

Homelessness During the Transition from Foster Care to Adulthood

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This article looked specifically at the rate of homelessness among foster youth exiting the system, as well as risk and protective factors to predict homelessness after 18-21. Consistent with other studies, risk factors of homelessness among exiting foster youth included frequent/unstable placements, history of running away, history of abuse, other 'delinquent' behaviors while in care, and exhibiting symptoms of mental health disorders. The researchers identified the impact of unstable placements throughout care as a core reason that youth may not be able to connect with community based resources, resulting from lack of supportive relationships with adults.

Information at a Glance:

- Of 624 participants, 36% reported becoming homeless at least once before 26 years old.
- Follow up responses at ages 19, 21, 23/24, and 26 years were 81-83%.
- Those with history of unstable placements, running away, and mental health needs were at higher risk.
- Homelessness among females declined as opposed to males, whose risk increased during the transition to adulthood.

Proposed Program Solutions:

The authors identify that early prevention is most needed with this population, holding child welfare agencies responsible for creating a concrete plan for all youths, including where they will live, with whom, and how to pay for living/housing costs. This approach also includes more attention on building financial awareness, and targeting a much earlier start on building financial options while still in foster care to create a safety net and support more options in

housing choices. Additionally, the researchers identify that that youth who changed placements often, those who were physically abused, or those with mental health needs should all receive specified attention, including more in-depth assistance in finding housing and/or applying for transitional housing programs.

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