

Children's Data Network

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Prevalence and Timing of Child Protection Involvement among Families Accessing Services through the Los Angeles County Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)

CONTEXT

We began by first identifying all individuals who received homeless services from LAHSA between 2013 and 2016. We then organized those individuals into family units using fields that allowed us to identify adult Heads of Households (HoHs) (i.e., individuals ages 18 and older) who had minor children attached. For all minor children, we then linked to statewide child protection records dating back to 1998. We used the data to describe the characteristics of homeless parents and families in the context of their demographics, services, and child protection involvement.

HEADLINES

- Homeless parents accounted for 11% of all Heads of Households seeking homeless services. More than half of the parents were between the ages of 25 and 39. One quarter were 40 or older, while less than 20% were between the ages of 18 and 24. Almost half were Black, 38% were Latino, 9% were white, and 2% were Asian / Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander. The vast majority (83%) of parents identified were female.
- Among homeless parents, 59% had more than one child. Nearly 60% of homeless parents had at least one child who was under the age of 5.
- One of every three homeless parents with children under age 5 had been reported to CPS for allegations of abuse or neglect, 17% of parents had a substantiated allegation and 9% had one or more children removed and placed in foster care. Rates of CPS involvement for homeless parents with children over the age of 5 were even higher.
- For the vast majority of families we identified as both homeless and CPS-involved, their first contact with CPS occurred before they sought homeless services.
- Among CPS-involved homeless families, a majority had not had any case opened for services. This finding should spark a conversation about the about the appropriateness of earlier child welfare response to families who subsequently sought homeless services.
- It is unknown whether earlier prevention supports and coordination of case services could have helped resolve problems at an earlier stage and potentially prevented later family homelessness.

The Children's Data Network helps California make better, smarter use of administrative data

The Children's Data Network (CDN) is a data and research collaborative focused on the linkage and analysis of administrative records. In partnership with public agencies, philanthropic funders, affiliated researchers, and community stakeholders, we seek to generate knowledge and advance evidence-rich policies that will improve the health, safety, and well-being of the children of California. Learn more at www.datanetwork.org