

Risk Factors for Youth Experiencing Homelessness During COVID-19

All Transition Age Youth (TAY) are vulnerable during the COVID-19 crisis, but homeless TAY are at an even higher risk. Below is a list of inter-related risks that highlight the need for extra care and funding to support these youth through the crisis.

Risks	How it Impacts Homeless Youth
<p>Health experts agree: All vulnerable populations are at-risk of COVID-19, not just older individuals.</p> 	<p>According to the World Health Organization, “People of all ages can be infected by the new Coronavirus.” While individuals age 65 and older pose a special risk, public health data shows that younger adults are also being infected and hospitalized. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 36% of those infected are 18 to 44 years old.ⁱ</p>
<p>Homeless youth are largely unsheltered, placing them at risk for COVID-19.</p> 	<p>According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s 2019 Point-in-Time Count, 79% of homeless youth in California were unsheltered, making them vulnerable to contracting and spreading COVID-19 because of a lack of access to showers and sinks and the ability to practice social distancing.ⁱⁱ</p>
<p>Homeless youth are disproportionately African American, a risk factor for COVID-19 hospitalization.</p> 	<p>In 2017, the Voices of Youth study found that Black or African American youth had an 83% higher risk of reporting homelessness.ⁱⁱⁱ Similarly, the Centers for Disease Control found that 33% of people who have been hospitalized with COVID-19 are African American, while only 13% of the U.S. population is African American.^{iv}</p>
<p>Homeless youth have poor underlying health, also a risk factor for COVID-19, particularly asthma.</p> 	<p>According to John’s Hopkin’s University, “Adolescents and young adults from disadvantaged backgrounds, compared to more affluent and educated peers, struggle much more with health problems, including obesity and asthma,” both risk factors for COVID-19.^v A 2018 study found that homeless students were three times more likely to have asthma than their housed peers.^{vi} Underlying health factors such as these place homeless youth at higher risk of transmission of COVID-19 and poor health outcomes.</p>
<p>Homeless youth are less likely to seek health care, placing them at risk for COVID-19.</p> 	<p>A study in <i>Nursing Research</i> found that homeless youth were not likely to access health care when needed due to “structural barriers, such as limited clinic sites, limited housing of operation and long wait times and social barriers, including perceptions of discrimination and law enforcement.^{vii} With the Coronavirus, a resistance or delay in seeking medical attention can be particularly dangerous, and sometimes fatal, given how quickly symptoms turn from mild to critical.</p>

ⁱ https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html#anchor_1587083500

ⁱⁱ https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC_PopSub_State_CA_2019.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://voicesofyouthcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/VoYC-National-Estimates-Brief-Chapin-Hall-2017.pdf>

^{iv} https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html#anchor_1587083500

^v <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/data/us-state-data-availability>

^{vi} <https://www.icphusa.org/reports/asthma-prevalence-access-to-care-among-homeless-high-school-students/>

^{vii} https://journals.lww.com/nursingresearchonline/Abstract/2010/05000/Health_Seeking_Challenges_Among_Homeless_Youth.9.aspx