DISCLOSURES

- No conflicts of interest to report

- No financial disclosures to report

TRAINER'S OBJECTIVES

- This training is meant to be interactive, and participatory.

- I would like to create a "brave space" where stereotypes can be challenged.

- Encourage discussions that can unearth answers that be directly utilized in current practice.

- Allow time to process what is being digested.

- **Look for bolded text to help answer the post test questions.**

MEASURABLE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- The learner will be able to list two educational barriers for African American adolescents who are experiencing homelessness.

- The learner will be able to identify two pieces of current literature related to African American adolescents who are experiencing homelessness.

- The learner will be able to identify two current risks related to mental health for African American adolescents who are experiencing homelessness.

- The learner will be able to apply three intervention strategies learned from this training.

IMPLICIT BIAS

- National Institute of Health (NIH) 2024 identified implicit bias as
  - The subconscious feelings, attitudes, prejudices, and stereotypes an individual has developed due to prior influences and imprints throughout their lives.

- Cultural knowledge- knowledge about some cultural characteristics, history, values, beliefs, and behaviors of another ethnic or cultural group.

- Cultural competence- set of values, behaviors, attitudes, and practices within a system, organization, program or among individuals and which enables them to work effectively cross culturally.

- Cultural responsiveness- the ability to learn from and relate respectfully with people of your own culture as well as those from other cultures.

BREAKING A BARRIER

- Breaking a barrier refers to overcoming an obstruction or limit, whether physical, conceptual, or societal. It can involve achieving a breakthrough, pushing boundaries, or challenging existing norms and expectations.

  - Generative AI (2025) which is "experimental"

- Physical Barriers

  - These are tangible objects or structures that obstruct movement or action, such as walls, fences, or natural formations.

- Conceptual/Intellectual Barriers

  - These involve limitations in thought, understanding, or knowledge, like overcoming cognitive biases or ingrained assumptions.

BREAKING A BARRIER, cont.

- Societal Barriers

  - These are social structures or practices that limit opportunities or perpetuate inequalities based on factors like gender, race, or social class.

- Breaking a barrier can involve:

  - Achieving a breakthrough: Successfully completing a task or reaching a goal that was previously thought impossible.

  - Pushing boundaries: Exceeding limitations or established norms in a particular field or area.

  - Challenging expectations: Refusing to conform to predetermined roles or stereotypes.

  - Creating change: Directly impacting systems or structures that perpetuate inequalities.

BREAKING BARRIERS

- How did we get here, and is there a need to "break barriers" related to the intersection of homelessness, mental health, and education with African American adolescents?

  - To do this, we need to first define, and then identify if homelessness is an issue here in the United States…

- The HUD's definition includes both sheltered and unsheltered people.

  - Sheltered people are living in emergency shelters, transitional shelters, safe havens serving people with severe mental illness, or hotels/motels.

  - Unsheltered people live outdoors, in cars, in abandoned buildings, or in other places unfit for human habitation.

BREAKING BARRIERS, cont.

- Previous research I looked at:

  - On a single night in 2017, an estimated 553,742 people experienced homelessness (i.e., living on the streets, in a shelter, or in some other alternative living situation) in the United States.

    - 2017 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress conducted in 12/2017

- In 2024, around 23 out of every 10,000 Americans — 771,480 people — experienced homelessness in January 2024 according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) annual point-in-time report, which measures homelessness across the US on a single night each winter.

  - Increase of 217,738 individuals

The total homeless population in the U.S. rose 32.5% from 2022 to 2024.

Point-in-time estimate of the homeless population, overall and by sheltered status

--- Total --- Sheltered --- Unsheltered
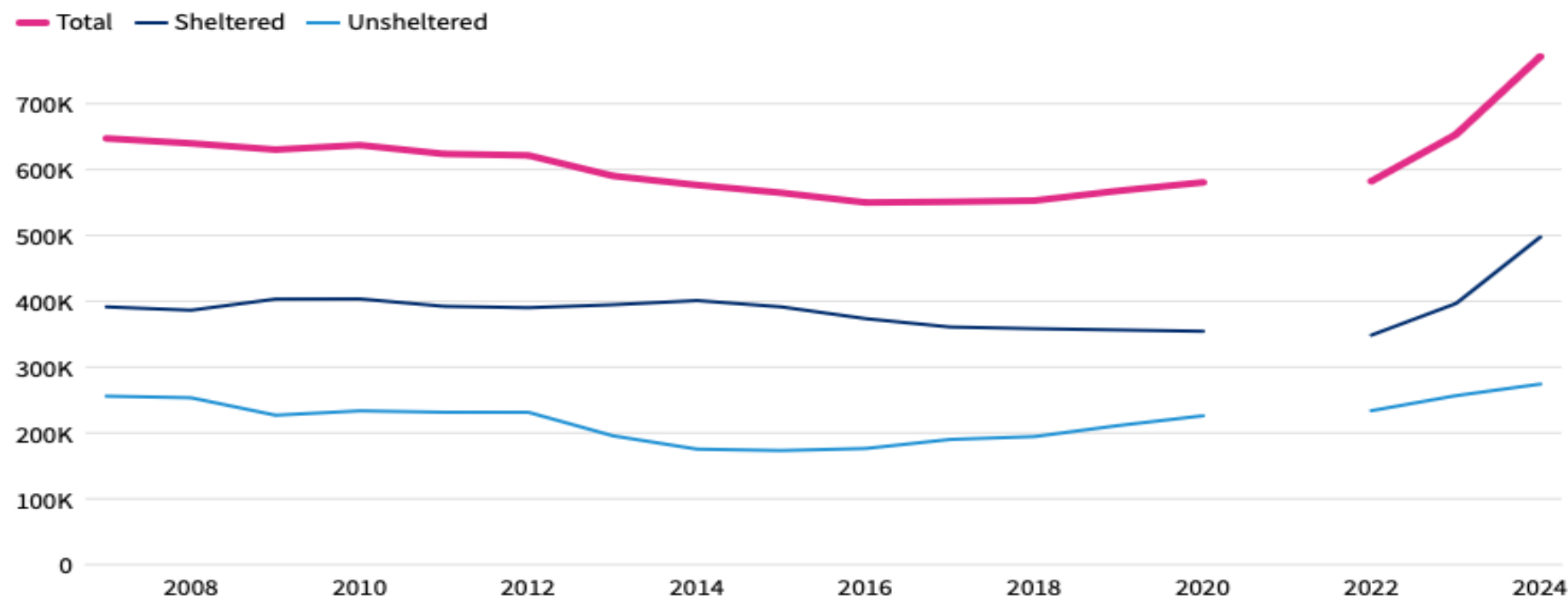
2021 data is excluded because many cities suspended counts during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development · Get the data · Embed · Download image · Download SVG

HOMELESSNESS

- USA Facts Team, with research that was updated as of 2/28/2025

- **Over 240,000 homeless Americans — 31.6% of the homeless population — identified as Black, African American, or African in 2024. This was the largest population of unhoused people.**

  - This same demographic made up 13.7% of the US population in 2023.

- Hispanic-identified people, who were 19% of the national population, were 31% of the homeless population.

- Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders had the highest rate of homelessness at 126.5 per 10,000 people in that racial category.

  - These rates could be partially a result of the high cost of living in Hawaii — in 2023, it was among the states with the highest rates of owners and renters who were housing-burdened, people spending more than 30% of their incomes on housing.

Homeless people per 10,000 people, 2024

Overall

General population ▬ 23.0

Ethnicity

Hispanic ▬ 36.2

Non-Hispanic ▬ 19.9

Race

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander ▬ 126.5

Black ▬ 53.3

American Indian or Alaska Native ▬ 47.2

Multiple Races ▬ 30.2

White ▬ 11.7

Asian ▬ 5.2

Estimates of homeless population from the January 2024 point-in-time count. Base population for rates is from July 2023. HUD also found a Middle Eastern or North African homeless population of 2,012.

Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development · Get the data · Embed · Download image · Download SVG

HOMELESSNESS

- The total homeless population went down generally from 2007 to 2022 before rising 12% in 2023 and another 18% in 2024.

  - The US Interagency Council on Homelessness attributes the current rise to inadequate systems for managing affordable housing, wages, and equitable access to health care and economic opportunity.

- According to the Council, people who experience homelessness have a life expectancy of 50, compared to 77 for the average American.

- Homelessness looks very different across states and cities and towns, and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that rising rent and job losses contribute to homelessness.

- Policies regarding encampment and shelter restrictions, as well as situations that change from person to person (such as poverty and experiencing domestic violence) also affect homelessness rates.

HOUSING INSTABILITY
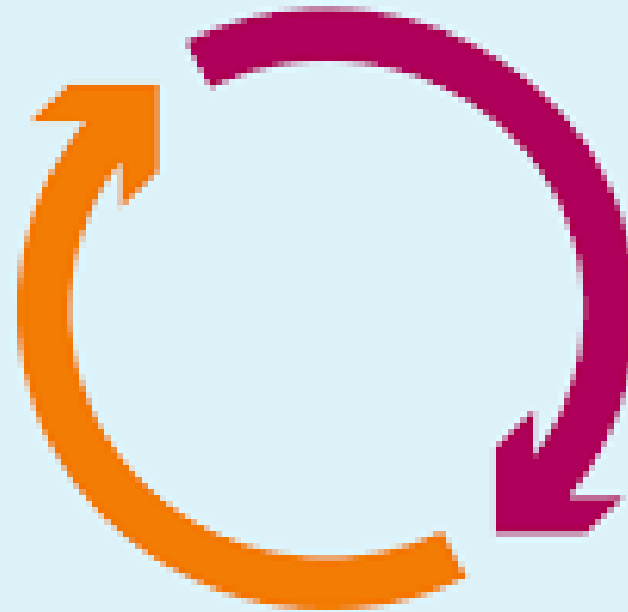
UNSTABLE HEALTH

HOUSING INSTABILITY

- If we are following the research, the previous slides indicate that we need to be focusing on housing instability…

- We previously indicated that 771,480 individuals were experiencing homelessness when studied in 1/2024. How many were children (under the age of 18)?

  - Nearly 150,000 children experienced homelessness on a single night in 2024, reflecting a 33% increase — or 32,618 more children — over 2023, the largest single-year increase of any group. (2025 Campaign for Children)

- Why do we believe that there has been such a stark increase over the course of the past several years?

- What is causing this housing instability?

ETHNIC PREVALENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

- In a nationally representative survey, Fusaro et al. (2018) found that lifetime prevalence of homelessness when asked if respondents had ever been homeless or lived in a shelter was:

    - 17% for Black, 8% for Latinx (of any race), and 5% for White.

- Another national survey (Otiniano Verissimo et al., 2021) asked about lifetime experience of homelessness episodes lasting at least one month.

    - 8% for Black, 7% for Native, 6% for Latinx, 5% for White, and 3% for Asian/Pacific Islander.

- **Across multiple studies, which ethnic group experiences the highest prevalence of homelessness?**

- **In the Voices of Youth Count, the first nationally representative survey of unaccompanied youth, Black youth had an 83% higher risk of homelessness compared to all other youth.**

    - (Morton et al., 2018)

VETERANS

- Studies on veterans used data on homeless service users and the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Homelessness Screener used across VHA settings. Consistent with other studies, research found higher rates of homelessness among Black veterans compared to White veterans.

  - (Breland et al., 2015; Montgomery et al., 2020; Tsai et al., 2017, 2021).

- US veterans, 8% of White and 19% of Black veterans had ever been homeless as an adult.

  - (Tsai et al., 2021).

- In the only study of rural areas, veterans experiencing homelessness in micropolitan areas in Nebraska were more likely to be White (84%) than veterans in metropolitan areas (54%).

  - (Tsai et al., 2015).

MENTAL HEALTH AND HOUSING INSTABILITY

- Roberts, Bhat, and Fenelon (2025) wrote an article entitled "The Long-term Effects of Housing Insecurity in Young Adulthood on Subsequent Material Hardship, Physiological And Mental Health."

- Economic and material hardship, including housing insecurity – limited or uncertain availability or access to safe, quality, and affordable housing – is strongly linked to negative physical and mental health outcomes among adolescents and adults.

  - Material hardship is defined as the difficulties individuals or households face in meeting their basic needs, such as food, housing, or healthcare, due to limited resources or financial constraints.

MENTAL HEALTH AND HOUSING INSTABILITY, cont.

- This study uses data from The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health) to construct a sample of participants who experienced housing insecurity. It was a nationally representative study that began with in-school (N = 90,118) and at-home (N = 20,745) surveys of adolescents in 1994–1995 (Wave I) (Harris et al., 2019).

  - Wave I included adolescents in grades 7–12, and participants were re-interviewed in 1996 (Wave II; grades 8–12), 2001–2002 (Wave III; ages 18–26), 2008–2009 (Wave IV; 24–32), and 2016–2018 (Wave V; 33–43). cont.

- Findings indicated that experiencing housing insecurity is associated with a significantly higher likelihood of experiencing material hardship at Wave IV and significantly worse depressive symptoms at both Waves IV and V.

- The treatment effects are more pronounced among women, with housing insecurity being linked to a significant increase in allostatic load from Wave IV to Wave V exclusively for women.

MENTAL HEALTH AND HOUSING INSTABILITY, cont.

- Evidence links housing insecurity to stress, material hardship, higher depressive and anxiety symptoms, and worse physical health.

  - (Desmond and Kimbro, 2015; Keen et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2017; Pierce et al., 2024; Singh et al., 2019; Stahre et al., 2015)

- Housing loss from eviction or foreclosure is linked to higher suicide rates.

  - (Fowler et al., 2015)

- Conversely, rental assistance is linked to less psychological distress (Denary et al., 2021), and public housing is associated with fewer socioemotional problems in children (Fenelon et al., 2018).

MENTAL HEALTH AND HOUSING INSTABILITY, cont.

- Stress disrupts the sympathetic-adrenal-medullary and hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axes, raising stress hormones and inflammatory cytokines.

  - (Beckie, 2012; McEwen, 2003, 2006).

- Chronic activation of these systems can elevate metabolic, cardiovascular, and immune markers, contributing to disorders like hypertension or diabetes.

  - (Epel et al., 2018; Juster et al., 2010; Kemeny, 2003; Logan and Barksdale, 2008; Ong et al., 2017; Pearlin et al., 1981).

- Thus, mental health is linked to physiological health through stress pathways.

  - (Carbone, 2021; Epel et al., 2018).

MENTAL HEALTH AND HOUSING INSTABILITY, cont.

- Housing insecurity often forces trade-offs between housing and other needs, linking it to broader material hardship.

  - (Marsh et al., 2000; Pollack et al., 2010).

- It frequently coincides with food insecurity, as those struggling with housing costs or living in food deserts lack access to affordable, quality food.

  - (Gillies et al., 2021; Kalousov´a et al., 2019; Njai et al., 2017).

- The Theory of Cumulative Disadvantage suggests that early adversities, such as housing insecurity, accumulate over time, increasing exposure to risks and reducing access to resources, contributing to long-term health and socioeconomic inequalities.

  - (Dannefer, 2003; Ferraro and Shippee, 2009; Melo et al., 2019).

- Early hardships may predict poorer health and unhealthy aging across psychological and physiological domains

  - (Ferraro and Shippee, 2009; Melo et al., 2019).

MENTAL HEALTH AND HOUSING INSTABILITY, cont.

- A history of housing insecurity, like missed payments or evictions, increases the likelihood of future instability, creating a negative cycle that exacerbates inequality.
  - Desmond (2016)
- For those experiencing "serial forced displacement," repeated housing insecurity compound material hardship and future insecurity.
  - (Kang, 2023).
- Economic hardship among Black adolescents was linked to poorer self-reported health, higher allostatic load, and accelerated epigenetic aging 3 years later.
  - Chen et al. (2016)
- Similarly, Walper (2009) found that economic deprivation in adolescence predicted poorer mental health 6 years later, particularly among women.
- Keen et al. (2023) found that childhood housing insecurity was associated with depression in adulthood, and Graetz et al. (2024) linked rent burden and eviction to higher midlife mortality.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND HOUSING INSTABILITY

- The National Center for Juvenile Just estimates that 865,000 young people will be arrested in the United States this year (2025).

- Up to 60% of justice-involved youth have experienced housing instability at some time in their life, and this a problem that disproportionately affects the youth participating in the system.

  - Comparatively, only around 26% of the overall population have ever experienced homelessness

- As of 2021, Black youth were 4.7 times as likely to be placed (i.e., detained or committed) in juvenile facilities as their white peers.

  - The Sentencing Project (2023)

- New data from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention shows Black youth are nearly 6 times as likely to be incarcerated as their white peers .

  - The Sentencing Project (4/7/2025)

Figure 3. Youth Placement Rates by Race and Ethnicity, 2021
Rate per 100,000 Youth

Race/Ethnicity	Rate
Black	228
Tribal	181
Latino	57
White	49
More than one race	40
Asian	13
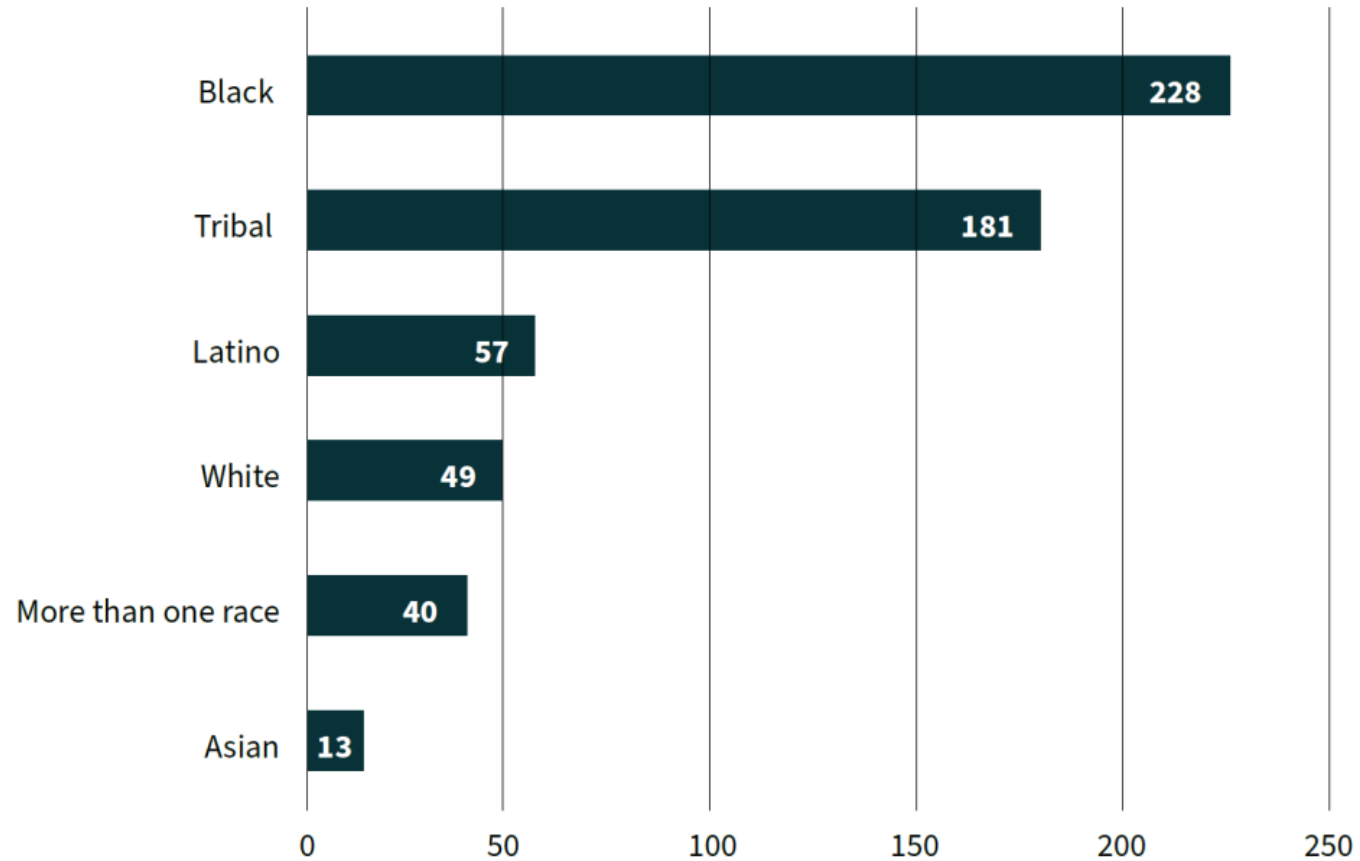
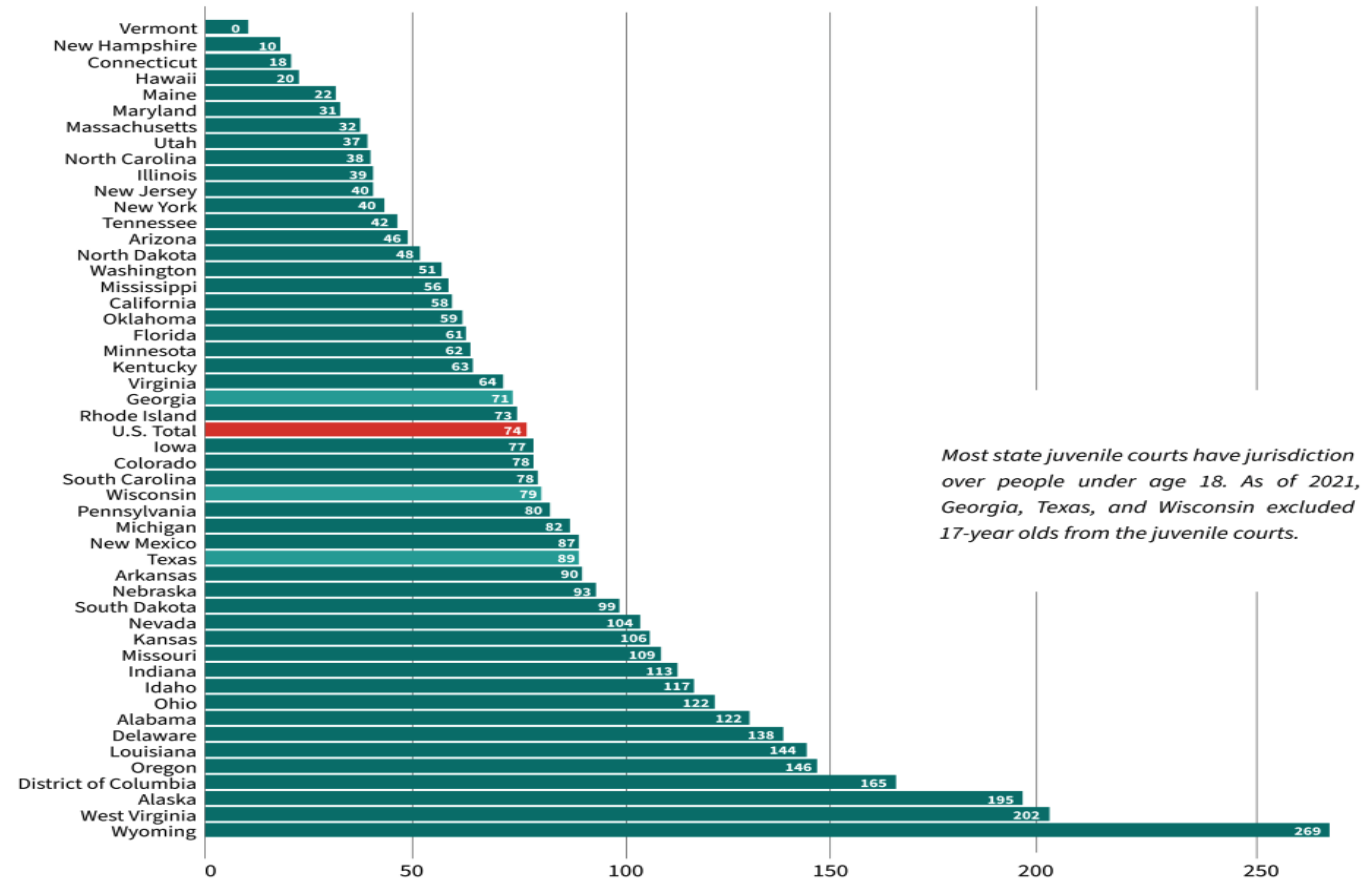Source: Puzzanchera, C., Sladky, T.J., & Kang, W. (2023). Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement.

Table 1. Cumulative Racial and Ethnic Disparities

DECISION POINT	BLACK YOUTH	WHITE YOUTH	DISPARITY
Arrests per 100,000 youth (2020)	2,487	1,080	Despite modest differences in self-reported behaviors, Black youth are 2.3 times as likely to be arrested as are white youth.
Cases diverted from formal processing per 100 juvenile court cases (2021)	37	49	Among those youth referred to juvenile court for delinquency offenses, white youth are 31% more likely to have their cases diverted.
Cases detained per 100 juvenile court cases (2021)	31	20	Among those youth referred to juvenile court, Black youth are 60% more likely to be detained.
Cases committed per 100 juvenile court cases (2021)	9.3	5.7	Among those youth referred to juvenile court, Black youth are 63% more likely to be committed than white youth. Sources:

Figure 4. Youth Residential Placement Rate By State (2021)
Placement rate for detained and committed youth per 100,000 youth [2]

For the purposes of this graph, youth are defined as age 10 through the maximum age of court jurisdiction in that state.

State	Rate
Vermont	0
New Hampshire	10
Connecticut	18
Hawaii	20
Maine	22
Maryland	31
Massachusetts	32
Utah	37
North Carolina	38
Illinois	39
New Jersey	40
New York	40
Tennessee	42
Arizona	46
North Dakota	48
Washington	51
Mississippi	56
California	58
Oklahoma	59
Florida	61
Minnesota	62
Kentucky	63
Virginia	64
Georgia	71
Rhode Island	73
U.S. Total	74
Iowa	77
Colorado	78
South Carolina	78
Wisconsin	79
Pennsylvania	80
Michigan	82
New Mexico	87
Texas	89
Arkansas	90
Nebraska	93
South Dakota	99
Nevada	104
Kansas	106
Missouri	109
Indiana	113
Idaho	117
Ohio	122
Alabama	122
Delaware	138
Louisiana	144
Oregon	146
District of Columbia	165
Alaska	195
West Virginia	202
Wyoming	269

Most state juvenile courts have jurisdiction over people under age 18. As of 2021, Georgia, Texas, and Wisconsin excluded 17-year olds from the juvenile courts.

Source: Puzzanchera, C., Sladky, T.J., and Kang, W. (2023). Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND HOUSING INSTABILITY

- Researchers Abd Al-Lattif, Ibraheem, & Hotsalyuk (2025) produced an article entitled "Young People Involved in Criminal Justice Are Associated with Housing Instability."

- They conducted a thorough analysis of scholarly articles, focusing mainly on subjects such as homelessness, the legal system, young people, poverty, mental health, substance addiction, social assistance, policy impacts, and multidisciplinary approaches.

- Findings reveal that young persons involved in the criminal justice system are greatly affected by insecure housing, which is driven by factors such as poverty, mental health illnesses, drug addiction, and a lack of social support.

- The association between the involvement of young individuals in the criminal justice system and their absence of secure housing is evident, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive approach to address this problem effectively.

- Efficient cooperation across the criminal justice, social service, and housing sectors is vital.

- This study highlights the need for more research to improve our understanding of the complex relationship between housing hardship and teenage misbehavior.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND HOUSING INSTABILITY

- For young individuals involved in the criminal justice system, housing instability is associated with a variety of negative outcomes:

  - Lower levels of educational attainment,

  - Greater rates of unemployment

  - Worse health outcomes,

  - Higher likelihood of reoffending.

- Factors such as financial hardship, mental illness, substance abuse, and a lack of social support contribute to the revolving door of homelessness that so many juvenile offenders face.

- According to the available literature, youth who interact with the criminal justice system are more likely to face housing instability than their non-involved peers.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND HOUSING INSTABILITY

- Homelessness is roughly 7 times greater among former prisoners, however, repeat offenders have 13 times greater rates than the general population. So, repeat offenders are nearly twice as likely to be homeless as first-time offenders.

- Regrettably, criminalizing homelessness makes previously imprisoned persons most likely to be taken into custody and detained again.

- While law enforcement aggressively enforces "infractions" like sleeping in public areas, panhandling, and public urination—not to mention other low-level offences that are more apparent in public—formerly jailed persons are needlessly forced back through the "revolving door."

True North Wellness (2025)

ALLOSTATIC LOAD

- The concept of allostatic load was first introduced by McEwen and Stellar in 1993, and is defined as:
  - The cost of chronic exposure to fluctuating or heightened neural and neuroendocrine responses resulting from repeated or chronic environmental challenges that an individual reacts to as being particularly stressful.
    - Guidi, Lucente, Sonino, & Fava, 2021
- It derives from the definition of allostasis as the ability of the organism to achieve stability through change, and the view that healthy functioning requires continual adjustments of the internal physiological milieu.
- It reflects the cumulative effect of experiences in daily life that involve ordinary events (subtle and long-standing life situations) as well as major challenges (life events), and also includes the physiological consequences of the resulting health-damaging behaviors:
  - Such as poor sleep and circadian disruption, lack of exercise, smoking, alcohol consumption and unhealthy diet.
- Several studies have shown an association between allostatic load and frailty, a multidimensional loss of individual resources with aging.
- Several studies showed that high levels of allostatic load were correlated with work-related stress poor quality job, and burnout syndrome.
  - Poor job quality = a job that lacks desirable characteristics, leading to a negative impact on workers' well-being, financial stability, and overall job satisfaction. It's a spectrum of unfavorable conditions that can make work feel less rewarding and fulfilling)

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ALLOSTATIC LOAD

- When environmental challenges exceed the individual ability to cope, then allostatic overload ensues as a transition to an extreme state, where stress response systems are repeatedly activated, and buffering factors are not adequate.

- Situations that may lead to the development of allostatic load/overload are:

  - Exposure to frequent stressors that may determine a status of chronic stress and repeated physiological arousal

  - Lack of adaptation to repeated stressors

  - Inability to shut off the stress response after a stressor is terminated

  - Allostatic response not sufficient to deal with the stressor

- Adverse childhood experiences, including child abuse and maltreatment, were found to be associated with high levels of allostatic load in adulthood.

- How do the findings of this study correlate to youth experiencing homelessness?

SALUTOGENIC EFFECTS

- Varadarajan et al. (2025) wrote an article entitled Salutogenic Effects of Greenspace Exposure: An Integrated Biopsychological Perspective on Stress Regulation, Mental and Physical Health in the Urban Population.

- Salutogenic effects refer to:
  - The positive influence on health and well-being resulting from factors that support and promote good health, rather than focusing solely on disease prevention or treatment.

- Globally, urbanization is associated with increased risk for physical and mental diseases.

- Among other factors, urban stressors (e.g. air pollution) are linked to these increased health risks (e.g. chronic respiratory diseases, depression).

- Emerging evidence indicates substantial health benefits of exposure to greenspaces in urban populations.

- Golf courses?
  - Recent studies (5/12/2025) have shown a potential link between proximity to golf courses and Parkinson's disease. This is primarily due to concerns about pesticide contamination in groundwater and air near golf courses.

SALUTOGENIC EFFECTS

- The United Nations estimated in 2018 that 55% of the global population resides in urban areas and projected that by 2050, 68% of the global population will be urban dwellers (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2018).

- On the one hand, urbanization (i.e., the process through which cities grow as well as the population shift from rural to urban areas) offers economic development, employment opportunities, better infrastructure, access to education and health care, etc. (Hou et al., 2019).

- However, on the other hand, it involves exposure to stressors such as air pollution, noise, violence, substance abuse, poor quality-built environment, etc. (Hernandez et al., 2020; Pelgrims et al., 2021; Zona & Milan, 2011).

- These stressors pose several health burdens, for instance, ambient air pollution (including ozone, nitrogen dioxide [NO2], particulate matter, PM2.5 and PM10) is associated with diseases such as chronic respiratory diseases, cardiovascular diseases, depression, etc. (Khan et al., 2019).

- Thus, urbanization is widely discussed within the premises of increased risk for physical and mental diseases (Landrigan, 2017; Li et al., 2016; Pinchoff et al., 2020).

GREENSPACE AND URBANIZATION

- As urbanization is progressing rapidly, the health risks associated with it call for a mandate to incorporate health-promoting measures in all urban settings.

- One such measure is the creation and preservation of greenspaces (Taylor & Hochuli, 2017; Vilcins et al., 2022), such as parks, gardens, woodlands, or nature parks, within and in the periphery of urban areas.

- In line with this, the health beneficial effects of greenspace exposure are reflected across age groups, i.e. from new-borns to older adults.

    - (for systemic reviews and metanalysis, see Dzhambov et al., 2014; Houlden et al., 2021; Twohig-Bennett & Jones, 2018; Vanaken & Danckaerts, 2018; Yuan et al., 2021).

- An ecological study that used aggregated sales data of prescribed mood disorder medication, psycholeptics and psychoanaleptics from 2006 to 2014 reported a reduction in medication sales (1–2%) associated with an increase (10%) in relative cover of woodland, garden, and grass in an urbanized area, indicating a relationship between greenspace exposure with mental health benefits in urban cohorts (Aerts et al., 2022).

COVID-19 AND GREENSPACE

- A survey (n = 2,089; age range 18–90; 83.1% females) conducted during the first 6 months of the Covid-19 pandemic reported a significant protective effect of tree-rich greenspace on depression as well as composite mental scores, i.e. a standardized and weighted score of parameters:

  - Covid-19-related worries; depression and anxiety symptoms among the entire cohort.

- Especially proximity to tree-rich greenspace was associated with a reduction in both depression and composite mental health scores in the elderly, as well as a lessening of pandemic-related worries in the younger cohort.

  - (Wortzel et al., 2021).

- Another large survey (n = 5,566) conducted during the pandemic showed that better subjective wellbeing and better self-rated health in study participants were associated with perceived access to public greenspace (e.g. park or woodland) as well as access to a private greenspace (e.g. a private garden)

  - (Poortinga et al., 2021).

PRESCRIBING GREENSPACE

- An increase in the duration of greenspace exposure (both visually and physically) is strongly linked to perceived stress reduction.
  - (Hazer et al., 2018).
- In urban communities, greenspace exposure could also facilitate health equity (Rigolon et al., 2021). For instance, spending time in greenspace is linked to a decrease in perceived stress among deprived urban communities
  - (Roe et al., 2013);
- Ward Thompson et al., 2016). Within the health-care settings and research, there is an on-going discussion about prescribing greenspace exposure (i.e., nature and park) for stress reduction and overall health improvement in urban populations from diverse socio-economic-ethnic backgrounds
  - (Kondo et al., 2020; Razani et al., 2018, 2020; Uijtdewilligen et al., 2019).
- Plausible intergenerational health benefits of maternal greenspace exposure were reflected in a pioneer study (n = 150 pregnant women) by Boll et al. (2020), which reported lower cortisol levels in umbilical cord blood associated with residential surroundings and proximity to greenspace (100m buffer), regular viewing of greenspace through windows, and additional time spent in greenspace during pregnancy.
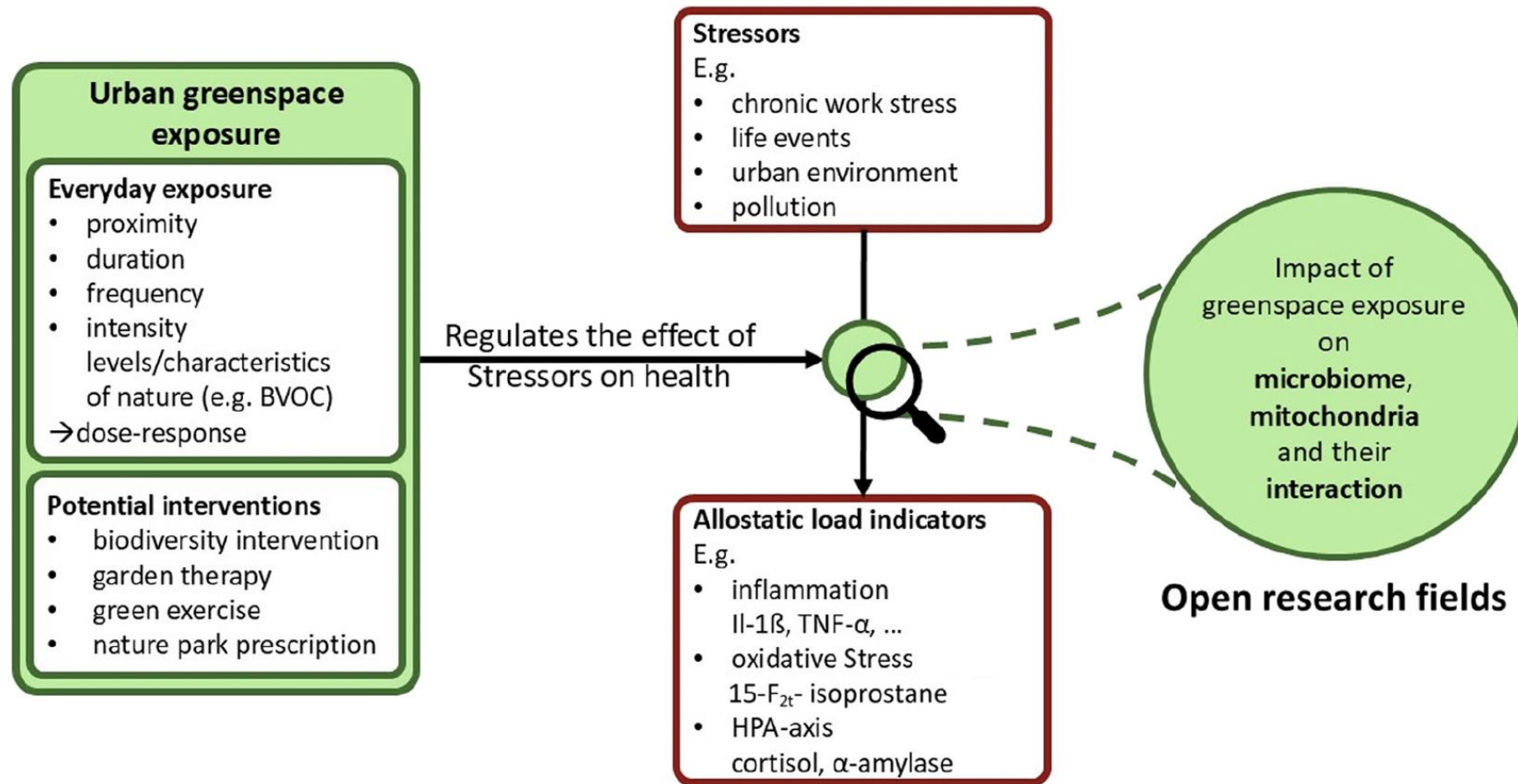
Figure 1: An integrated biopsychological framework on the salutogenic effects of greenspace exposure: Regular exposure to urban greenspace improves (mental) health in a dose–response manner. Previous studies employed independent biomarkers of stress parameters (e.g. cortisol, α-amylase, 15-F_{2t}-IsoP, hsCRP, and IL-8) as well as entire allostatic load parameters. Future investigations should address the impact of greenspace exposure on mitochondrial function, human gut microbiome diversity, and its mutual influence. Knowledge derived from such investigations could enable innovative greenspace-based interventions, such as biodiversity intervention, garden therapy, and green exercise, and encourage nature park prescriptions.

The **Importance** of EDUCATION

SCHOOLS

- Edwards (2020) wrote an article entitled "Young, Black, Successful, and Homeless: Examining the Unique Academic Challenges of Black Students Who Experienced Homelessness."

- **A common theme that emerged from seven of the eight participants was the experience of a hostile racial climate at school.**

  - In this study, hostile racial climate is defined as "an environment that is steeped with racial inequity and racism on both institutional and interpersonal levels" (Kohli 2018, 309).

- In response to the question, "Do you think your experience with homelessness had unique challenges because you are Black?" participants described experiences with racial microaggressions at school and cited racial disparities in discipline, low expectations for Black students, and racial tension between Black and Latinx students as examples of a hostile racial climate

SCHOOLS

Table 1. Participant demographics.

Participant alias	Robert	Alina	Marcus	Kevin	Jamelle	Dayon	Elizabeth	Jeffrey
Age at interview	21	21	19	22	23	17	19	20
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Race/ ethnicity	Black	Black	Black	Black	Black	Black	Black	Black
HS graduation year	2013	2017	2015	2012	2012	2019	2016	2017
School district	District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4	District 5	District 2	District 2	District 2
Number of high schools attended	3	1	2	1	1	1	2	3
Living arrangement	Doubled-up	Doubled-up, Motel, Shelter, Street	Doubled-up, Motel, Shelter	Motel	Doubled-up, Motel	Doubled-up	Couch-surfing	Couch-surfing, Street
Estimated duration of homeless experience(s)	3 Academic years	2 Academic years	7 Months	1 Academic year	6 Months	2 Academic years	3 Academic years	2 Academic years

WHERE ARE THE SCHOOLS?

- Researchers Tierney & Hallet (2012) wrote an article entitled "Homeless Youth and Educational Policy: A Case Study of Urban Youth In a Metropolitan Area."

- This chapter examines the educational barriers that homeless youth face in one large urban area. The text reviews the McKinney–Vento Homeless Assistance Act (1987) and discusses how California has attempted to follow the federal mandates, and the implications for Los Angeles.

- Interviews with 120 homeless youth and 45 policymakers, school counselors, and after-school program coordinators in Los Angeles to understand how youth experience the education system.

- The authors identify aspects of the federal mandate that impede the educational progress of homeless youth. The findings highlight that homeless youth are not a homogenous group, and educational supports need to be designed recognizing the diversity of their needs.

SCHOOLS

- Local schools in Los Angeles, especially under-resourced schools, have very little leeway with regard to additional resources that might be spent on activities that vary from what every other school has.

- Discretionary money may exist at the district level but it is limited.

- School districts exist in political environments and any discretionary money that is spent occurs in large part because a particular constituency has lobbied for it.

- Because of the stigma attached to being homeless, children and their parents we spoke with did not feel comfortable using their voice to ask for educational money to be spent on their behalf.

- Although schools may have clubs or services for gay youth or undocumented students, no such club or related activity exists for homeless youth in Los Angeles.

- Perhaps if homeless youth lobbied for some service they might be accommodated, but they do not.

SCHOOLS

- The federal and state government has made the assumption that mainstreaming homeless youth is optimal. Therefore, a homeless student may benefit from programs that serve subpopulations,.
  - For example, if a homeless youth is gay then he or she might join a gay club; if a homeless youth is undocumented then a meeting about how to pay for college might be appropriate.
- However, the student must seek out these supports and have the time and resources available to participate.
  - Unfortunately, for most of the students we interviewed these extracurricular supports fail to fully meet their needs.
- If students are proactive or exhibit behaviors that raise the awareness of a school official, then some sort of support might be forthcoming.
  - A homeless student who is living on the street and comes to school unclean might be guided to the school nurse who has a number of remedies.
  - A student who appears in need of counseling might be referred to social services.
  - But again, these sorts of acts are what happen to all youth whether they are homeless or housed.

SCHOOLS

- In Los Angeles, the schools do not have a staff member who specifically works with homeless youth at each school site; the students are referred to the same staff members as other students when a problem arises.

- A homeless youth is identified as needing support only after he or she has missed a few weeks or months of school.

  - Ironically, it benefits the homeless youth to have attendance issues; the red flag brings the student to the attention of a staff member.

  - However, the student may be so disconnected from school by the time support is offered that he or she may no longer be motivated to attend school.

  - Further, the high mobility of homeless youth increases the likelihood that they will move to a different school before attendance and academic issues are addressed.

- The district liaison in Los Angeles created a district level policy that required each school site to identify a contact person for homeless youth; however, the position will likely be little more than an additional job title added to the responsibility of one of the administrators or counselors.
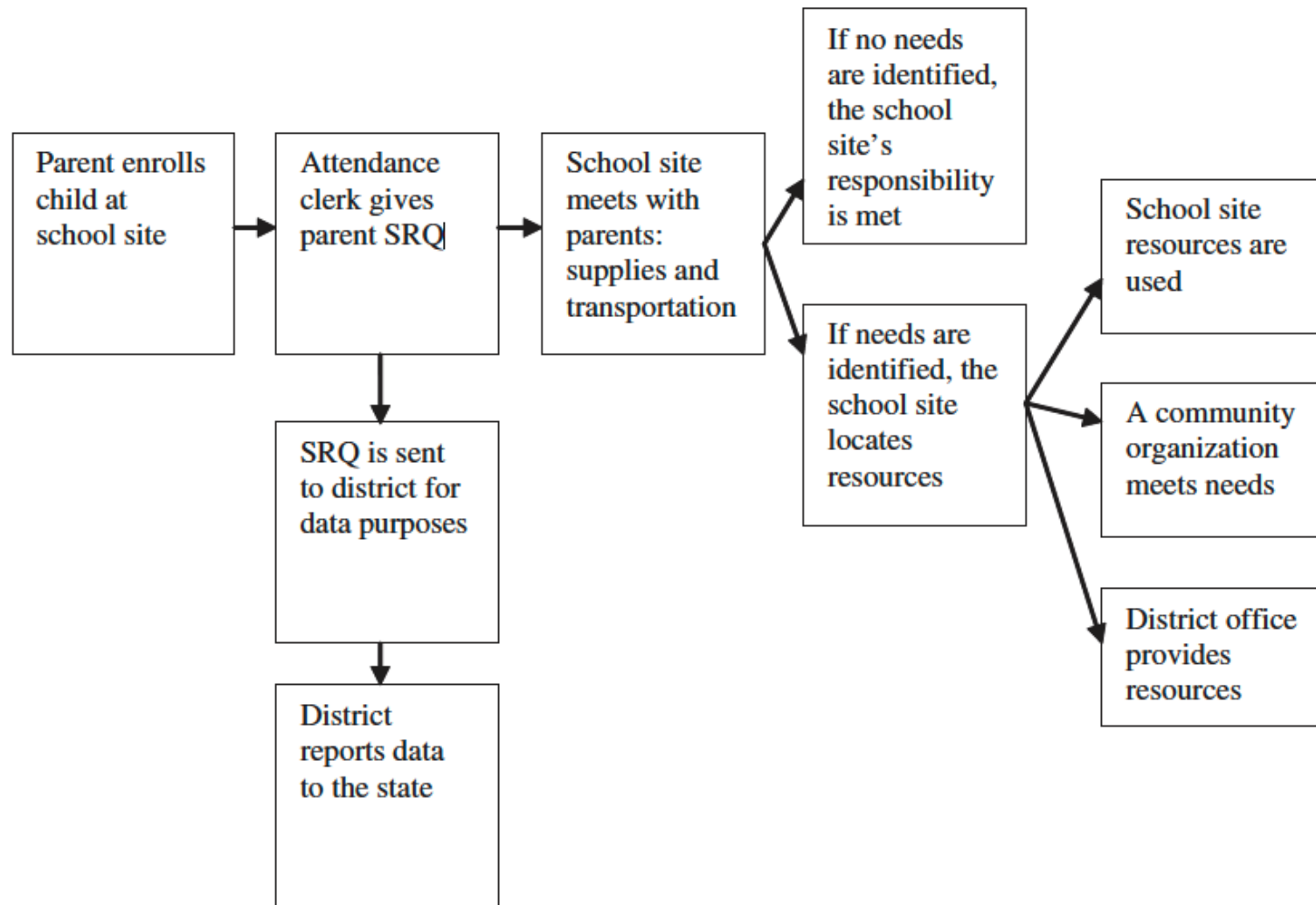
Fig. 2. Enrollment Process for Homeless Students.

SRQ- Student Residency Questionnaire

SCHOOLS

- Unfortunately, not all of the clerks in the attendance office distribute the residency questionnaire to parents and the parents we spoke with frequently did not know how to request it.

  - In part, this is reflective of the limited training provided to office staff and a belief that families are trying to manipulate the system.

- The information the attendance counselor and district receive is only as good as the clerk is able, or willing, to collect.

- Frequently, no one on the campuses we visited was aware of the individual students who were homeless or the extent of their legal rights.

  - For example, we observed homeless youth being denied enrollment because they lacked transcripts or could not prove neighborhood residency.

Table 1. Typology of Homeless Youth and Educational Outcomes.

Type of Homeless Youth	General Issues	Educational Outcomes
Accompanied sheltered	• Unstable residence • Insufficient, impersonal space • Shelter dependent on following rules	• Limited space and resources to complete homework
Accompanied unsheltered	• High mobility • Daily survival concerns	• Frequent movement between schools • Education is secondary to daily survival • Lack space and resources to complete homework
Unaccompanied transitional	• High mobility • Lack of parental guidance	• Frequent movement between schools • Lack space and resources to complete homework
Unaccompanied sheltered	• High mobility • Daily survival concerns • Lack of parental guidance	• Frequent movement between schools • Education is secondary to daily survival • Limited space and resources to complete homework
Street	• High mobility • Daily survival concerns • Lack of parental guidance • High rate of victimization	• Frequent movement between schools • Lack space and resources to complete homework
Doubled-up	• Semi-stable residence • Insufficient space • Shelter dependent on others	• Limited space and resources to complete homework
Couch surfing	• Unstable residence • High mobility • Daily survival concerns • Lack of parental guidance	• Frequent movement between schools • Education is secondary to daily survival • Limited space and resources to complete homework

THREE (3) CHALLENGES FOR HOMELESS YOUTH

- First, if a student is homeless then he or she is likely to be stigmatized and invisible at school.

  - Most homeless youth do not want anyone to know they are homeless, and at the school no one knows a youth is homeless after he or she has registered, in large part because of federal and state policies. To require that anyone, much less a child, must ask for assistance based on a stigma assures that support for the stigmatized individual will be less than adequate.

- Second, the enactment of federal and state policy is based on the assumption of similarity rather than difference.

  - Even though how one gets categorized as homeless is a robust definition based on several characteristics, the manner in which the policy gets carried out in Los Angeles is by assuming that the needs of all homeless youth are similar, and their educational needs are equivalent to the needs of housed students.

- Third, homeless youth have unmet educational needs.

  - The McKinney–Vento Act (1987) came about to provide equal opportunity for homeless youth. The problem is that the manner in which the policy is carried out at the local level does not provide equal opportunity. Simply mainstreaming children into a public school ought not to suggest that everyone receives the same opportunities.

THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS

TACA
THE AUTISM COMMUNITY in ACTION

INTERVENTIONS

- Article entitled "Under Their Wing: A Case Study of Caring Adults Who Support Homeless Youth" by Helfrick in 2024 sheds light on current empirically supported intervention methods to be utilized to support youth experiencing homelessness.

- Despite the utility of meaningful relationships, mentoring, and CASA, the literature does not, however, provide insight into effective interventions for homeless youth.

  - CASA = Court Appointed Special Advocate

- Atlena et al. (2019) conducted a review of the literature in 2009 and a follow up review in 2018, yielding 11 and 13 studies respectively.

  - Intensive case-management, independent living programs, cognitive behavioral counseling, independent living skills and programs, supportive housing, peer-based support, motivational interviewing, and mentoring programs were included in the findings.

INTERVENTIONS

- The conclusion of the authors was that most of the qualities of the studies were rated as poor and none were identified as effective.

- The authors noted that there were no known school-based interventions at that time.

- Positives

  - Some slight improvements were found for homeless youth who participated in substance abuse treatment with mentoring.

  - A slight increase in social well-being in interventions that targeted social support.

    - Both gives further evidence that relational interventions may have a positive impact.

  - Youth who were provided case-management had increased psychological well-being, and decreased problem behaviors.

  - Shelter based case managements also had positive outcomes on housing.

- Interventions that target one area of risk are simply insufficient, and an ecosystem perspective is needed.

INTERVENTIONS

- Wish list
  - The absence of support people was as weighty of a topic as those that did support the homeless youth.
  - On the wish list of support people for participants were drivers, shoppers, employers, mental health professionals, and finance people.
- Participants also noted the need for legal counsel to help inform the advocate of the rights and responsibilities when entrenched in caring for the youth.
  - "I wish that we even had like some sort of a legal counsel that would kind of just pull something up and protect us as families…
- Participants remarked on the insufficiency of the support people that were in place, such as Child Protective Services.
  - "Basically, they say, well, he's with you. Are you okay with that? Well yeah, I mean, that's fine. He's here he's safe that's, you know, and it's like, Okay, good. And they don't call you back. They do not. They're like, Oh, good. Someone else has this one. And you don't hear from them again, you know. "

INTERVENTIONS

- Qualities that participants wanted in an advocate:

  - Grin and bear it

    - This category reflects what could be defined as perseverance. Participants noted a long-term commitment to the youth they supported, outlasting other relationships that gave up. Despite difficult choices and behaviors of the youth, participants indicate that they still were in contact with youth even into adulthood. Julia reports:

      - *"Once you bring someone into your house and you know you're their only hope. That's a really weird place to be. So it's like okay, they're going to steal from you, they're going to do this. They're going to steal from your kids... they're going to cause all of these issues. they're going to do that. And unless you grin and bear it. What happens to them next could be so much worse."*

  - Really listen

    - One activity noted frequently by participants was listening and talking to the teen. Being someone who would listen to them was of the utmost importance. Candace describes:

      - *"And just listening to kids. I mean, you gotta be. It's not just liking teenagers. I like them but you gotta, you gotta be willing to really listen to them and peel back what they're what they're really trying to say because they're trying to figure it out themselves."*

INTERVENTIONS

- Parental

  - The participants in many ways took on parenting responsibilities with the teen. Interestingly, one characteristic was that each participant was connected with teenagers or had teenagers of their own, and that was how they met the teen they supported. Participants reported giving boundaries and structure to teens, making sure they were eating, ensuring they were not being taken advantage of, and looking out for their safety. Melissa states:

    - "Some of its life coach, some of its mentoring, some of its parenting and just treating these kids like they're your kids, even though they're not."

- Conscience

  - Participants felt responsible for the youth that they supported. It was a matter of moral conviction: an inner feeling that they had to do what was right for the child. Julia describes it well:

    - "So you really end up being at the mercy of your conscience. In a way that's like because it really is your conscience that keeps you going. It's like if they're not here, where will they be? And because there isn't anything next... Juvenile detention, that's what happens next. "

- Flexibility

  - Participants reported that flexibility was an important aspect of supporting youth that were homeless: setting structure and expectations, but also being able to problem solve when difficult situations would arise. Candace reflects:

    - "Yeah. It can't be so flexible that you get walked over and then there are no rules…I mean, it does break my heart when I see things happen, but it absolutely does. But then if you're not: Okay. Well, how do we try and fix that? Before you move along in a different way. That's flexibility and problem solving and just listening to kids.

INTERVENTIONS

- Empathy
  - Melissa reported that "empathy and listening" were the top two characteristics an advocate should have. Participants noted accepting the youth where they were, despite their circumstances. They were able to put themselves in the shoes of the youth. Julia describes:
    - *"Whoever you are, wherever you've been, whatever you've done it really doesn't matter to me. You are here. It's that map at the amusement park that has a little red X: And you are here. And when you are here. You are not anywhere else and you are not anybody else, but who you are right here and right now. And I just think there's something about a clean slate. Um I've needed that in my life and I always want to be able to offer that too because when they walk in. I don't care what I've heard about you. I don't care what you're scared I'm going to find out about you. You're here."*

- Not quite right.
  - By this point, it is clear that these individuals are to some extent extraordinary, and they are completing tasks and listening to youth that are for the most part invisible to the rest of the world. How does one encapsulate this quality? With some comedic relief, Julia proposed the following:
    - *"I think you need someone who's just not quite right (laughing). I mean it. Because I think about myself and I think like if I was normal, I wouldn't do this. You know, like, because you do, you have to have almost some really sick sense of idealism…It's gonna be all the things last time wasn't, and then when it's not, you want to like…there's a part of you that says let's do it again! Like there has to be insanity. I don't know. I don't know what it is."*

LEGISLATIVE INTERVENTIONS

- First Focus Campaign for Children (2025) calls on the 119th Congress and the newly installed Trump Administration to take the following actions to address the rapidly growing problem of child, youth, and family homelessness:
  - Pass the Homeless Children and Youth Act (HCYA): The bipartisan Homeless Children and Youth Act (H.R. 5221)
    - Reintroduced in the 118th Congress, would align federal definitions of homelessness for children and youth.
    - The legislation removes barriers, streamlines assistance, leverages resources, and brings greater visibility to the reality of family and youth homelessness.
  - Pass the Family Stability and Opportunity Vouchers Act: The bipartisan Family Stability and Opportunity Vouchers Act (S. 1257/H.R. 3776),
    - Reintroduced in the 118th Congress, would create an additional 250,000 housing vouchers over five years specifically for low-income, high-need families with young children.
    - This legislation is especially important to combat the extraordinarily high rates of homelessness among infants and toddlers, and other young children.

LEGISLATIVE INTERVENTIONS

- Improve the Child Tax Credit

  - A quarter of children cannot receive the full Child Tax Credit because their parents make too little to quality, primarily affecting children in rural communities, children of color, and children in larger families.

  - Lawmakers must enhance the Child Tax Credit to better reach these households.

- Create and implement a national Renter Tax Credit

  - Rent has increased nearly 20% nationwide since 2019, yet 80% of federal housing tax benefits go to homeowners.

  - Creating a national renter tax credit would deliver resources directly to children in families and young adults, who are greater risk of homelessness and less likely to receive housing assistance.

  - A national renter tax credit would deliver resources directly to families and young adults and reach many more than are currently served by rental assistance.

INTERVENTIONS FROM YOU

- Without putting data within the context of systemic racism and disaggregating outcomes, research will produce incomplete knowledge on family homelessness, leading to ineffective interventions for families of color (Heaton (2025).

  - Disaggregating- separate (something) into its component parts.

- I have learned that specific and appropriate interventions are not talked about in the literature, and our hidden within the agencies that are actually doing the work.

- With that being said, let's do a "deep dive" and determine what intervention methods that have worked in the communities that we are actively serving, and write them down to help out others who may hear this training at a later date:

  - It is suggested to…

QUESTIONS

- Are there any answers?