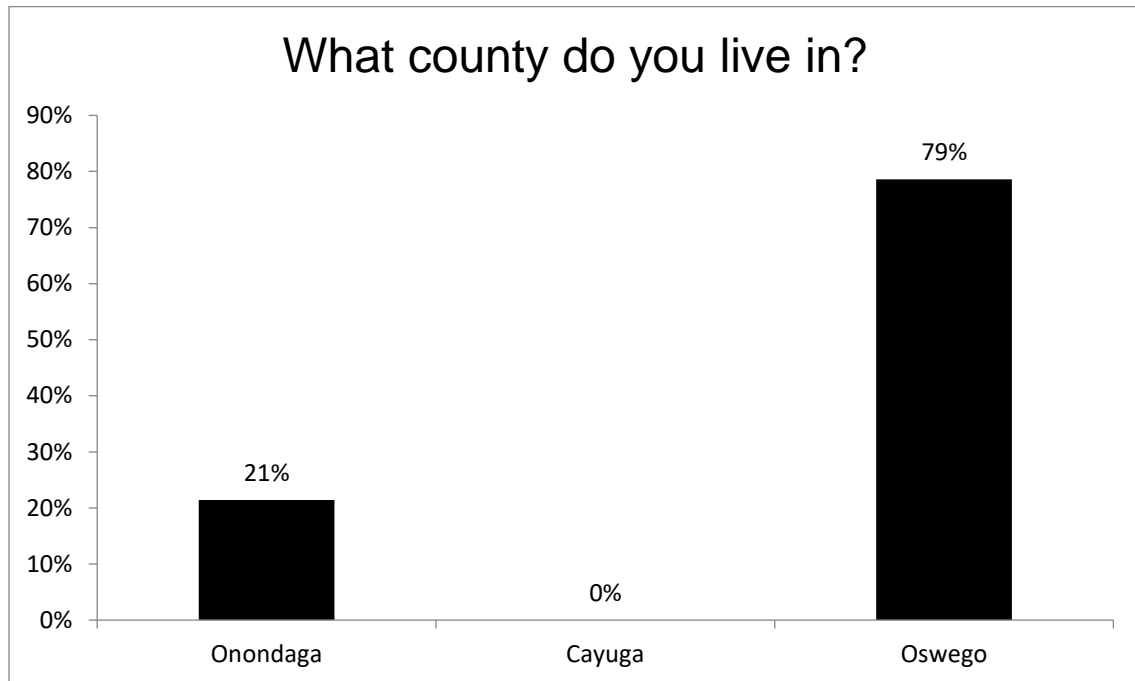
Gender Identity: 71% of respondents identified as Female, and 21% of respondents identified as male.



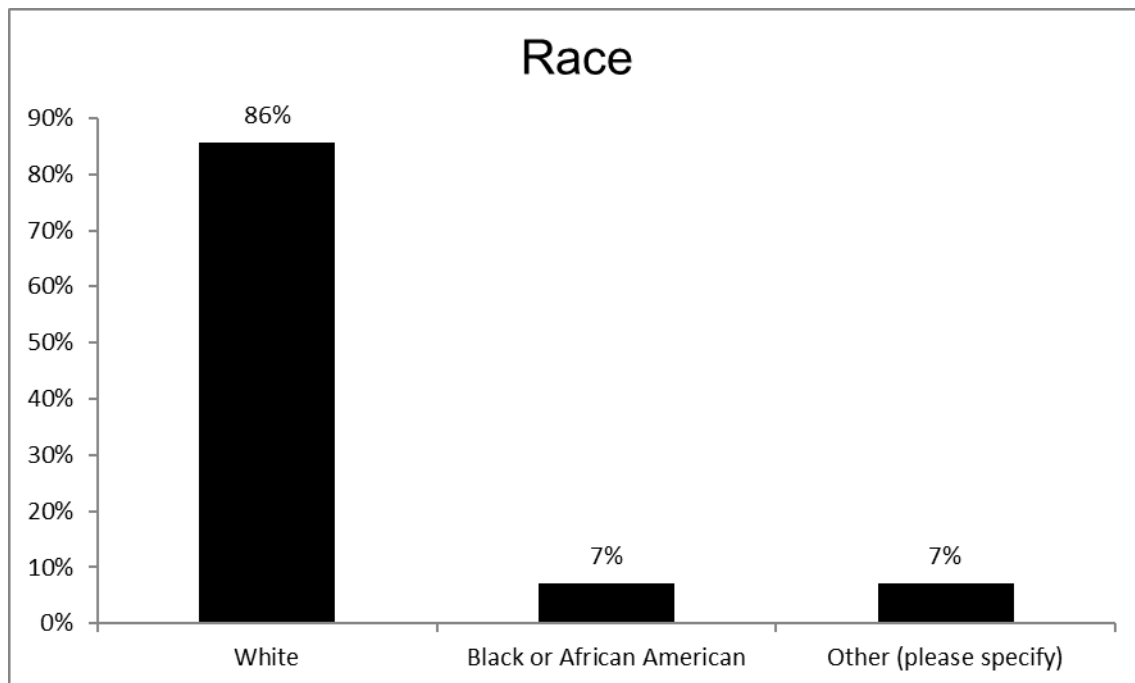
Sexual Orientation: 70% of respondents identified as heterosexual. 7% of respondents identified as bisexual



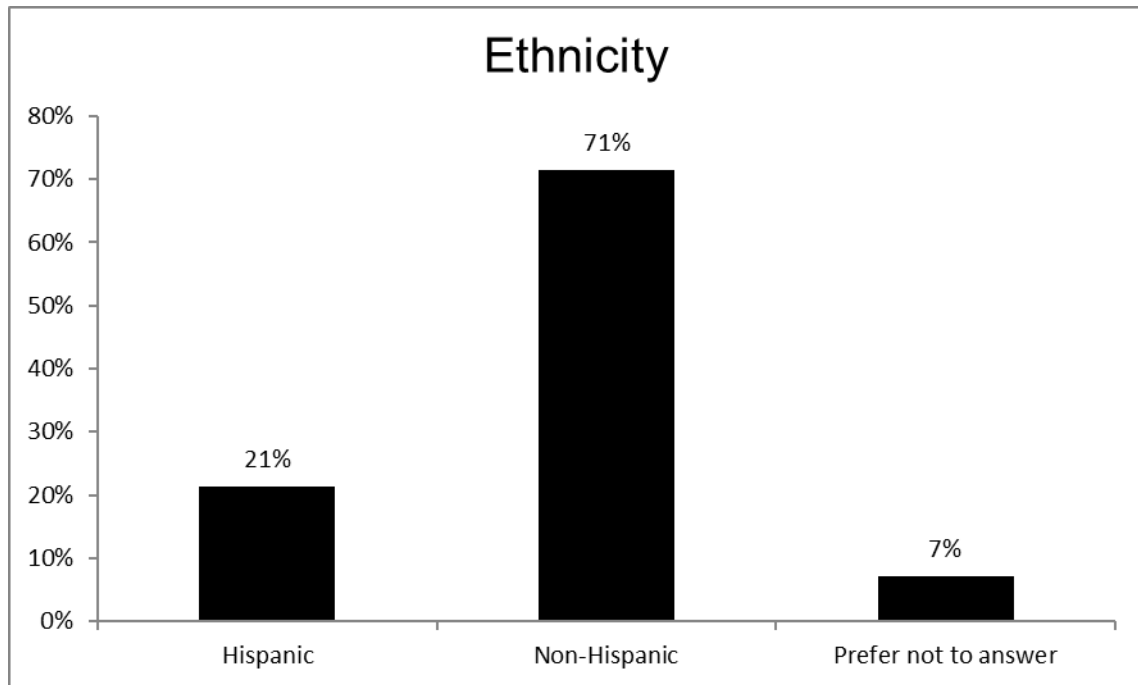
What county do you live in?: 79% of respondents were from Oswego County, and 21% of respondents were from Onondaga County.



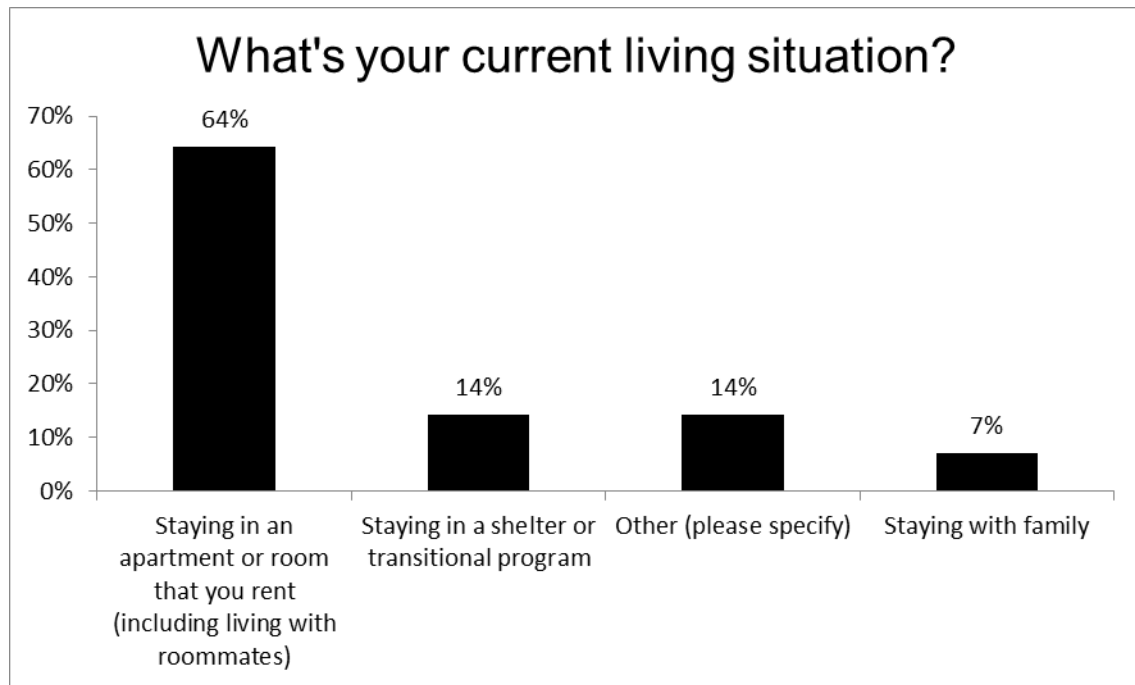
Race of Respondent: 86% of respondents were White. 7% of respondents were Black. 7% identified as another race.



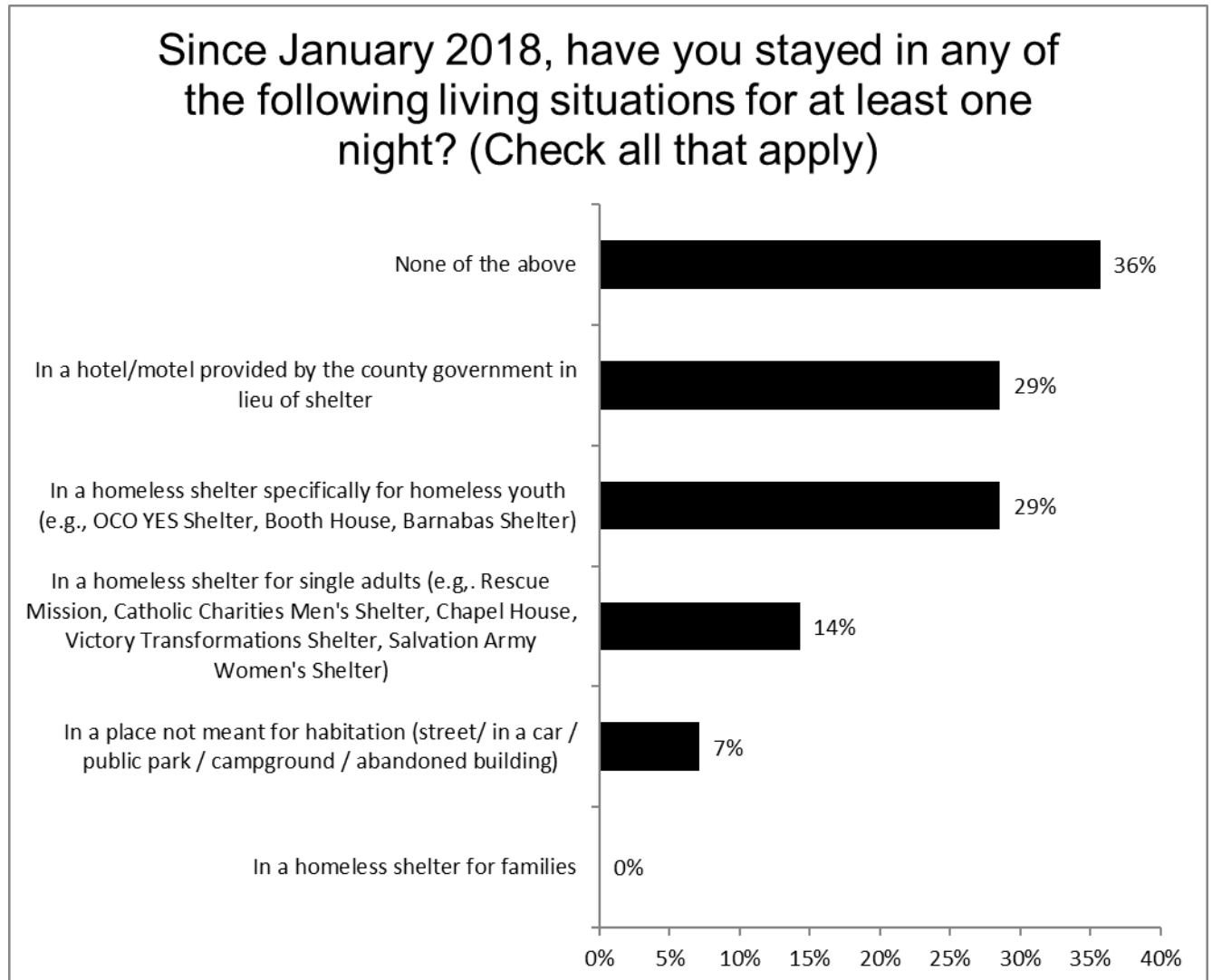
Ethnicity of Respondent: 71% of respondents identified as non-hispanic. 21% of respondents identified as Hispanic. 7% preferred not to answer.



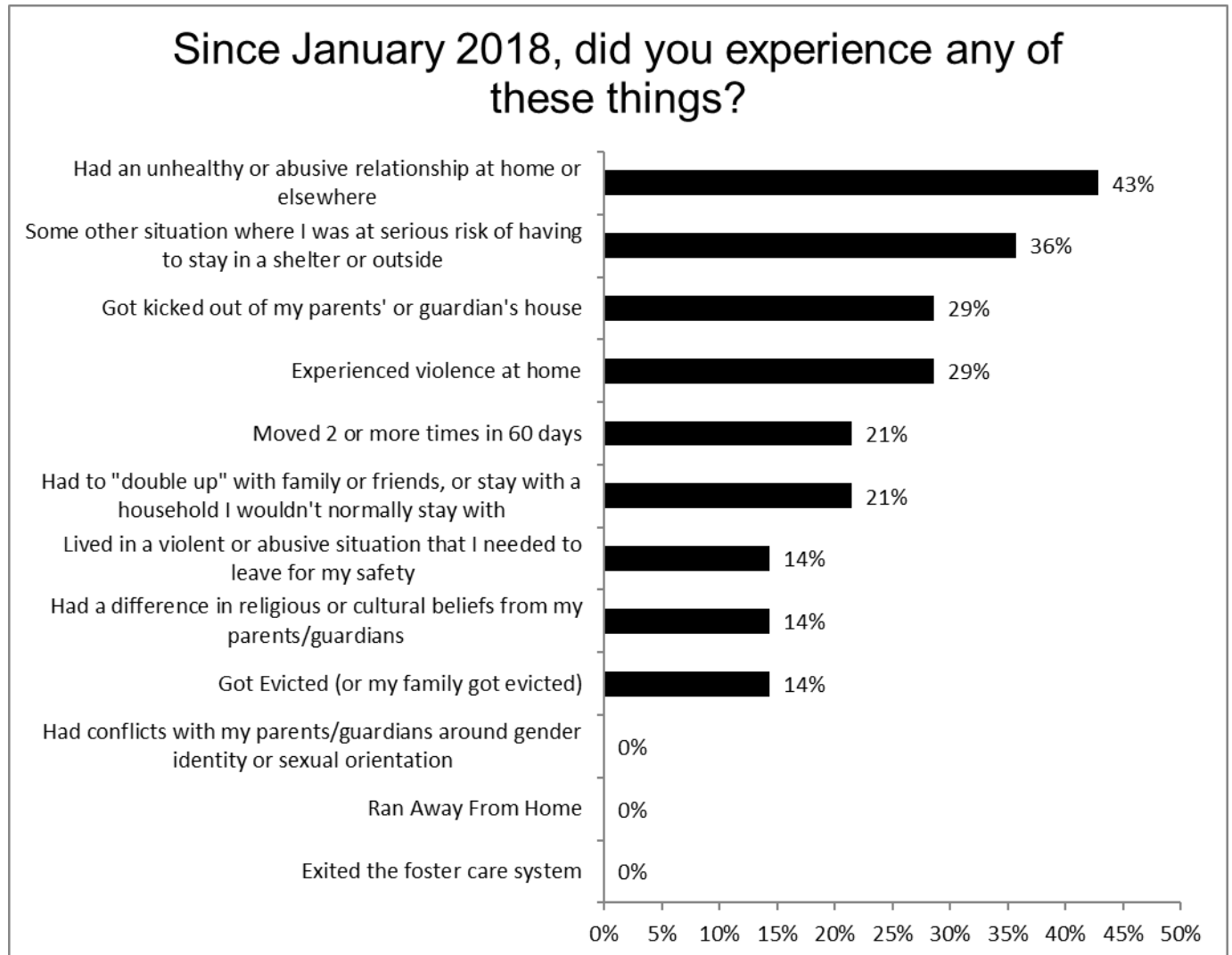
Current Living Situation of Respondent: 64% of respondents stated they were living in a room or apartment that they rented. 14% reported staying in a transitional living program or shelter. 14% were in other living situations. 7% reported staying with family.



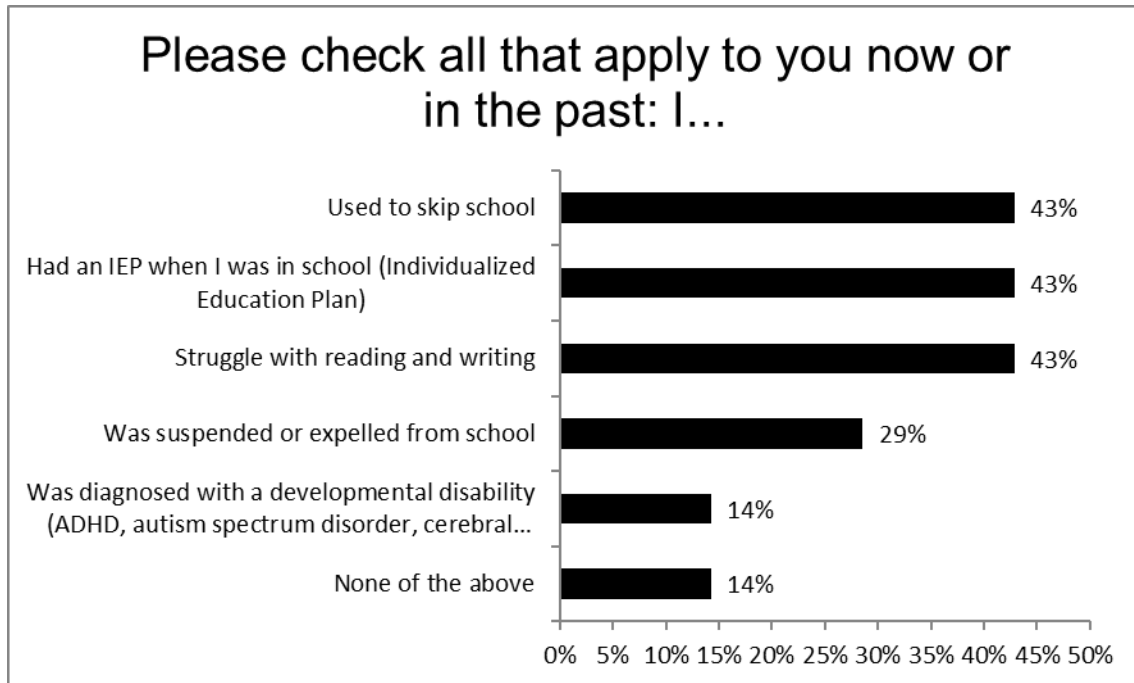
History of Homelessness: 36% of respondents said they had not stayed in a homeless situation at any point since January 2018. 29% reported having stayed in a hotel or motel provided by the county government. 29% reported that they stayed in a homeless shelter for youth. 14% reported that they stayed in a homeless shelter for single adults. 7% reported that they stayed in a place not meant for human habitation.



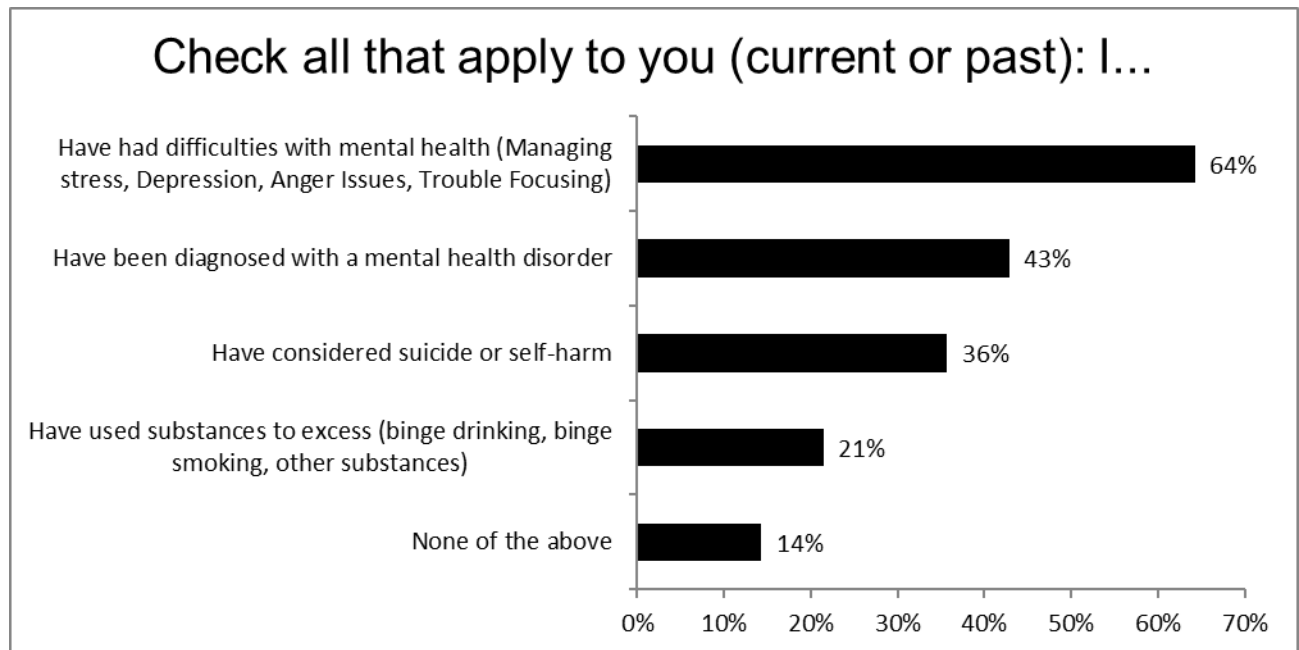
History of Housing Vulnerability: Respondents were asked “Since January 2018, did you experience any of these things?” The top five events that respondents reported were: 1. Having an unhealthy or abusive relationship at home or elsewhere (43%), 2. A situation where they were at serious risk of having to stay in a shelter or outside (36%), 3. Getting kicked out of their parents’ or guardian’s house (29%), 4. Experiencing violence at home (29%), and 5. Having to move 2 or more times in 60 days (21%).



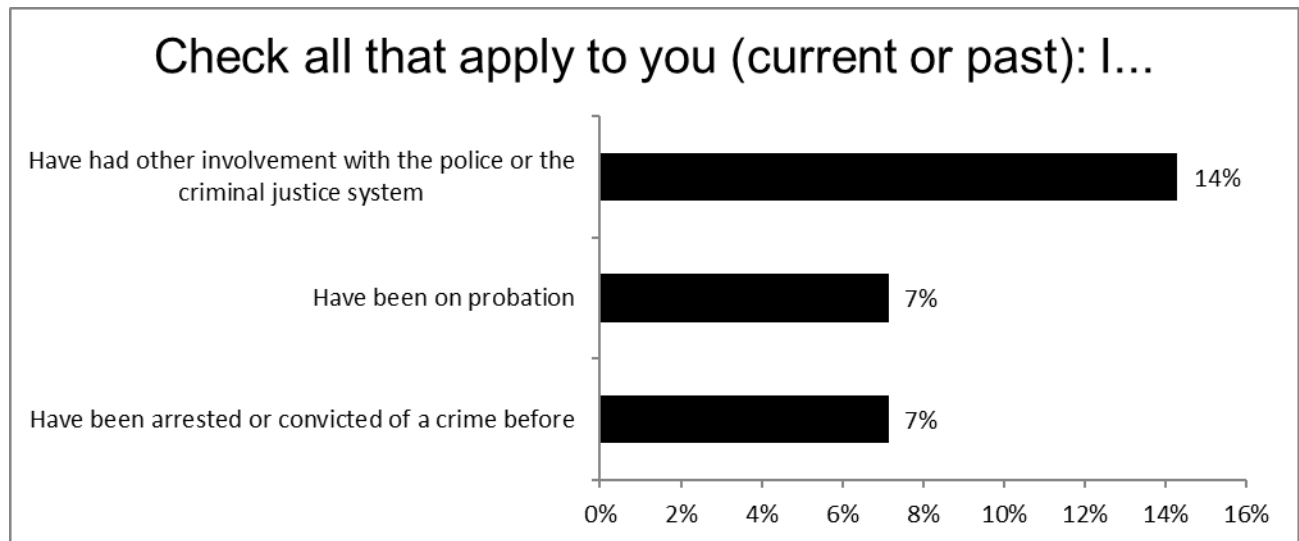
History in school: 43% of respondents reported that they used to skip school. 43% of respondents reported that they had an IEP when they were in school. 43% of respondents reported they were struggling with reading and writing. 29% of respondents reported they have been suspended or expelled from school. 14% were diagnosed with a developmental disability of some kind.



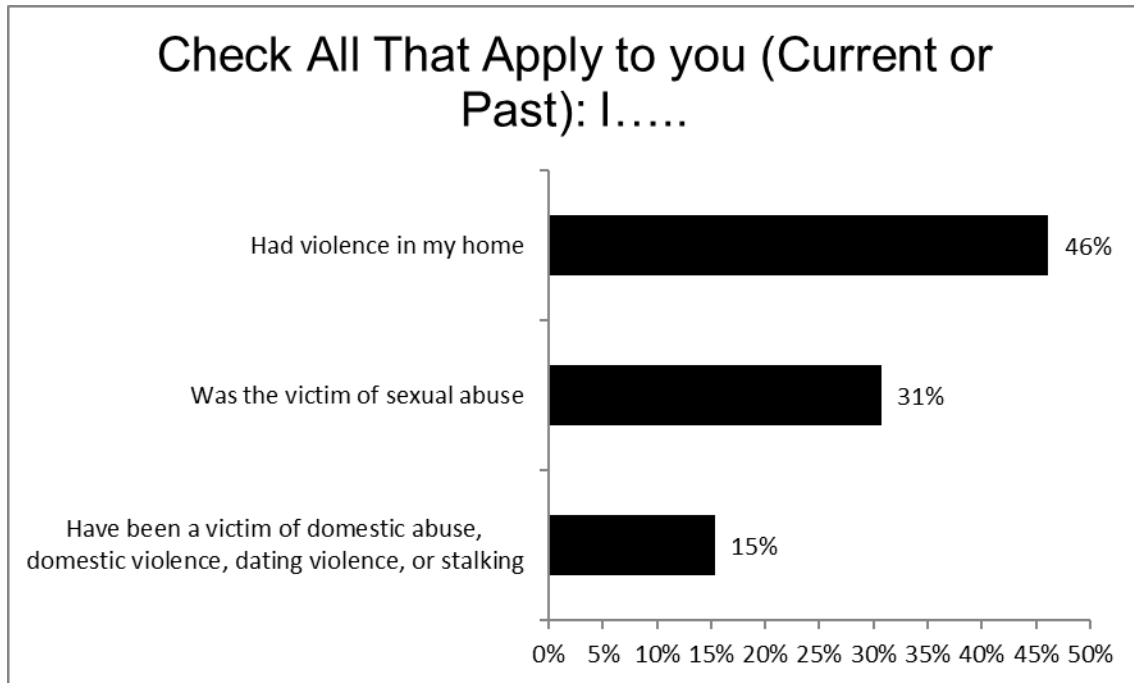
Mental Health Experiences: 64% of respondents reported having difficulties with mental health. 43% of respondents have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder. 36% reported that they have considered suicide or self-harm. 21% reported having used substances to excess.



Criminal Justice System Involvement: 14% of respondents reported having had involvement with the police or the criminal justice system. 7% reported having been on probation, or having been arrested or convicted of a crime.

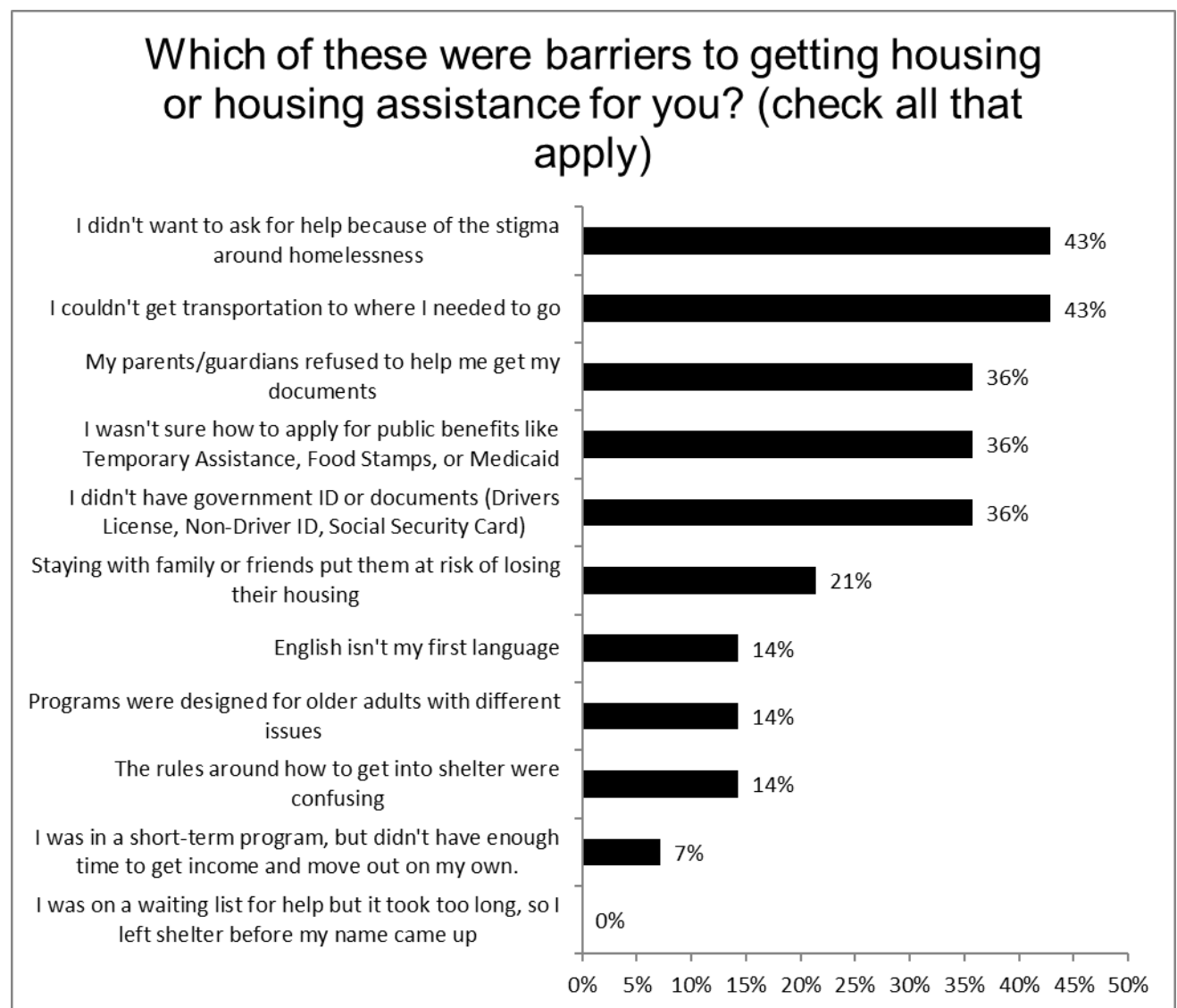


Domestic Violence: 46% of respondents reported that they had violence in their home at some point in the past. 31% of respondents reported that they were the victim of sexual abuse. 15% of youth reported being the victim of domestic abuse, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking.

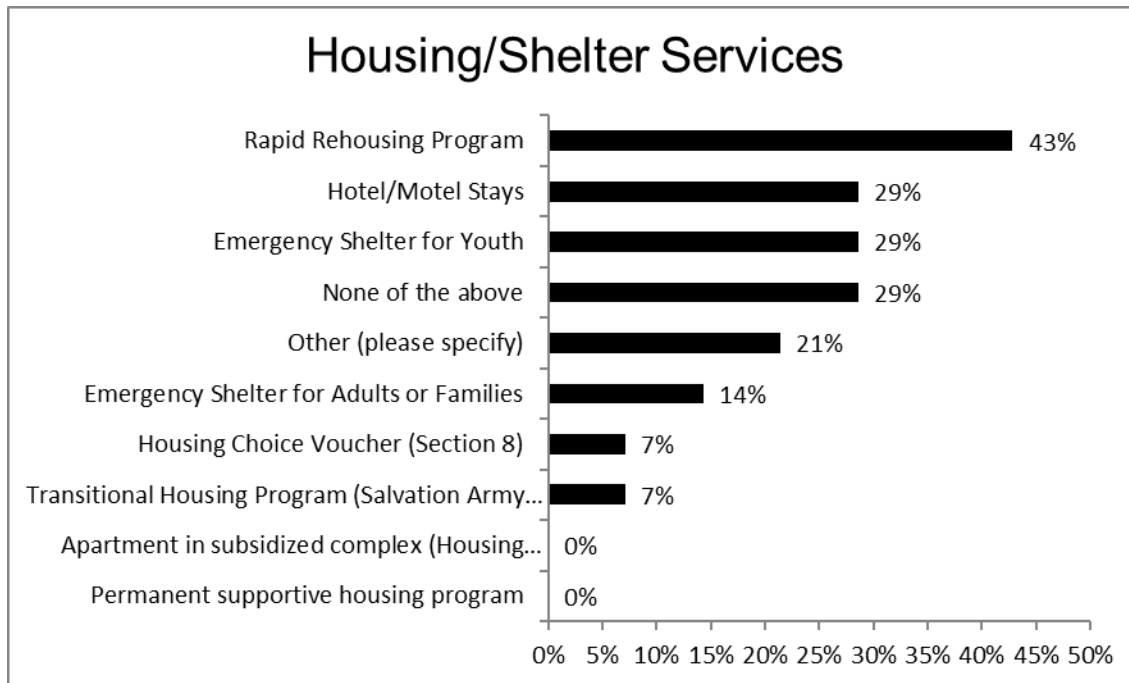


Barriers to housing: Respondents were asked “Which of these were barriers to getting housing or housing assistance for you?”. The top 5 responses were

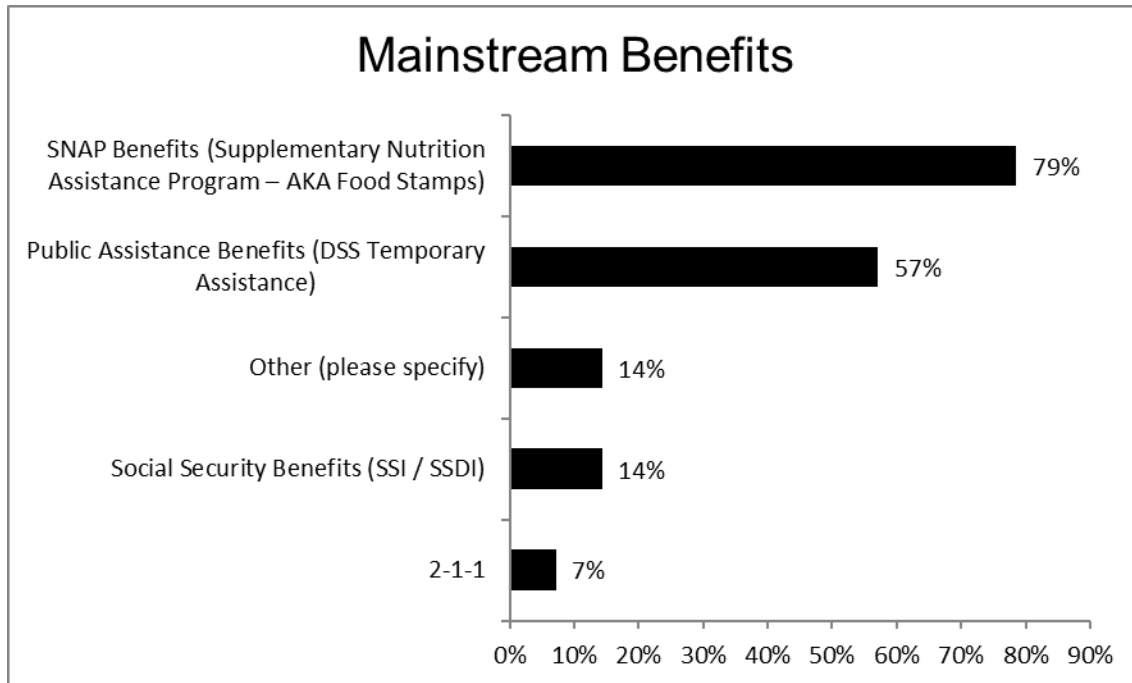
1. I didn’t want to ask for help because of the stigma around homelessness (43% said yes)
2. I couldn’t get transportation to where I needed to go (43%)
3. My parents/guardians refused to help me get my documents (36%)
4. I wasn’t sure how to apply for public benefits like Temporary Assistance, Food Stamps, or Medicaid (36%), and
5. I didn’t have government ID or documents (Drivers License, Non-Driver ID, Social Security Card) (36%)



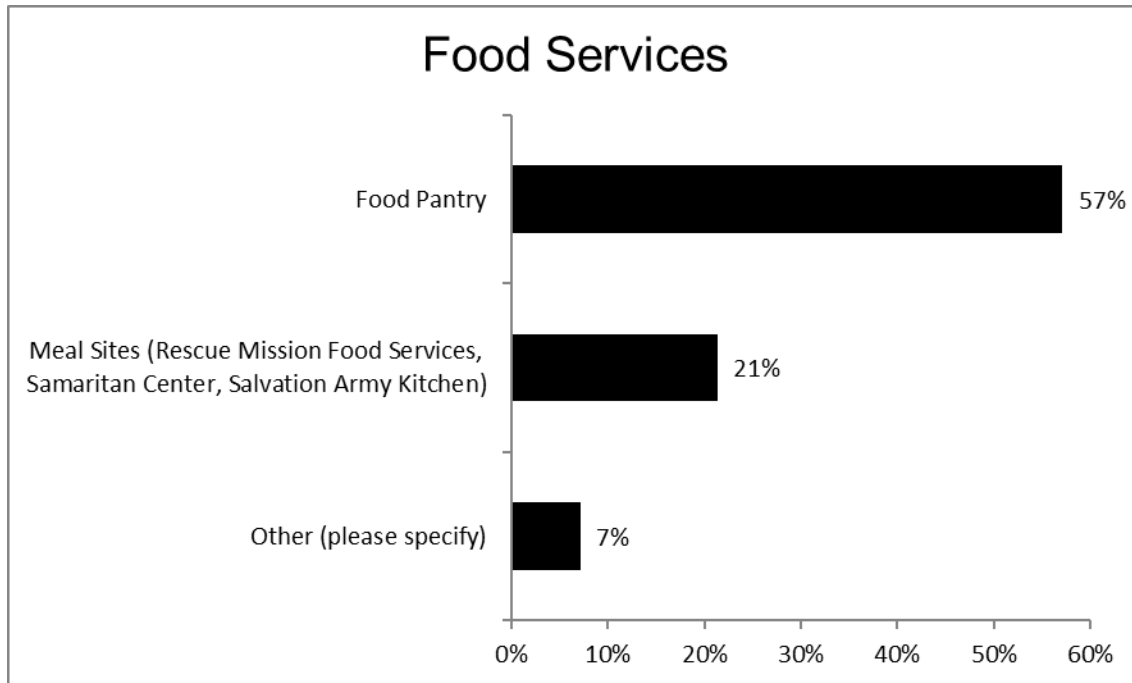
Shelter utilization: Respondents were asked: “How many of the following services have you used in the last year?” The most common answer was a Rapid Rehousing Program (43%).



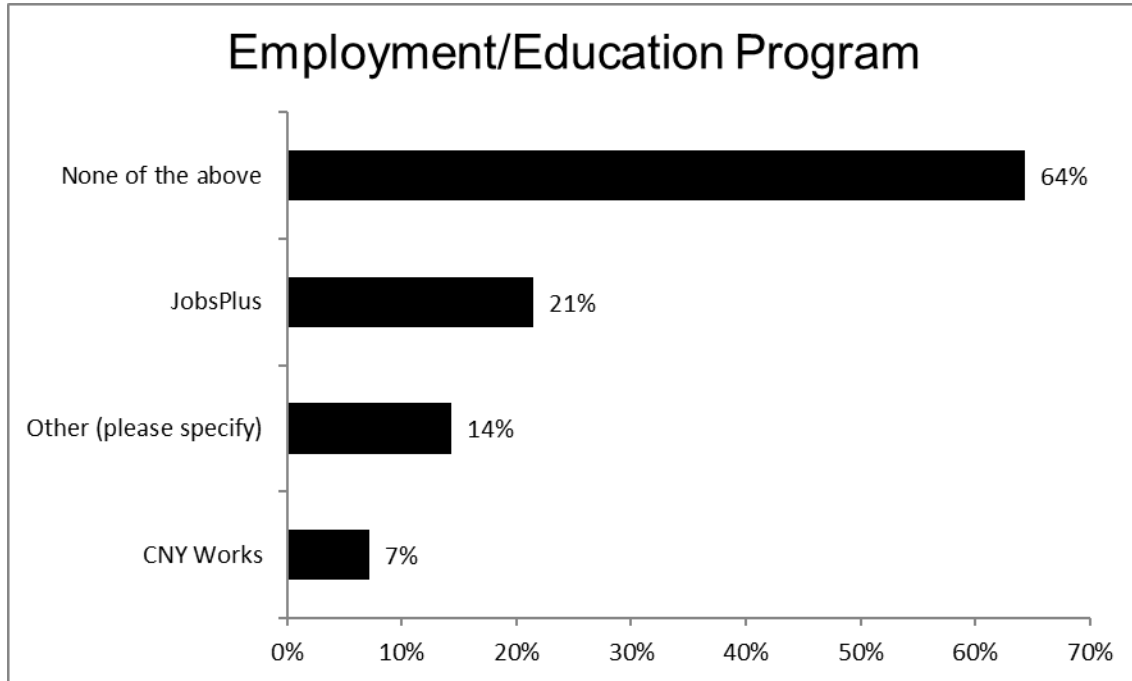
Mainstream Benefits Utilization: Respondents were given a list of mainstream benefits and asked: How many of the following services have you used in the last year? The most frequently selected benefit was SNAP (79%).



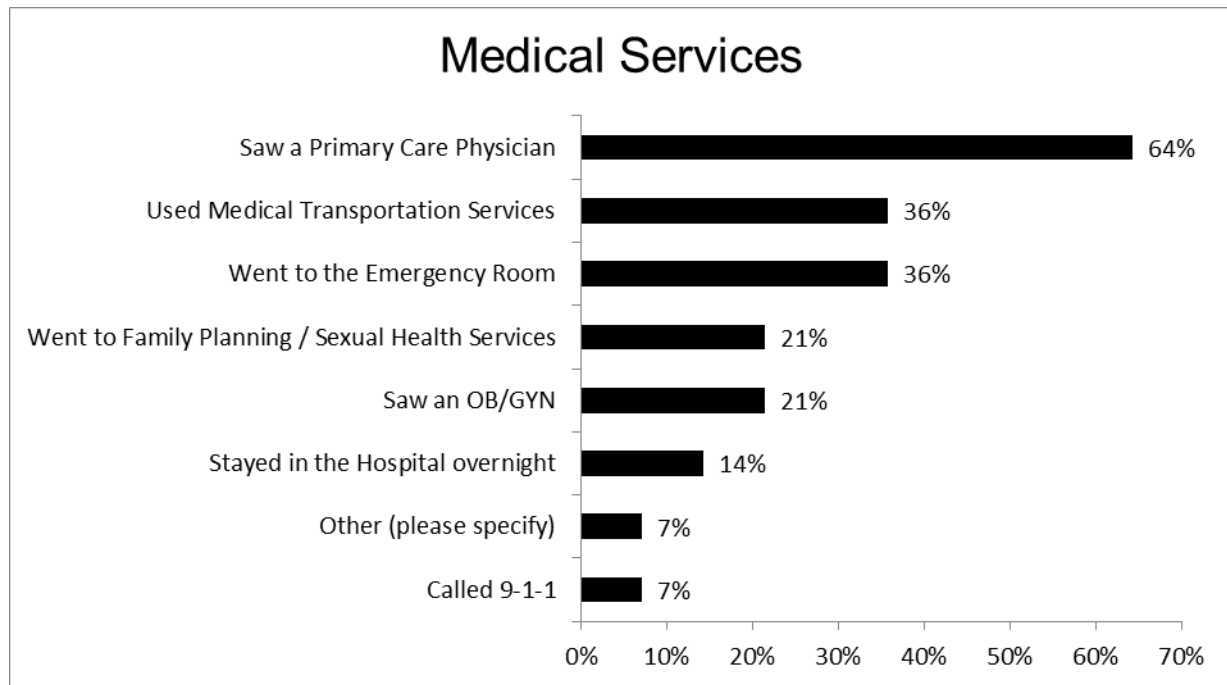
Food Services Utilization: Respondents were given a list of food services and asked: How many of the following services have you used in the last year? The most frequently selected benefit was Food Pantry (57%).



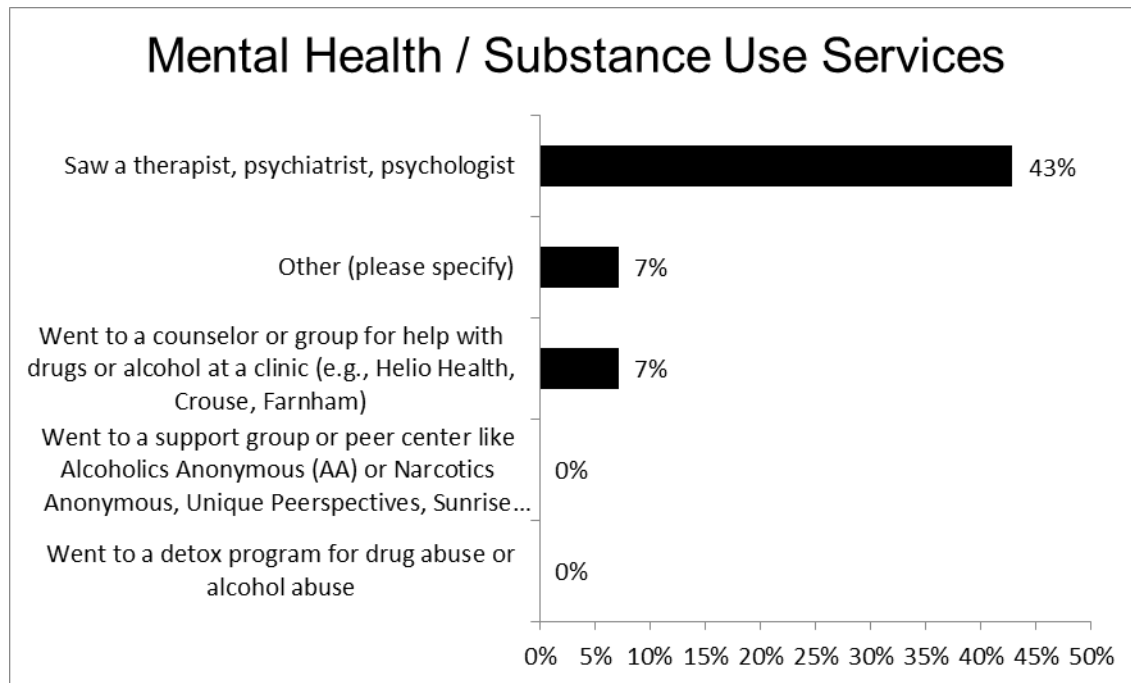
Employment Services Utilization: Respondents were given a list of employment services and asked: How many of the following services have you used in the last year? The most frequently selected benefit was None of the above (64%).



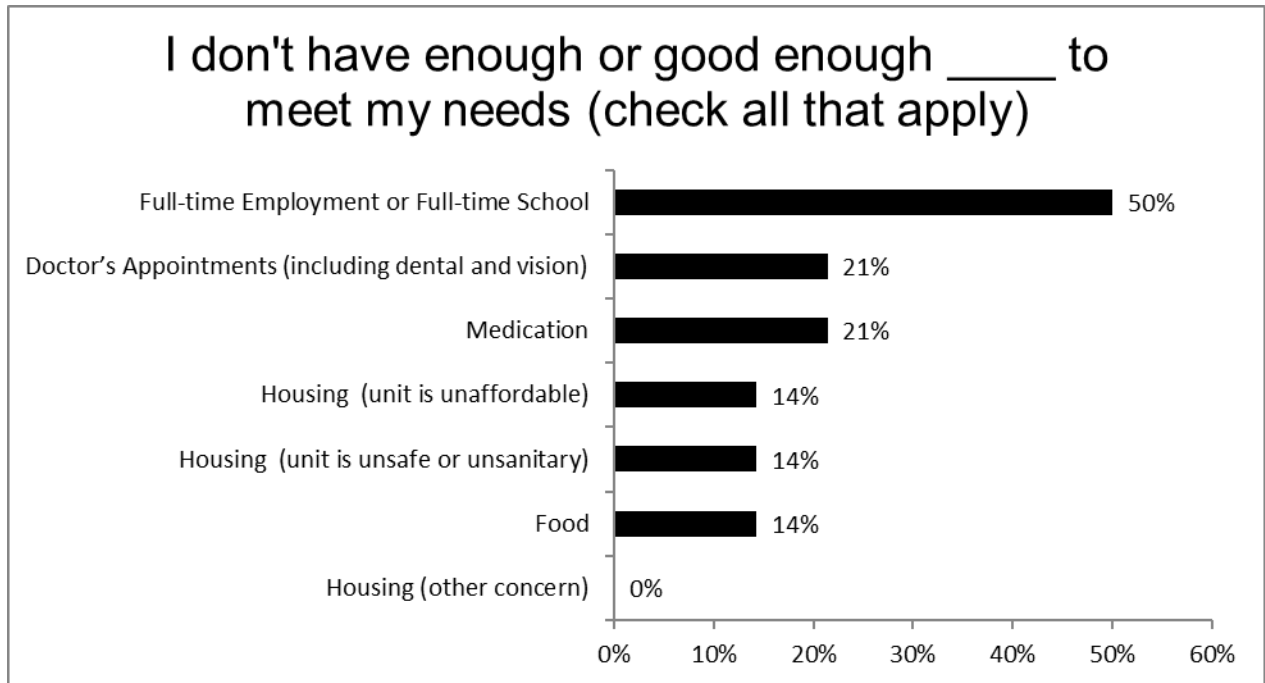
Medical Services Utilization: Respondents were given a list of medical services and asked: How many of the following services have you used in the last year? The most frequently selected benefit was saw a primary care physician (64%).



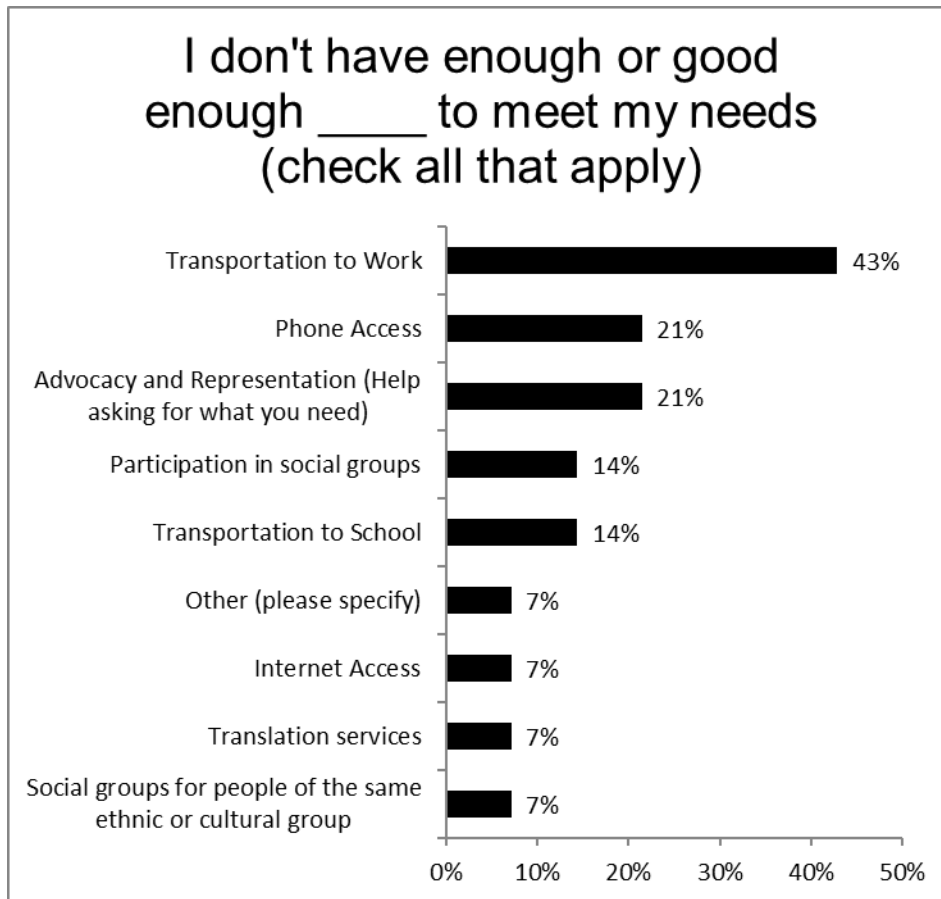
Mental Health Services Utilization: Respondents were given a list of mental health and substance use services and asked: How many of the following services have you used in the last year? The most frequently selected benefit was seeing a therapist, psychiatrist, or psychologist (43%).



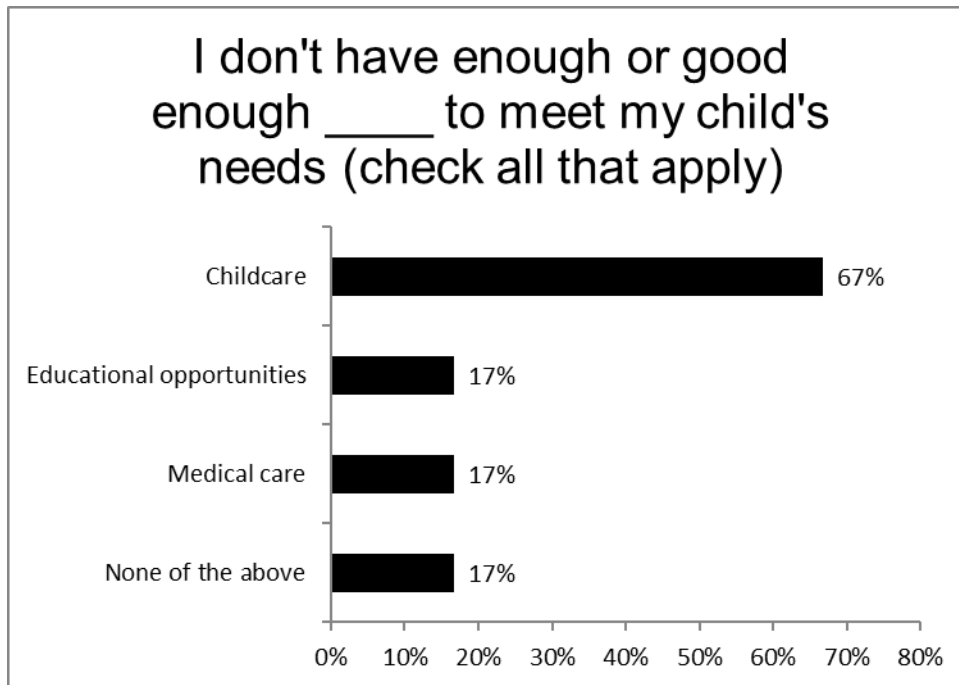
Basic Needs: Respondents were asked “I don’t have enough or good enough _____ to meet my needs” and given a list of basic needs. The most common response was “Full-time employment or full-time school”.



Additional Needs: Respondents were asked “I don’t have enough or good enough _____ to meet my needs” and given a list of needs. The most common response was “Transportation to Work” (43%).



Family services Needs: Respondents with children were asked “I don’t have enough or good enough _____ to meet my needs” and given a list of basic needs. The most common response was Childcare



Respondents were given open-ended prompts about their barriers and suggestions for improvements to youth services. Responses to these questions are included in the table below.

Question	Responses
What was another barrier to achieving stable housing you experienced that we didn't ask about?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My partner has a criminal record from years ago and a lot of places use that against us • "There is not enough safe affordable housing" • "I couldn't qualify for SNAP or other assistance because I was told my parents make enough to support me even though I'm 24 and live alone" • "I've experienced no transportation most days. I only have transportation one day a week." • "It's difficult to afford housing as a single individual in this area" • "Zero Credit"
Is there anything you'd like to share about your experiences in more detail?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I am permanent guardian of my three nephews. I arrived to Syracuse in June 2020 and housing is very unsafe" • "I just wish there were housing options for single adults like me who work only part time due to disabilities because I make too much for "low income" housing and have to pay out of pocket for things like college which I attend part time (parents make too much for me to get financial help) and doctor visits & meds (because part time employees don't get insurance). \$925 a month is so expensive for someone who makes less than \$600 bi-weekly." • "Not really been homeless for 8 months been in hotel since march 1st 2021 in all these programs. I would like childcare when I have things to do so makes things more easier more transportation would be better too."
What improvement would you most like to see for youth homelessness services?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I have no experience with homelessness besides helping homeless clients at Catholic Charities. I can't say we've had any issues with getting them set up with shelter." • "More transportation in the area taxi-wise. More Centro buses coming around. More times that they come around so not waiting too long. More hotels to accept dss in case we ever have to move so we dont go too far." • "A youth center that you can hang out at"

Open-ended responses were to questions about barriers, open-ended descriptions of clients' experiences, and questions about improvements to the youth homelessness services system. Clients

answers to the question about barriers included criminal history, a lack of affordable housing, transportation issues, and difficulties navigating mainstream benefits like SNAP. Respondents shared experiences with unsafe housing in Syracuse, difficulty finding an affordable unit with a low income, and difficulties finding childcare. Respondents said that they would like to see more transportation available to people in Syracuse.

A copy of the survey form is available in Appendix C.

Key findings:

Highlights of the results of the survey include the finding that the most common risk factors in the sample were home violence and dating violence. Stigma about homelessness was the most commonly reported barrier to seeking services for youth. The most common risk factors reported included struggles with mental health, violence in the home, unhealthy relationships, difficulties in school, and other unspecified housing instability. The most reported needs were employment and education resources, transportation, and childcare (It is important to note that most youth surveyed were not literally homeless at the time they were responding). The most utilized services were food pantries, primary care physicians, SNAP benefits, and rapid re-housing programs. The least utilized services included substance abuse counseling services, peer support groups, and 2-1-1.

Limitations:

Limitations of the survey included the low number of responses to the survey. Recruitment took place across the entire area of the CoC, but most of the respondents lived in Oswego County. The survey also relied on a web-based platform to administer the survey, and no paper forms were administered. This may have biased the sample toward youth who have access to technology. Future youth surveys should offer incentives for participation and focus more heavily on outreach to the target population.

Appendix C. Youth Homelessness Needs Assessment Survey Form.



Youth Housing Needs Survey 2021

Thank you for participating in the Housing and Homeless Coalition's Youth housing survey. We are conducting this survey to get a better idea of housing needs for youth in our community.

Your answers are completely anonymous, but you will be asked where you heard about the survey.

The survey consists of questions about your housing history in the past few years, things you might have experienced or need, and barriers that you've experienced when you tried to meet those needs.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate. If you find any questions to be too personal or upsetting, you can skip or mark "Prefer not to answer" to any questions you don't feel comfortable answering.

The survey should take about 10-15 minutes to complete.

Your responses will remain anonymous and only be used to calculate averages across the entire group of people that we surveyed. The responses will be included in a Youth Needs Assessment that will be available on the website of the Housing And Homeless Coalition (www.hhccny.org). The results of the survey will be used to help plan new services and improve existing services to help young people obtain and maintain safe, affordable, and stable housing.

The results of the survey will be compiled into a report. You can enter your e-mail address at the end if you would like a copy of the completed report.

The HHC uses Survey Monkey to collect survey responses. Please see [Surveymonkey's privacy policy](#) for more details on how they protect your data.

1. By clicking agree, you indicate that:

*you have read the above information

*you voluntarily agree to participate

*you are at least 18 years of age

☐ I Agree

☐ I Disagree



Youth Housing Needs Survey 2021

Thank you for participating in the Housing and Homeless Coalition's Youth housing survey. We are conducting this survey to get a better idea of housing needs for youth in our community.

Your responses will remain completely anonymous.

*** 2. Where did you hear about the Survey?**

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> HHC Weekly Newsletter | <input type="radio"/> Rescue Mission |
| <input type="radio"/> HHC Website | <input type="radio"/> Catholic Charities |
| <input type="radio"/> HHC Facebook Page | <input type="radio"/> The Salvation Army Emergency Shelter Programs |
| <input type="radio"/> Friend or Family Member | <input type="radio"/> Oswego County Opportunities (OCO) |
| <input type="radio"/> The Salvation Army Youth Services | <input type="radio"/> Helio Health |
| <input type="radio"/> ACR Health Q Center | <input type="radio"/> Oswego County DSS |
| <input type="radio"/> A teacher at my school | <input type="radio"/> Cayuga County DSS |
| <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) | |

*** 3. Age**

- ☐ 18-20
- ☐ 21-24
- ☐ 25-27
- ☐ 28 or older

*** 4. Gender Identity**

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Male | <input type="radio"/> Transgender (Female to Male) |
| <input type="radio"/> Female | <input type="radio"/> Don't Identify as Any Gender |
| <input type="radio"/> Transgender (Male to Female) | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to answer |

* 5. Sexual Orientation

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Heterosexual (Straight) | <input type="radio"/> Other Orientation |
| <input type="radio"/> Lesbian/Gay | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to answer |
| <input type="radio"/> Bisexual | |

* 6. What county do you live in?

- ☐ Onondaga
- ☐ Cayuga
- ☐ Oswego
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

* 7. Race

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> White | <input type="radio"/> American Indian or Alaska Native |
| <input type="radio"/> Black or African American | <input type="radio"/> Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander |
| <input type="radio"/> Asian or Asian American | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to answer |
| <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) | |

* 8. Ethnicity

- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Non-Hispanic
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

* 9. What's your current living situation?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Staying with family | <input type="radio"/> Staying with friends |
| <input type="radio"/> Staying in an apartment or room that you rent (including living with roommates) | <input type="radio"/> Living outside (street/car/park/campground/abandoned building) |
| <input type="radio"/> Staying in a shelter or transitional program | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to answer |
| <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) | |

10. Since January 2018, have you stayed in any of the following living situations for at least one night? (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> In a homeless shelter specifically for homeless youth (e.g., OCO YES Shelter, Booth House, Barnabas Shelter) | <input type="checkbox"/> In a hotel/motel provided by the county government in lieu of shelter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In a homeless shelter for single adults (e.g., Rescue Mission, Catholic Charities Men's Shelter, Chapel House, Victory Transformations Shelter, Salvation Army Women's Shelter) | <input type="checkbox"/> In a place not meant for habitation (street/ in a car / public park / campground / abandoned building) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In a homeless shelter for families | <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above |

11. Since January 2018, Which, if any, of the following situations applied to you at some point?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Had to "double up" with family or friends, or stay with a household I wouldn't normally stay with | <input type="checkbox"/> Some other situation where I was at serious risk of having to stay in a shelter or outside |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Moved 2 or more times in 60 days | <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lived in a violent or abusive situation that I needed to leave for my safety | |

12. Since January 2018, did you experience any of these things?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ran Away From Home | <input type="checkbox"/> Had conflicts with my parents/guardians around gender identity or sexual orientation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Got kicked out of my parents' or guardian's house | <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Had a difference in religious or cultural beliefs from my parents/guardians | |

13. Since January 2018, did you experience any of these things?

- ☐ Got Evicted (or my family got evicted)
- ☐ Exited the foster care system
- ☐ Experienced violence at home
- ☐ Had an unhealthy or abusive relationship at home or elsewhere
- ☐ None of the above

* 14. Please check all that apply to you now or in the past: I...

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Struggle with reading and writing | <input type="checkbox"/> Used to skip school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Had an IEP when I was in school (Individualized Education Plan) | <input type="checkbox"/> Was suspended or expelled from school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Was diagnosed with a developmental disability (ADHD, autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, hearing loss, intellectual disability, vision impairment, or another disability not mentioned) | <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above |

15. Check all that apply to you (current or past): I...

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have used substances to excess (binge drinking, binge smoking, other substances) | <input type="checkbox"/> Have considered suicide or self-harm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have had difficulties with mental health (Managing stress, Depression, Anger Issues, Trouble Focusing) | <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder | |

16. Check all that apply to you (current or past): I...

- ☐ Have been arrested or convicted of a crime before
- ☐ Have been on probation
- ☐ Have had other involvement with the police or the criminal justice system
- ☐ None of the above

17. Which of these were barriers to getting housing or housing assistance for you? (check all that apply)

- ☐ The rules around how to get into shelter were confusing
- ☐ Programs were designed for older adults with different issues
- ☐ I didn't have government ID or documents (Drivers License, Non-Driver ID, Social Security Card)
- ☐ I wasn't sure how to apply for public benefits like Temporary Assistance, Food Stamps, or Medicaid
- ☐ My parents/guardians refused to help me get my documents
- ☐ None of the above

18. Which of these were barriers to getting housing or housing assistance for you? (check all that apply)

- ☐ I was in a short-term program, but didn't have enough time to get income and move out on my own.
- ☐ I was on a waiting list for help but it took too long, so I left shelter before my name came up
- ☐ English isn't my first language
- ☐ I couldn't get transportation to where I needed to go
- ☐ I didn't want to ask for help because of the stigma around homelessness
- ☐ Staying with family or friends put them at risk of losing their housing
- ☐ None of the above

19. What was another barrier to achieving stable housing you experienced that we didn't ask about?

20. Check All That Apply to you (Current or Past): I.....

- ☐ Was the victim of sexual abuse
- ☐ Had violence in my home
- ☐ Have been a victim of domestic abuse, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking
- ☐ None of the above

Since January 2020, Which of the following services have you used?

21. Housing/Shelter Services

- ☐ Emergency Shelter for Youth
- ☐ Emergency Shelter for Adults or Families
- ☐ Transitional Housing Program (Salvation Army TILP, TAPC, YWCA)
- ☐ Hotel/Motel Stays
- ☐ Rapid Rehousing Program
- ☐ Other (please specify)
- ☐ Permanent supportive housing program
- ☐ Apartment in subsidized complex (Housing Authority, e.g.)
- ☐ Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8)
- ☐ None of the above

22. Mainstream Benefits

- ☐ 2-1-1
- ☐ Public Assistance Benefits (DSS Temporary Assistance)
- ☐ SNAP Benefits (Supplementary Nutrition Assistance Program – AKA Food Stamps)
- ☐ Other (please specify)
- ☐ Social Security Benefits (SSI / SSDI)
- ☐ None of the above

23. Food Services

- ☐ Meal Sites (Rescue Mission Food Services, Samaritan Center, Salvation Army Kitchen)
- ☐ Food Pantry
- ☐ Other (please specify)
-
- ☐ None of the above

24. Employment/Education Program

- ☐ JobsPlus
- ☐ CNY Works
- ☐ Syracuse EOC Employment / Opportunity Center
- ☐ Other (please specify)
-
- ☐ None of the above

25. Medical Services

- ☐ Called 9-1-1
- ☐ Went to the Emergency Room
- ☐ Stayed in the Hospital overnight
- ☐ Saw a Primary Care Physician
- ☐ Saw an OB/GYN
- ☐ Went to Family Planning / Sexual Health Services
- ☐ Used Medical Transportation Services
- ☐ Other (please specify)
-
- ☐ None of the above

26. Mental Health / Substance Use Services

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Saw a therapist, psychiatrist, psychologist | <input type="checkbox"/> Went to a support group or peer center like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous, Unique Perspectives, Sunrise Center |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Went to a detox program for drug abuse or alcohol abuse | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Went to a counselor or group for help with drugs or alcohol at a clinic (e.g., Helio Health, Crouse, Farnham) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) | |
| <input type="text"/> | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above | |

27. I don't have enough or good enough ____ to meet my needs (check all that apply)

- ☐ Food
- ☐ Medication
- ☐ Housing (unit is unsafe or unsanitary)
- ☐ Housing (unit is unaffordable)
- ☐ Housing (other concern)
- ☐ Full-time Employment or Full-time School
- ☐ Doctor's Appointments (including dental and vision)
- ☐ None of the above

28. I don't have enough or good enough ____ to meet my needs (check all that apply)

- ☐ Transportation to School
- ☐ Transportation to Work
- ☐ Participation in social groups
- ☐ Social groups for people of the same ethnic or cultural group
- ☐ Translation services
- ☐ Advocacy and Representation (Help asking for what you need)
- ☐ Internet Access
- ☐ Phone Access
- ☐ Other (please specify)
-
- ☐ None of the above

29. Are you currently pregnant or do you have children of your own?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No



Youth Housing Needs Survey 2021

30. I don't have enough or good enough ____ to meet my child's needs (check all that apply)

- ☐ Childcare
- ☐ Medical care
- ☐ Educational opportunities
- ☐ Social opportunities
- ☐ Diapers
- ☐ Baby food/formula
- ☐ Information when I have questions about child development
- ☐ Other (please specify)

- ☐ None of the above

31. Since January 2020, Which of the following Child/Family Services have you used?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Childcare Subsidy | <input type="checkbox"/> Parenting Skills Classes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> WIC Benefits | <input type="checkbox"/> Parent Aide Programs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Head Start | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Early Screening and Intervention | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) | |

- ☐ None of the above



Youth Housing Needs Survey 2021

32. Is there anything you'd like to share about your experiences in more detail?

33. What improvement would you most like to see for youth homelessness services?



Youth Housing Needs Survey 2021

Thank you for completing the survey! Your answers will help inform and guide new programs to address youth homelessness.

If you need assistance with housing or other services right now, please call 2-1-1.

2-1-1 is a human services referral line that can help connect you with programs at local government and nonprofit agencies that can help you meet your needs.

For more information on 2-1-1 in Oswego and Onondaga counties, see 211cny.com

For more information on 2-1-1 in Cayuga County, see 211lifeline.org

To receive a copy of the report from the completed survey, click here to provide your e-mail address. Your e-mail is not linked with your survey answers.

Have more to say? Want to join us in ending homelessness?

If you're between the ages of 18 and 24, join the Youth Action Board for the Housing and Homeless Coalition.

We meet once a month over zoom to discuss ways to improve homelessness services for youth. Members are compensated for their time. This is a great leadership opportunity to add to your resume or college application.

Contact Miranda Eddy (meddy@unitedway-cny.org) or Sherrain Clark (sclark@unitedway-cny.org) for more details.