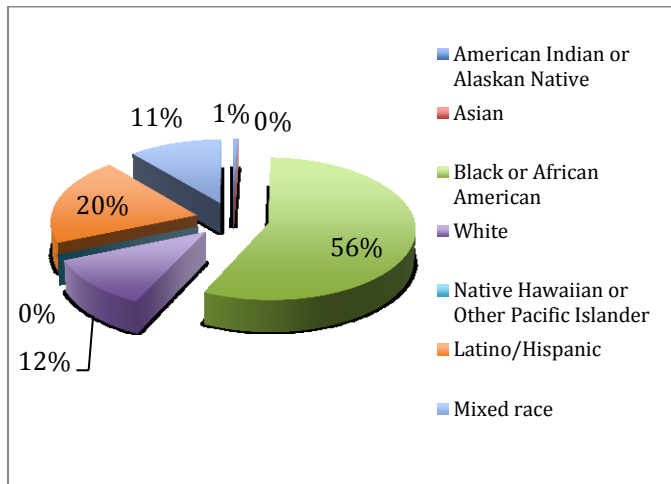


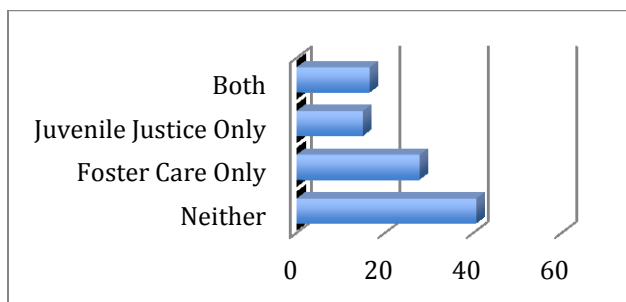
## Results of the Connecticut TAY Triage Tool Pilot

**Eric Rice, Ph.D.**

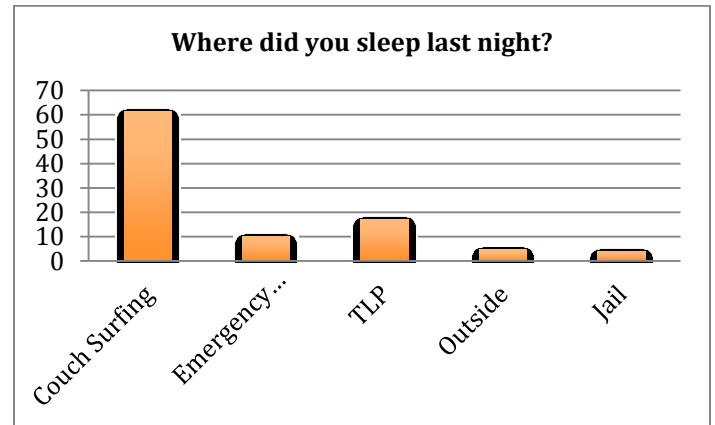
From September to December 2014, 187 youth between age 13 and 24 in the state of Connecticut homeless service sector were surveyed by two providers. Data was collected from 2 unique provider programs, Youth Continuum (located in New Haven, CT) and The Connection, with programs throughout the state. These data are a convenience sample of youth available in programs during the time of recruitment.



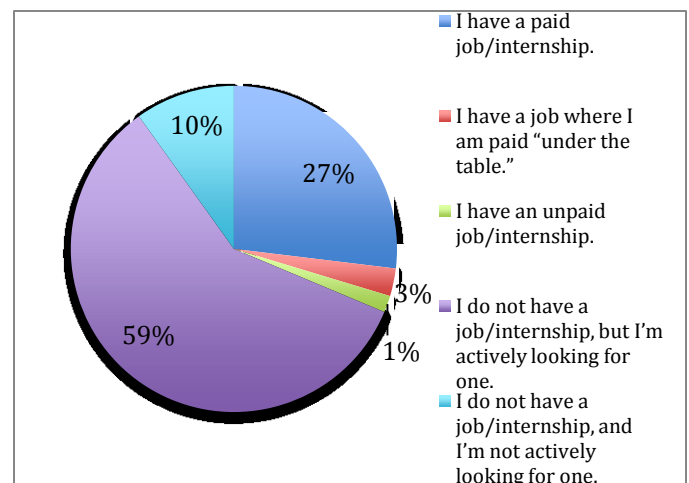
The profile of homeless youth in Connecticut: There is a great deal of racial/ethnic diversity in CT. Nearly 16% of youth report being a sexual minority. And the vast majority of youth served by homeless youth services in CT are originally from CT (88%). Moreover, 60% of youth have been in either foster care, the criminal justice system, or both.

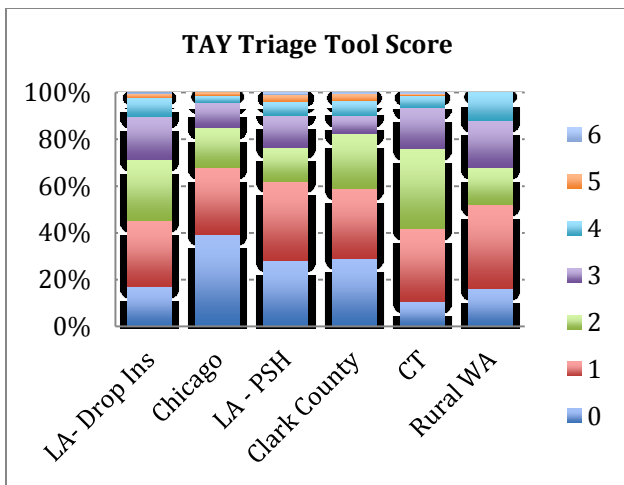


**Homeless experiences:** The annual rates of “literal” homelessness experiences are actually quite high. In the previous year 15% of youth had used an emergency shelter and 13% had spent the night outdoors. It is also crucial to understand that more than half of the homeless youth in CT reported “couch surfing” the night before the survey, 18% were at a “friend’s” home and an additional 35% youth staying with family of some kind.

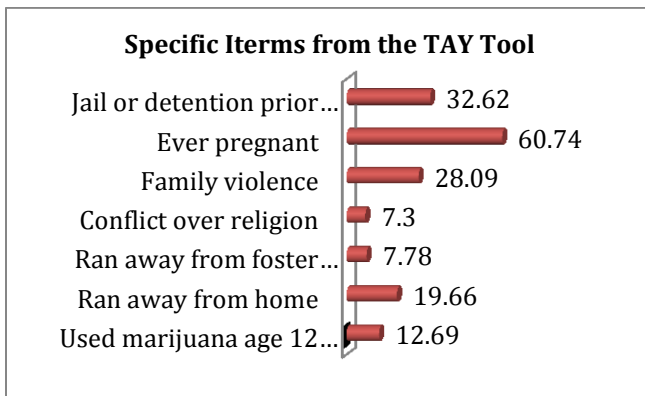


**Education and employment:** There is a great need for education and employment services for the homeless youth in Connecticut. Only 62% of the youth surveyed have a high school diploma or GED but only another 16% are currently in high school. Moreover, only 27% of the youth surveyed are legally employed, although 59% reported being in the process of actively looking for employment.

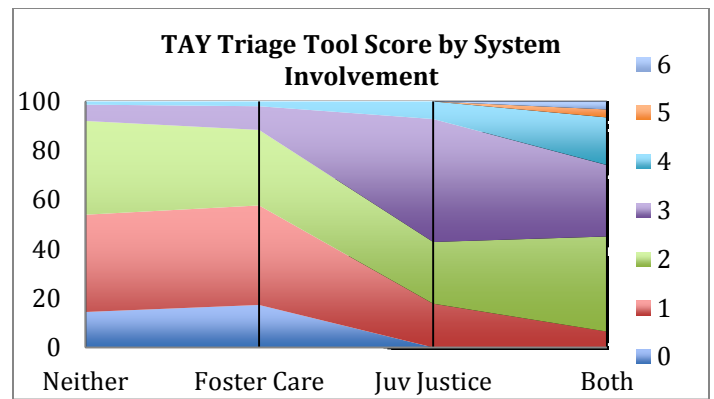




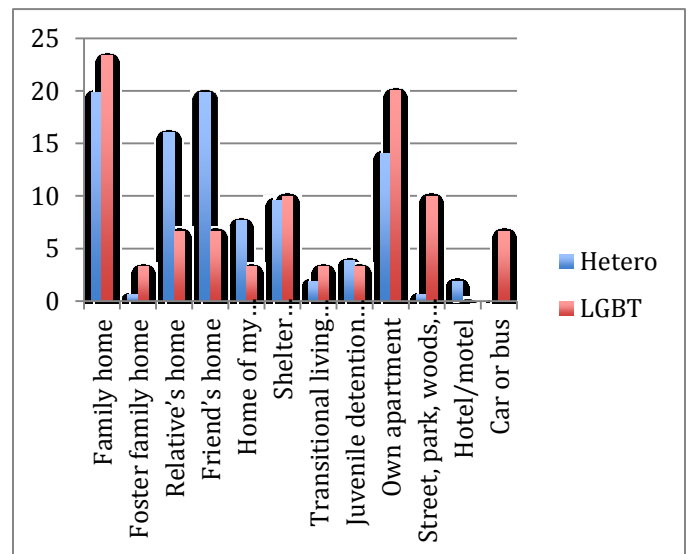
The TAY Triage Tool is an effective way to identify youth in Connecticut who are at highest risk of experiencing long term homelessness. 90% of youth endorsed at least one TAY Triage Tool item and 24% of the youth endorsed 3 or more items. Youth who endorse 3 items are more than 5 times as likely to experience 5 or more years homeless relative to those youth who score 0. High scores on the TAY Triage Tool were also correlated with increases in depressive symptoms and symptoms of PTSD.



**System Involvement:** The most important findings with respect to system involvement were that youth with both foster care and juvenile justice histories scored higher on the TAY Triage Tool than other youth. Moreover, youth only involved with juvenile justice score higher than youth with only foster care histories, whereas youth with neither experience have the lowest scores.



**Sexual Orientation:** Approximately 15% of the youth surveyed in Connecticut are sexual minority youth (gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender). Sexual minority youth were more likely to report having slept outside in the past 30 days.



**Agency Differences:** Not surprisingly, there are some differences between the agencies with respect to demographic characteristics of their client populations and system involvement histories. The Connection also serves more youth who are utilizing shelter services, whereas Youth Continuum seems to have slightly higher rates of “couch surfing” among their clients. With respect to the TAY Triage Tool score, there is an interesting finding in which youth from The Connection are more likely to report very high and very low scores as compared to the youth from Youth Continuum.

## **Recommendations:**

### Using the TAY Triage Tool:

I would recommend that the TAY Triage Tool be used to prioritize youth for supportive housing. The Tool can effectively identify those youth who have experienced (or will experience) long term homelessness among youth in Connecticut. Perhaps the most important finding in this report is demonstrating the effectiveness of this Tool in assessing youth at great risk of long term homelessness.

One strategy for implementing the TAY Triage tool would be to utilize Orgcode's Next Step Tool. The 6 items which constitute the TAY Triage Tool are included in this larger tool. I would recommend that Next Step scores and TAY Triage Tool scores be generated for all youth. It is my guess (but only a guess at this point) that there is much overlap between which youth are identified as most vulnerable by both tools. Because the TAY Triage Tool is embedded within the Next Step Tool one can assess youth on both Tools.

It is important to note that youth who score high on the TAY Triage Tool have multiple problems which will need to be addressed. The original data from Los Angeles showed higher rates of substance abuse and mental health problems for youth who score higher on the tool. While we did not assess substance abuse in the current survey, we did look at both post-traumatic stress and depression. Youth who score higher on the TAY Triage Tool report higher levels of trauma and depression. Mental health and possibly substance abuse interventions are likely needed for youth who score high if they are placed into housing.

### Needs for Other Supportive Services:

These data suggest that many homeless youth in CT are in need of education and employment services in addition to housing

services. 22% of the youth surveyed were high school drop outs and only 27% were legally employed. It is encouraging, however, that 59% of the youth report actively seeking employment. Programs to help youth achieve this goal are needed. This is not to say that such programs do not exist within The Connection and Youth Continuum, but rather the need exists in the population and such programs need funding.

Also as previously mentioned, youth with high TAY Triage Tool scores are in need of mental health treatment as part of the services which accompany housing.

### Special Programs for System Involved Youth:

Youth who have a history in both the juvenile justice and foster care systems score higher on the TAY Triage Tool. Special attention and programming will likely need to be directed to these "dual" system involved youth.

### Added Housing Options for Sexual Minority Youth:

Although LGBT youth share many of the experiences with heterosexual youth, it is important to note that sexual minority youth are more likely to become homeless in the first place. In addition, in CT, LGBT youth were more likely to report sleeping outside that were heterosexual youth. Levels of shelter use, however, were comparable. LGBT youth appear to be doing less "couch surfing" instead opting for the streets. It appears that informal "couch surfing" temporary solutions to housing are less available to LGBT youth who then opt to sleep outside. This suggests that LGBT youth may have higher levels of need for emergency shelter. I believe these data suggest a need for more emergency and other housing for LGBT youth in particular.

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