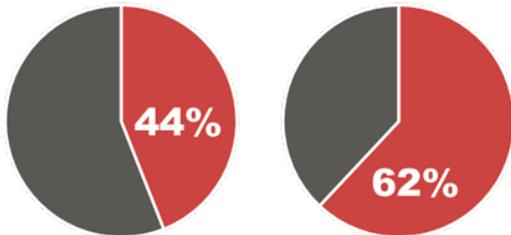


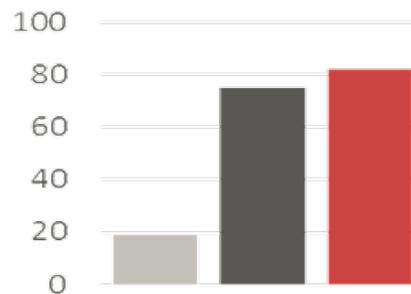
The Intersection of Homelessness, Behavioral Health Needs, and Justice Involvement

The TA Tidbit is an online publication of the TA Network highlighting resources developed or provided in response to requests from SAMHSA SOC grantees on various topics. This edition focuses on **behavioral health needs among youth experiencing homelessness with histories of justice system involvement** and was prepared by Policy Research Associates, Inc. in partnership with the TA Network.

Youth experiencing homelessness with both behavioral health needs and a history of juvenile justice system involvement make up a significant and often invisible percentage of youth experiencing housing instability. Though the exact number of youth in this population is not tracked, most youth experiencing homelessness report previous justice system involvement and exhibit symptoms of diagnosable behavioral health disorders.



Of youth who experience homelessness surveyed by the ACYF Street Outreach Program, 44% have been confined in a jail, prison, or juvenile detention center, and 62% had been arrested.



While 20% of general population youth experience behavioral health disorders, these numbers rise to 75% and 80% in the juvenile justice and youth experiencing homelessness populations.



Research has shown that youth who experience homelessness have an increased risk for a wide range of behavioral health disorders, including:

- anxiety,
- ADHD,
- depression,
- PTSD, and
- self-injurious behaviors, suicidal ideation, and attempted suicide.

Youth who are homeless are also more likely to have experienced high rates of family conflict and child abuse or neglect than their housed peers. In addition, youth who are homeless experience increased risk for victimization when living on the street. This street victimization has been shown to have a significant impact on the development of depression among youth who are homeless.

Youth who experience homelessness also face disproportionately high rates of justice system involvement. These young people self-report involvement in high-risk activities that include delinquent behavior such as dealing drugs, stealing, and prostitution - often as a means of survival. They are also more likely than their housed peers to have spent time in juvenile detention and delinquency often increases at youth become enmeshed in life on the streets. Nearly one-fifth of homeless youth are considered “doubly homeless,” having become homeless after running away from an out of home placement that was generated either as a result of child welfare or juvenile justice system involvement.

Research has shown that the combination of homelessness and mental health needs can significantly increase a young person’s risk of arrest. For example, one study found that youth experiencing homelessness who met criteria for current major depressive episode and past or present manic episode were significantly more likely to report arrests. Young people experiencing homelessness, including those with histories of justice system involvement, tend to be very low utilizers of health and social services. They often lack insurance, transportation, or knowledge about system supports.

There is tremendous opportunity for behavioral health intervention among young people who are homeless and who have histories of justice system involvement. Research has shown that the engagement phase is critical to such efforts, with an empowering strengths-based approach bringing the most promise for successful engagement. While there is little research to identify the most effective interventions once youth are engaged, interventions that incorporate cognitive-behavioral approaches have shown promise.

See below for resources on the intersection of youth homelessness, behavioral health needs, and justice involvement as well as general resources on youth homelessness.

- SAMHSA & Federal Resources:
 - [Homelessness Programs and Resources](#)
 - [Behavioral Health and Homelessness Resources for Youth](#)
 - [Fighting to Live: Self-Esteem and Homeless Youth](#)
 - [The 2017 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress](#)



- SAMHSA & Federal Resources Continued:
 - [Ending Youth Homelessness Guidebook Series](#)
 - [Health Coverage for Homeless At-Risk Youth](#)
 - [Family and Youth Services Bureau Programs for Runaway and Homeless Youth](#)
 - [Preventing and Ending Youth Homelessness: A Coordinated Community Response](#)
 - [Federal Framework to End Youth Homelessness](#)
 - [Serious Mental Illness and Prolonged Youth Homelessness](#)
- Resources for Youth
 - [National Runaway Hotline For Youth and Teens](#)
 - [National Human Trafficking Hotline](#)
 - [National Homeless Coalition Online Directory of Homeless Advocacy and Service Organizations](#)
 - [Directory of State Coordinators for the Education of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness](#)
- General Resources
 - [Behavioral Health Among Youth Experiencing Homelessness](#)
 - [Addressing the Intersections of Juvenile Justice Involvement and Youth Homelessness: Principles For Change](#)
 - [Preventing Homelessness Among Juvenile Justice-Involved Youth](#)
 - [Youth Homelessness and Juvenile Justice: Opportunities for Collaboration and Impact](#)
 - [Using Medicaid to Support Individuals Experiencing Homelessness](#)
 - [Students Experiencing Homelessness in Public Schools Fact Sheet](#)