Children's Hospital Los Angeles
Youth Coordinated Entry System (CES)
Final Evaluation Report

Commissioned by Children's Hospital Los Angeles
Prepared by Focus Strategies

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focus STRATEGIES

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to find our reports, research, news, and more information about who we are and what we do. Focus Strategies offers analytic services to help communities reduce and end homelessness. Our services include system planning and performance measurement; system and program evaluations; coordinated entry design; supportive housing system development; and point in time counts.

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A.   Background

The Hollywood Homeless Youth Partnership Agencies (HHYP) launched the Youth Coordinated Entry System (CES) pilot in November 2015 to better meet the needs of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County. Focus Strategies was engaged to conduct a process and outcome evaluation of the pilot. Our work for this study has included collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative information. We have reviewed data from the local Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) about the youth assessed and served, as well as held interviews and focus groups with system stakeholders, program leadership and staff, and young people assessed for the pilot. Over the course of the past year, we have issued three quarterly progress reports and made interim recommendations for modifications or improvements. This report presents our final results for the evaluation period (November 2015 to November 2016).

B.   Results

Our evaluation found that the Youth CES Pilot has achieved all three of the goals it had set out in the original design:

- **Goal 1:** All Hollywood Homeless Youth Partnership Agencies (HHYP) use a standardized assessment at initial contact with at least 500 youth experiencing homelessness over a 12-month period.
  Result: The Youth CES Pilot **assessed 519 unique youth** over a twelve-month period.

- **Goal 2:** At least 100 youth are connected and linked with housing and/or other support services.
  Result: **136 youth** were connected to a variety of types of housing including transitional housing, temporary and permanent housing with friends and family, and rental units with or without subsidies.

- **Goal 3:** Identify and support at least two additional LA County communities to implement the next wave of Youth CES.
  Result: By the end of the pilot period, all **eight LA Service Planning Areas (SPAs)** had implemented a youth coordinated entry system and were participating in a 100 Day Challenge to house 100 young people. A December 2016 newsletter published by the LA Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) noted that 257 youth were successfully placed in safe and stable housing during the Challenge period; 206 young people gained permanent housing, and 51 youth were placed in transitional housing, on their way to securing permanent housing.

Our overall finding from the evaluation is that the Youth CES pilot was successful in putting in place a coordinated entry system that includes a functioning prioritization and placement system. This has created a more consistent and collaborative process for allocating available youth housing resources. It has also reduced the burden on youth, who formerly had to navigate a fragmented system, and now have a more streamlined pathway to be considered for the assistance the system has to offer. Yet, our evaluation also found a number of areas where the coordinated entry system is in need of further refinement and improvement, particularly in the area of connecting high-need youth to housing solutions. Our report makes some key recommendations for further system development.

C.   Recommendations

1. ***Continue refining approach to improve ability to respond to the housing needs of highest need youth***. The design of the pilot is intended to match youth assessed into three priority categories (highest, moderate and low) to interventions targeted to each group (long-term and short-term housing, and diversion). Our work found that high-need youth appear to be served less well by this process than moderate need youth. Moderate- need youth are more likely to secure a placement, in part because there are more resources currently targeted to them, but the data also indicate that high-need youth are more frequently lost to the system before gaining assistance, and have lower outcomes. We encourage the Youth CES oversight group to continue to focus on ensuring that highest need youth receive support to quickly access housing resources, including being considered first for most or all program types. We also encourage Youth CES to treat the assessment process as resulting in a single prioritized list, rather than functionally treating them as three distinct lists. We encourage the partners to work together to think through a response for each youth on the list, with a focus on those with the highest priority. Finally, there is a clear need for additional resources for high-need youth, as well as improvement of the process for getting the current longer-term housing resources, especially vouchers, in the hands of the youth who need them.

2. ***Develop a consistent approach for lower-need youth and youth scored for diversion.*** While high-need youth were not connected to resources as well as moderate-need youth in the pilot system, the data also indicate that lower-need youth may not be receiving assistance that could be used to end their housing crisis and that many are continuing to be homeless or have other negative outcomes after assessment. It is important to have a consistent response for lower-need youth so that their situations can be resolved quickly, if possible, and not continue to deteriorate. It is not clear that the program has given focus to date on developing a consistent response for this group. We recommend developing a specific diversion approach or connections to other services for these youth, with a focus on assistance to resolve their housing crisis without ongoing supports.

3. ***Track returns to homelessness closely and look for trends***. At the time of this report, the pilot was unable to track all youth who returned to the coordinated entry system and thus we were only able to analyze those who used emergency shelter again after becoming housed. The rate of return to shelter was quite low during the pilot, under 6%. Returns in the first year are somewhat higher for youth identifying as Hispanic/Latino ethnicity, and is a finding that should be monitored as more returns occur. Moving forward, it will be important to track this measure consistently and across the entire youth homeless system (not just shelter), to understand which youth are returning to homelessness and to determine if there are any trends.

4. ***Consider adopting the Tay Triage Tool (TTT) or a similar brief screener for initial prioritization***. We provided a separate report analyzing differences and similarities between a derived TTT score and the Next Step Tool (NST) used in the pilot. It may be advantageous to move to a tool such as the TTT for initial assessments, since this tool is brief, less personally sensitive, and appears to identify a more limited population than the NST. When used as intended with a 4-point cut-off, it produces a much smaller number of high-need youth than the NST, results that are more aligned with available housing interventions for youth with the highest needs. A similar impact can be achieved, however, by changing the cutoff point used on the NST tool.   HUD's recent guidance on coordinated entry suggests that assessments may be done in

phases. It is possible that the TTT could be used to identify the highest need youth, then a more detailed tool, such as the NST, could be used for distinguishing among more moderate need youth.

In addition to these primary recommendations we make several process improvement recommendations including:

5. Develop additional training for staff involved in the CES process and work on common messaging language.
6. Continue to build and strengthen connections across agencies at line-staff level including considering development of a learning collaborative.
7. Consider allowing youth to stay connected with specific agencies across program types if youth prefer it.
8. Strengthen mainstream connections with other public agencies including defining clear roles and responsibilities in the youth homeless crisis response system.
9. Work with Department of Mental Health and the Housing Authorities of Los Angeles City and County to streamline the housing voucher process.
10. Improve data collection on sexual orientation to assess and meet the needs of LGBTQ youth.
11. Involve youth in the ongoing assessment of the system.

D.   Conclusion

The Youth CES pilot achieved significant results in its first year of operation. All its initial goals were fully achieved or exceeded. A functioning prioritization and placement system was created and has since been expanded. This represents a substantial and important change within a year's time that sets the stage for continued improvement. With the implementation of this pilot, and now its expansion to the rest of the county, the youth system has moved from a set of loosely associated programs, in which youth must navigate multiple organizations to receive help, to a system where all the parts seek to work together toward common goals. The system allocates its resources more fairly and consistently, and reduces the burden on youth to figure out a path to be considered for the system's resources. For the first time, this system will also allow the community to see and measure to a much greater extent, the problem of homeless youth, identify which youth have the most difficult time getting support, and assess the effectiveness of the interventions the system has to offer.

While important progress has been made, there is still work to be done to refine the youth CES and ensure it makes effective connections to housing solutions. Communities around the country are learning that operating a coordinated entry system is an ongoing process, in which continuous learning, refinement, and improvement are central to success – not only with coordinated entry, but with the creation of an effective youth crisis response system. Without functioning coordinated entry, a true system does not exist. But coordinated entry alone is not enough. It must be used to inform decisions throughout the system that allocate resources and focus energy around housing solutions. The Los Angeles Youth CES Pilot has built strong practices that will serve the community well moving forward. It continues to need to focus on developing additional housing solutions and improving housing outcomes for youth, particularly those with the highest unmet needs.

A.   Introduction to Final Evaluation Report

Focus Strategies was commissioned to evaluate both process and outcomes associated with the 12-month pilot of a coordinated entry system for homeless and unstably housed youth ("Youth CES Pilot"). The pilot, which launched on November 9, 2015, was designed to achieve three goals, each of which was successfully accomplished. The pilot's goals and achievements included:

1. All Hollywood Homeless Youth Partnership Agencies (HHYP) use a standardized assessment at initial contact with at least 500 youth experiencing homelessness over a 12-month period.

   Goal achieved: The Youth CES Pilot **assessed 519 unique youth** over a twelve-month period.

2. At least 100 youth are connected and linked with housing and/or other support services.

   Goal achieved: **136 youth** left the coordinated entry system to a variety of types of housing including transitional housing, temporary and permanent housing with friends and family, and rental units with or without subsidies.

3. Identify and support at least two additional LA County communities to implement the next wave of Youth CES.

   Goal achieved: By the end of the pilot period, all **eight LA Service Planning Areas (SPAs)** had implemented a youth coordinated entry system and were participating in the 100 Day Challenge to house 100 young people. A December 2016 newsletter published by the LA Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) noted that 257 youth were successfully placed in safe and stable housing during the Challenge period; 206 young people gained permanent housing, and 51 youth were placed in transitional housing, on their way to securing permanent housing.

This report provides a brief overview of the Youth CES Pilot implementation, a summary of qualitative findings gathered through interviews and focus groups, a description of the youth assessed, and their housing outcomes. We investigated whether prioritization scores relate to housing outcomes and addressed alternative approaches to prioritization. The report ends with a summary of findings and some issues worthy of further discussion for the continuing implementation of Youth CES.

B.   Youth CES Model: Initial Design and Implementation

The Youth CES pilot was designed to meet the needs of a range of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness in LA County. The pilot was also designed to meet youth where they were and provide access to appropriate support, based on a three-phased process of engagement, assessment, and connection to housing and services. The goals and guiding principles for the Youth CES were established by a group of stakeholders, youth, and youth organizations.

As originally designed, the Youth CES pilot included three major components: Community Sign-In, Screening and Assessment, and Connect and Assist. Each of these experienced modifications during the pilot period.

1. Community Sign-In (CSI)

Original design: The Community Sign in (CSI) component was originally designed to provide the pilot with information about the number of youth seeking services, the number of *new* youth requesting services, the number of youth requesting housing support, as well as service usage across agencies. The Community Sign operated as a daily log at each drop-in center, designed to capture standard data on all youth that could be compared with data from shelters and other programs. CSI data was supposed to be entered into HMIS on a daily basis, to allow the pilot to calculate the unduplicated inflow of youth seeking housing support. CSI was also supposed to be the basis for determining when an NST assessment would be done for youth at drop-in centers.

Modifications: After the first quarter, Focus Strategies identified that the Community Sign in was not well utilized or consistently executed, and that programs were each making their own determination about when to perform assessments, leading to broad variations in practice. CSI was dropped after the first quarter and the pilot adopted a standard for when different program types would offer the assessment to young people being served (see item 2. below.) While the elimination of CSI impacted the data available about the universe of youth that seek and receive services, it reduced work for many of the agencies. People who addressed this change in our interviews said it was an improvement.

2. Screening and Assessment

Original design: The screening and assessment process was delivered by case managers within all pilot agencies and was designed to include: 1) a method for gaining consent to release information; 2) determination of eligibility for resources with the Department of Children and Families Services (DCFS); 3) completing the Next Step Tool (NST); and 4) capturing youth choice. The NST was intended to be delivered using a conversational approach by case management staff.

Responses were collected using a paper version of the tool or directly into HMIS. All responses were expected to be entered into HMIS within 24 hours of administering the tool. Scores generated by the NST recommend youth for prioritization into: 1) diversion and support services only; 2) short-term housing with support services; or 3) long-term housing with support services.

Modifications: During the pilot, timing for when assessments were conducted was adjusted and standardized. The original intent was that youth at drop-in centers would be assessed when they indicated interest, while all youth in shelters would be assessed. With the decision to drop the CSI process (described above), the pilot agencies adopted a new expectation for when screenings would occur:

- Shelter Programs - within seven days of intake;
- Drop-In Center Programs - within three visits when the youth is enrolled in case management and has identified housing as a goal;
- Transitional Living Programs - six months prior to their anticipated exit date, even if the youth was assessed with the NST prior to entering the program; re-assessment closer to their exit date allows for access to the broader array of housing resources; and

- Unaccompanied Minors in any program type - six months prior to their 18th birthday, as part of their overall transition planning, even if the youth was assessed with the NST prior to entering the program.

3. Connect & Assist

Original design: Connect and Assist refers to the process for connecting youth that had been assessed and prioritized for the two categories of housing resources under the pilot: shorter-term housing and longer-term housing. Shorter-term resources included Transitional Living Programs (TLP; up to 24 months of housing combined with services), Independent Living Program (ILP; up to 36 months when youth enter the program at age 18)[1], and Housing for Current and Former Foster Youth. Longer-term housing resources included Rapid Rehousing and Supportive Housing.

Information about each young person was captured on the Care Coordination Spreadsheet[2] (manually transferred from data in HMIS) and used to match individuals to program openings. Regular Care Coordination Meetings were facilitated by the CHLA Youth CES Coordinator. The meetings were initially held weekly and decreased in frequency over time as fewer program openings became available. The Care Coordination Meetings, brought together case management staff of the pilot agencies along with the SPA-Level Matcher from the Adult Coordinated Entry system to match youth to available housing resources.

While NST scores provided the primary basis for matching youth to available interventions, during most of the pilot period, staff at Care Coordination Meetings also discussed whether they supported the NST recommendation provided by the tool and brought in additional contextual information, which at times may have changed a recommendation.

For youth connected to a housing resource, case management staff followed-up with the youth to communicate the housing match within 48 hours to determine whether the youth would accept the housing. If so, the case manager scheduled a time to meet to complete the required housing materials, including the Program Intake Assessment. The assigned case manager supported the youth in the application process until their move-in date.

Modifications: As the pilot progressed, concerns were raised about the time it was taking to fill some openings due to difficulty locating youth. A policy was adopted to make multiple referrals (generally three) for each opening. Policies were also adopted to determine when a youth that could not be reached would be considered inactive and removed from the active list. Policies and practices were also modified to determine what type of information could be brought in to modify or supplement NST scores (see Quarter 2 report for more on these changes).

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[1] ILP provides training, services, and benefits to assist current and former foster youth in achieving self-sufficiency prior to, and after leaving, the foster care system. Housing is an integral component of ILP and housing types vary among service providers.

[2] By the end of the Pilot, the Continuum had decided to change HMIS vendors and a new method to produce this list is anticipated. Currently, the Case Conferencing Tool can be pulled from HMIS to view all clients who received assessments (adults, families, and youth). The Case Conferencing Tool can be generated by SPA and System Type (Single Adult, Family, and Youth). The Case Conferencing Tool contains three tabs of data: the Client Detail Tab that contains client-specific information; the Client Potential Match Matrix that pre-selects client housing resources based on how the youth answered questions in the NST; and the Housing Resource List that details date of availability, eligibility information, and housing provider information.

Overall, the pilot's design changed during implementation primarily in introducing greater specificity around how certain practices were implemented, and key modifications were made to reduce burden on agencies, increase the likelihood of achieving effective matches more quickly, and introduce greater standardization into the process. Throughout the rest of this report, our findings and recommendation relate to the policies and practices in effect at the end of the pilot period, unless otherwise noted.

C.   Sources of Information

Quantitative and qualitative data for this report was drawn from the local Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), as well from interviews and focus groups conducted with key system stakeholders, provider leadership and staff, and young people assessed for the pilot. All data gathering and collection efforts were approved by the CHLA Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.

HMIS Data

The LAHSA HMIS team provided Focus Strategies with a de-identified data set from HMIS, which covered a slightly greater than one year timeframe for the pilot, from November 2015 through November 2016. HMIS Data included information captured about youth during Screening and Assessment with the Next Steps Tool (NST), as well as other items from standard HMIS intake. Data elements provided from HMIS included the date of NST assessment, age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, all NST item responses, and total NST score. Additional data elements important to this report included exit destination (where youth were reported to have gone or to be living when they were removed from the CES prioritization list) and date of removal from the CES prioritization list.

The NST is designed to gather information relevant to the needs of youth, determine relative vulnerability and assist in making prioritization decisions for housing resources. The NST produces a score that is intended to indicate whether youth might be most appropriately prioritized for Diversion (generally defined as one-time problem solving assistance and/or connection to mainstream resources; 0-3), Short-Term Housing resources (4-7), or Longer-Term Housing resources (8-17). Over the course of the year-long pilot, 572 NST assessments were completed and recorded in HMIS, representing 519 unique youth. Although most youth had a single NST assessment in HMIS, 50 youth had been assessed more than one time (47 youth had been assessed two times and three youth had been assessed three times).

Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups

At the start of this project in November 2015, for the first quarter report in March 2016, for the second quarter report in June 2016, and at the end of the pilot in December 2016, Focus Strategies and subcontractor Carol Wilkins conducted interviews with several key stakeholders. These interviews asked initially about their hopes, expectations and concerns regarding the pilot, and then, as the project rolled out, their impressions about strengths, challenges, and differences in the implementation from what they had anticipated. Many of the themes covered below were raised both in the initial and follow-up conversations. Stakeholders interviewed in the final phase included leadership of several participating agencies, including My Friend's Place, Covenant House, and CHLA, as well as key players from LAHSA, Blessed Sacrament (which does adult matching), and the LA Departments of Children and Family Services, Mental Health, and the office of County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl (Supervisor for the 3rd District, which includes the Hollywood area). For a full list of interviewees, see Appendix

A. (Also see Appendices B and C for Interview questions used in November 2015 and December 2016, respectively, and Appendix D for questions used in March and June 2016).

In addition to these interviews, which were primarily conducted by phone, Focus Strategies held a focus group with staff of agencies participating in the Youth Coordinated Entry pilot at the end of the pilot year. Ten people participated in the staff focus group including staff from Covenant House (3), The Way Inn (1), LGBT Center (2), My Friend's Place (2), Children's Hospital Los Angeles (1), and Los Angeles Youth Network (1). The positions represented included five case managers, one housing navigator, two managers who receive and process CES referrals, and two clinical social workers. Appendix E provides the questions used in staff focus groups.

Also in December 2016, Focus Strategies held three focus groups with young people. These included a group with youth in short-term housing held at Covenant House, a group with youth in rapid rehousing held at the LGBT Center, and a group of youth still waiting for housing held at My Friend's Place. In total, Focus Strategies spoke with 22 youth at various stages of the process (see Appendix F for a list of groups, and summary information about the young people participating in the groups, and Appendix G for the focus group questions).

D.   Themes Identified From Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups

Participants in interviews and focus groups were asked questions about their expectations, experiences, and suggestions for changes or improvement from their perspective. This section pulls out key themes that we heard consistently, as well as highlighting certain specific perspectives, experiences or areas of difference in what people shared.

Collaboration is Identified as the Greatest Strength

Throughout the pilot, stakeholders said that the strong partnerships formed among the providers has been the greatest benefit. Several stakeholders talked about the way that agencies that previously did not work together are now regularly in contact and working on issues, and occasionally on shared client support. Many people also mentioned that leadership from LAHSA and CHLA has been critical and that they have been champions. One stakeholder said that there is "solidarity in the leadership team to work through this – it's hard."

Although these partnerships were seen as key to the success of the pilot, as it progressed the leadership realized that the connections were being made primarily at the managerial level and not at the line staff level. A mixer for case managers was held in a later stage of the pilot that many people spoke of as being very well-received by staff.

Youth we spoke with did not have a strong sense of the coordination of the system being better or worse than what had come before, though most were aware that it had been changed (see below for Concerns about the Assessment Process).

Primary Challenge: Unmet Need

The pilot was successful in terms of what it set out to do – assess 500 youth and house at least 100. However, many stakeholders reported feeling disheartened by the pilot demonstrating the number of youth that need or would benefit from assistance and the lack of sufficient resources to assist them. Terms that were used by stakeholders to describe the growing list of youth needing housing support included "frustrating and overwhelming", "depressing and feels oppressive," "adds to angst," and "deflating for staff."

However, most stakeholders felt that despite there still being stumbling blocks in the process, coordinated entry was moving things in the right direction, and that the gaps that it revealed are real. Not everyone agreed that coordinated entry was the right direction, however. One stakeholder felt strongly that coordinated entry is not the right approach because it is too complicated and slow, and that the process misleads case managers and youth who think housing is coming. Another person said that the coordinated entry system disrupted relationships that used to work, as well as taking away sense of satisfaction that case managers had before when "being a good case manager got people housed."

<u>Concerns about the Assessment Process</u>

At the start of the project, many people expressed concern about the use of an assessment tool to prioritize homeless youth and match to programs. Concerns expressed included the length of the tool, whether it would be able to adequately capture vulnerability, and whether the distinctions between scores, especially along the cut off margins, would be meaningful.

At the end of the pilot, the use of the tool had become more accepted as a means to prioritize, but many people continued to express reservations about the results of the NST. Concerns were strongest among case managers and others directly administering the tool. Their concerns tended to be whether the tool elicits accurate answers from young people, especially in relationship to mental health and substance abuse, as well as whether the personal nature of some of the questions is re-traumatizing.

One person who works in a low-barrier, drop-in setting said that using the tool with some youth had provided information they would likely not otherwise get. For example, they might learn about mental health needs, which they could then work on with a young person. Using the tool therefore made a contribution even if housing was not immediate.

Other reservations about the assessment process had to do with continuing to administer new assessments when there is already a long wait to get housing – one individual asked, "Is it trauma-informed to assess when there is so little chance of a young person getting assisted?"

Suggestions for improvement included making changes to the tool questions, and/or to the weighting or grouping of the scores. For the most part, it seemed people felt that the highest scores were likely to be accurate, but that those with moderate scores might need more exploration. One person also pointed out that even though in her organization, they made an effort not to refer to young people as or by their scores, she had heard them doing that (e.g. "He is a 15 and…"), which is a source of concern.

The range of knowledge and experience of the assessment process among youth in the focus groups was wide, from youth who seemed entirely unaware of a new process, to youth who could describe the process clearly and even had knowledge of coordinated entry for other populations, comparing the new tool to the VI-SPDAT used in the Adult CES. Youth currently in short-term housing reported the least experience of the assessment process, and it is possible that many of them had been accepted into their program prior to the pilot. Youth not yet housed and youth in rapid rehousing had greater knowledge and understanding of the process.

Most of the youth who remembered having been through the assessment process said they did not find it overly intrusive. They noted it was long and sometimes personal, but many felt that what was asked was necessary to understand a person's situation or for eligibility and that the questions "made sense to ask." A few said they simply did not answer specific questions if they didn't want to. One youth said she did find it somewhat traumatic, that it caused her to have flashbacks, and one said she found some of the questions invasive (giving as an example the questions regarding domestic violence). Another youth said it made her think about what had

happened to her but that it highlighted for her all the things she had done in order to ***not*** become homeless, which she found interesting.

Youth felt more confused about what the relationship between the assessment process and getting a housing offer was. One said they knew it was to help get housing, and they felt hopeful, while another said they remembered being asked a lot of questions but didn't understand what for. One described the process for getting housing as "random" and another said they were told that that process takes "months or years."

Matching/Placement

Stakeholders reported that the matching and placement processes are still evolving. Some expressed significant concern that the expansion of the system to countywide and introduction of a new HMIS system could reduce or take away the ability to bring other information into the matching process or to recommend a youth for another kind of housing other than what their score indicates.

Some felt that there needed to be more effort made to make matching happen sooner to prevent gaps between when a slot became open and when it was filled, in order to find youth. The current practice of making more than one referral to an opening was added to reduce the gap in filling program slots, but was specifically mentioned by one stakeholder as problematic, as she felt it disfavored higher-need youth who would be less likely to be chosen for openings if they had to "compete" for them and it led to disappointment.

We also asked whether programs were taking all of their referrals from the process. It appears most openings are now filled through the process, though on occasion programs are still exercising latitude either when they have a long-standing opening or in cases where they feel a particular need should be met which the process will not address. An example of this was a case where two sisters were in shelter and had vowed to stay together but had very different results on the assessment. When the "higher-need" sister received a program referral, the program took her sister in as well "off the books".

Finally, we heard that matching doesn't always result in a good fit for the youth, and that sometimes the transition from one provider to another is perceived as either challenging or not benefiting the young person. We were told about one case where Covenant House and the LGBT Center "co-case managed" someone through a transition, which turned out to be positive. We also heard from youth that sometimes the shift between agencies is not welcome, and that two specific agencies (LGBT Center and Covenant House) have different approaches/strengths and that some youth who feel comfortable at one agency do not feel comfortable with the other.

Technology and Data

A theme throughout the pilot has been the challenge of data collection and data entry. Respondents working on the pilot said that they received training on HMIS and felt they understood what they need to do, but described the system as difficult, "clunky," and often frustrating. Data entry was also reported as an area of extra work.

The challenge of maintaining an external list of assessed clients and matches has also grown, as more youth have been added and the list's ability to be sorted is limited. As described above, the system is moving to a new HMIS System with greater CES capacity (with the concerns noted previously). Looking into the future, the promise of a new data system that will be more user-friendly is being welcomed.

Training and Messaging

We specifically asked in the staff focus group about whether they felt they had received adequate training. The majority said they had received training on conducting the NST assessment and on data entry, but less about the entire process and system. A person relatively new to their position said that they had not been oriented to the entire process and felt "out of the loop."

We also asked about the messaging about the process that they used with young people. Similarities in messaging included not calling the assessment a housing application, not talking with youth about scores, and not implying or making promises that get hopes up. However, the assessment process was described somewhat differently by different staff. Some said they call the NST a "tool" while others said they call it a "survey." Some said they have youth check in with them regularly (such as weekly) and that they tell them if the youth misses an opportunity they will "go to the bottom of the list." People mentioned that the messaging is difficult, particularly about why some youth get housed before others, and that youth in short-term housing can become resentful when someone who just entered a program gets permanent housing, while they have been waiting for a long time.

As mentioned above, young people reflected that they had heard that they could not be told when they would get housing and that the process was not a guarantee of immediate assistance. Many of them perceived the results as "random" or unpredictable. They wanted to know when they could expect help. They also reported confusion about where a young person had to go or be in order to get help – one person said that people think they have to be in shelter to get assistance even though that is not supposed to be true. Another said that if you stay in your car, you are not considered homeless by the county.

Need for Additional Housing Resources and Streamlining Access to What Exists

A point of nearly universal agreement from all stakeholders is the shortage of critical housing resources for youth. This has been consistent throughout the pilot; everyone who spoke about gaps said that there is a shortage of permanent housing and most also mentioned a need for more crisis housing for youth. Some specifically mentioned need in all categories, including rapid rehousing and lower-barrier transitional housing. Others mentioned not only needing more permanent housing, but needing appropriate services connected to the housing.

New information emerging in these interviews and focus groups highlighted the difficulty of using some of the housing resources that do exist. Vouchers offered by DMH, HACLA and HACoLA were all reported to be extremely difficult to use. One interviewee said "Vouchers – that has been bananas!" Interviewees and focus group participants cited multiple steps, difficult paperwork with changing standards, and it is taking a very long time (up to nine months) to be able to use them. The staff focus group particularly mentioned the challenges with DMH, despite also stating that there is a dedicated navigator who works for DMH who is helpful. They also reported that housing authority staff seem inconsistent in what they will accept and what standard for paperwork they enforce.

Steps have been taken to help case managers understand the process better, including training and materials prepared by Liz Sanford, the adult matcher, but the number and complexity of steps does not yet appear to be streamlined. This was cited as a very big issue, especially since the youth that are matched to these resources are the ones with the highest service needs and housing barriers. Many people said that youth often cannot complete the process and they sometimes disappear before they can use the resource.

Two other challenges were raised in relationship to vouchers. First, many vouchers available through the pilot come with either no ongoing services or limited service support, despite the fact that a wide array of stakeholders reported that high-need youth need ongoing support to be successful in their housing. Vouchers through the Department of Mental Health (DMH) require establishing or evidencing a connection to County mental health services, which can be hard to do, and takes significant time if not already existing. Even for youth who are engaged in mental health services, this connection does not guarantee that the ongoing support services youth will get will be housing-focused, field based (rather than clinic based), or specific to the individual needs of high-need youth. Housing Choice Vouchers, which may be available from public housing authorities, generally do not come with any attached services and therefore youth have to rely on limited follow up services that can be put in place through the case management they have prior to gaining housing. Newly funded Housing Navigation services which are intended to support stabilization as well as housing location may address some of this gap, but these services are not yet clearly defined, and may not be sufficient for the highest need youth.

Second, it is extremely difficult for youth to find landlords willing to accept tenants with vouchers and apartments that are available at the rent that can be covered by a housing voucher. The neighborhoods where such housing can be rented with a voucher are limited, and many youth felt unsafe in those neighborhoods. Stakeholders provided feedback that this is particularly true for queer and trans youth, and for African-American young men who may feel that some neighborhoods are unsafe for them to live in or return to. Some stakeholders also mentioned continuing challenges with barriers to getting into short-term housing/transitional programs, though most who spoke about this acknowledged significant improvement in this area. Programs that previously had multiple steps, such as interviews and program applications, have reportedly reduced their entry barriers, though in the staff focus group, it was stated that high-need youth still do not get entry into short-term programs.

Respondents who spoke about rapid rehousing had positive things to say about it. We were told that it "worked better than we anticipated", though people were still learning about it. As a new model, there is some seeming inconsistency in how it is rolling out and there is a need to figure out how navigators/housing specialists should be focusing their time and energy.

The youth in the rapid rehousing focus group also mentioned that the rapid rehousing model is somewhat unclear and some of them had been given different information upon entering. Two said that when they entered the program they were told they would receive graduated assistance following a regular schedule of rent increases, but that once they were in, they were expected to take over the rent much more quickly.

Youth in the focus groups also spoke generally about the need for more housing. Their comments focused less on the type of programming, though some said there was a need for more vouchers. Most comments focused on the shortage of apartments they could rent, particularly in neighborhoods that they felt comfortable or safe in. One youth said access to housing depended on where you are willing to go and stated "it is better to be homeless on the streets in Hollywood than housed downtown – people prey on the homeless." Some suggested that the City and County needed to do much more to expand the availability of housing, including requiring set-asides of units in all new housing projects being built.

Housing Navigation and Other Services

Housing navigation is a new service that has been added to the array of supports for youth. This support is intended to help young people locate housing, particularly those given rapid rehousing or permanent housing

vouchers. Both staff and young people felt that this was an important addition, though in our meetings with program staff it was noted that the service was still not clearly defined.

Youth said many times that finding housing was hard, though most of those who had housing credited the help of their case manager in finding it. Youth made the point that the case managers try to be helpful but they have a lot of other responsibilities. More than one mentioned that an up-to-date list of landlords that would take young people and that had openings would be helpful. Lists available now are out of date. Staff said this was needed as well. Some youth said that there needs to be advocacy with landlords, including helping landlords understand how to work with trans-homeless youth. One trans youth said she should "not have to be defensive" in her housing.

In the focus groups with youth, we asked whether they were receiving other services/support or help that they wanted or needed. Youth in short-term housing cited the need for employment/vocational support and support for education. Some youth felt the program they were in gave them support for that, while others said that was not the emphasis of their program. Most youth that spoke about this wanted more time to finish educational goals. Nearly all youth in the short-term group also mentioned the need to learn to drive. Youth in rapid rehousing talked about the need for like skills and resources once you move in (e.g. needing to understand about writing checks to the landlord).

Pilot Structure and Coordination

As mentioned above, many stakeholders had compliments for the collaborative spirit of the pilot and the role of the leadership, and several mentioned LAHSA and/or CHLA specifically as champions for the project. Many stakeholders, however, expressed concerns about the day to day coordination functions and the roles and responsibilities of the Coordinator and Peer Navigator within the pilot. Several indicated that they understood that the Coordinator position is a challenge, requiring a wide-ranging skill set, and that there was also turnover in the role part way through the pilot. The general sense was that during the pilot the full potential of the coordinator and peer advocate positions were not fully realized. Partners felt for the CES process to run smoothly that agreement on the important roles and responsibilities of the Coordinator and Peer Navigator was necessary. Further work toward ensuring staff in these roles have or develop a broad range of skill sets would be key to supporting the CES partner agencies.

Additional Gaps

Besides the lack of housing resources and services mentioned above, a few other issues were raised by staff and stakeholders as needed additions to the system. First, several mentioned the need to involve youth more in the planning.

Another issue that was raised was what happens for youth that are aging out of eligibility for the youth-focused coordinated entry system, but haven't been housed yet. Interviewees understood the youth would be added to the adult list, but wondered how they would get case management.

Another concern raised was the need to focus more attention onto housing retention to ensure youth are staying housed after placement and to troubleshoot the cases where youth are not.

Finally, some stakeholders said that there are people missing from the planning process. Agencies such as DMH, DCFA and HACLA have people who participate, but there is concern that they may not be "the right people" to implement needed changes within their agencies. In the interviews with DMH and DCFS, the stakeholders

interviewed did not seem to feel that their agencies were central players in the process. They also expressed fewer concerns about the process and identified fewer challenges than other stakeholders.

<u>Expansion to Countywide</u>

At the end of the pilot, the youth CES system was being rolled out on a county-wide basis. In the staff focus group, we heard that the broader roll out may make it more challenging to keep in touch with youth and support them, as it expands to a group that are more transitory.

We also heard that there needs to be more connection with the other two CES systems (for single adults and for families). While steps have been taken to ensure that young people in the youth system have access to resources in the adult system, steps to integrate with the family system were perceived as needed. Three youth in the focus groups reported being parents themselves, though they were not including their children in their household.

One stakeholder mentioned the need to learn which youth may already be in the adult CES system but not assessed in the youth system. One person said adult providers should be using the NST for transition-age youth but didn't think that was happening.

There are also concerns about whether youth are able to "compete" with adults given that they do not tend to score as high due to lower chronicity. This concern was also reflected by one young person who said she had turned down placement in a transitional program because she is on the adult list too and this would "wipe" her homeless history, losing her chronic status and chances for permanent housing.

Other questions and concerns were raised in relationship to the connection of the Youth CES to other mainstream systems. One question is who is responsible for youth exiting foster care. Those who get extended care are still technically "in care" and receiving stipends but they are also homeless. Another question raised was when and how minors should be assessed. Stakeholders commented that intersections with other systems still need to be worked on, especially DCFS and probation.

In summary, stakeholders had a variety of concerns about the process and desires to see it improved. However, overall people saw the process as generally on track and evolving as anticipated.

E.   Demographic Characteristics and Homeless Histories of Youth Assessed for the CES Pilot

This section of the report presents information about the youth served based on the data received from the HMIS system. Using data from each young person's initial NST assessment, summary information for the 519 youth is presented in Table 1 below. Their average age is 22, ranging from 16 to 26 years old. Self-reported gender is 60% male, 31% female, and 9% transgender, and more than half of the young people hold a least a high school diploma or GED (63%). The majority of youth are African American (54%), with the remainder either Caucasian (33%), or reporting multiple races (10%). One-quarter of the youth report being of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity.[3] Data suggest that youth who participated in the pilot appear more likely to be African American and less likely to be Hispanic/Latino or Caucasian than would be expected based on the Los Angeles population as a whole. [4]

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[3] HMIS categories for race and ethnicity are distinct. A person who is Hispanic/Latino is also expected to identify as belonging to one or more racial categories.
[4] The self-reported race and ethnicity of youth in this project stands in contrast to the racial and ethnic distribution of the Los Angeles population reported by the American Community Survey in 2015 (Caucasian, 56%; African American, 9%; Asian,

Table 1: Summary Information for Youth Assessed for CES Pilot

		Total (N=519)
Race		
	African American	54%
	Caucasian	33%
	Multiple Races	10%
	Other	2%
Hispanic/Latino		25%
Gender		
	Male	60%
	Female	31%
	Transgender	9%
Average Age		22
	Age Range	16 - 26
Education		
	Less than or some High school	38%
	High School diploma or GED	56%
	Some education beyond high school	7%

The data set provided had limited information about the sexual orientation youth reported identifying with. In contrast with race, ethnicity, gender and age, which are required for reporting to HUD, sexual orientation is not a required element. As a result, of the 519 youth assessed, sexual orientation was captured for only 137 youth (26.4%), meaning for there are 382 youth for whom sexual orientation is unknown. Of the youth whose information was captured, 97 identified as straight (70.8% of the known responses) and 40 as LGBQ (29.2%; specifically, 26 gay/lesbian (19.0%), 12 bisexual (8.8%), and 2 questioning (1.5%)). It is not clear if the same proportions would hold if this information was available for the other 382 youth.

LGBQ youth are known to be significantly overrepresented in the population of youth who experience homelessness, nationally estimated to be 40%. Conflict with family and caregivers over sexual orientation is a major cause of youth homelessness, and threats to safety, discrimination, and isolation once homeless pose additional barriers to engaging and being rehoused. For these reasons, it is extremely important to increase the frequency of capturing these data to fully describe the population of youth experiencing homelessness and unstable housing.

Table 2 summarizes information regarding housing status and housing instability of the 519 young people. The data show that 67% of youth most frequently slept outside or in shelters prior to assessment; these youth would

16%; other, 21%; Hispanic/Latino, 48%)
https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF

be considered to be literally homeless under the definition used by HUD. An additional 17% of youth reported couch surfing as their most frequent sleeping situation.

The amount of time since youth reported having last been in a stable housing situation ranged from 0 to 276 months (23 years), with an average of 22 months and a median of 12 months. The number of times youth reported being homeless in the last three years ranged from 0 to 72, with an average of 3.7 and a median of 2.0. Table 2 shows that 63% had been homeless three or fewer times in three years.

Table 2 also provides the reasons youth gave for their lack of stable housing. On this question, youth may choose as many of the listed reasons as they want; some chose none while others selected all. The most frequently selected reason was that "family or friends 'caused' it". The second and third most frequent responses were related to violence in the home, either between other family members or with the youth as an involved party.

Table 2: Housing Status and Stability Indicators

	Total (N=519)[5]	
	N	%
Where Sleep Most Frequently		
Outdoors	161	31
Shelters	184	36
Couch Surfing	90	17
Transitional Housing	28	5
Other	54	10
	N	%
Times Homeless Last Three Years		
0 or 1	188	36
2 or 3	138	27
4 or 5	115	22
6 or more	77	15
	N	%
Reason for Lack of Stable Housing		
Ran Away	140	27
Religion/Cultural Beliefs of Parents	162	31
Family or Friends "Caused" it	309	60
Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation	151	29
Violence Between Family Members	224	43
Abusive Relationship	284	55

[5] Percents are based on the number of valid responses rather than the total number of youth. The number of valid responses for where youth slept most frequently was 517 and for the number of times homeless in the last three years was 518.

In the previous section on demographics, we noted that there was significant missing data regarding the sexual orientation of youth. In the reasons youth provided for their lack of stable housing, close to one-third of youth (N=151; 29%) reported that the reason for their current lack of stable housing was because of conflicts around gender identity or sexual orientation. This underscores the need to capture valid and reliable information about the sexual orientation of youth experiencing homelessness.

F.   Next Steps Tool (NST)

Table 3 summarizes the average and range for NST scores as well as provides the service level recommendation for this group of young people. The average NST score was 7 and ranged from 0 to 16 out of a possible 17. Of the 519 youth, initial NST scores suggest that the service level recommendation for 73 (14%) would be diversion, for 249 (48%) would be shorter term housing, and for 197 (38%) would be longer term housing.

A series of analyses investigated whether NST score and/or service level recommendation were related to demographic characteristics available in HMIS (age, race, ethnicity, or gender), or homeless history characteristics (most frequent sleeping location, number of months since stable housing, or times homeless in the last three years).

Table 3: Summary Information of Unique Youth Assessed with NST

	Total (N=519)
Average NST Score	7
NST Score Range	0 - 16
NST Recommendation	
Diversion	14%
Shorter Term Housing	48%
Longer Term Housing	38%

Regarding the demographic characteristics, analyses showed that only age was associated with NST service level recommendation. There were significant differences in the mean age of youth falling into each service level (F (2, 512) = 8.2, p<.001), with those recommended for long-term housing being older on average (22.4 years) than those recommended for either short-term housing (21.7 years) or diversion (21.7 years).

Analyses investigating the association of homeless history characteristics found that all three characteristics were significantly related to NST score/service level recommendation. First, the most frequent sleeping location was strongly related to NST score (F (4, 512) = 29.4, p<.001), with youth sleeping outside or couch surfing showing significantly higher NST scores than youth who slept primarily in "other", in shelters, or in transitional housing (see Figure 1). While sleeping location affects a youth's score, the magnitude of the differences between the groups is much more than can be accounted for by the weight given in the score for this item alone. It is not clear whether the difference between youth who sleep outside/couch surf and those who are in transitional housing/shelter is related to higher scoring youth being unwilling or unable to stay in shelters, or

shelters not accepting higher scoring youth. Alternatively, it may be that for youth who are sheltered or in transitional housing, sufficient time passes prior to their assessment and their score naturally decreases.

Figure 1: Primary Sleeping Location is Associated with NST Score
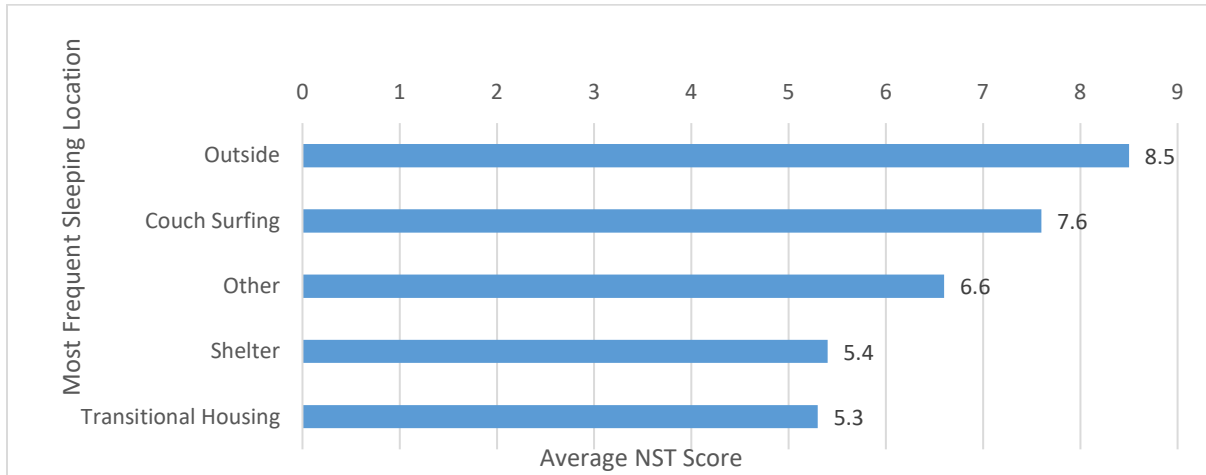
Further, both the number of months youth reported since being in their last stable living situation and the number of times homeless in the last three years were significantly associated with service level recommendation. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the relationship of these variables. Specifically, youth falling into the Long Term housing category had a much longer time since their last stable housing situation (Figure 2: $F_{(2, 509)}$ = 10.5, p<.001), and also had been homeless significantly more times in the previous three years (Figure 3: $F_{(2, 515)}$ = 9.6, p<.001).

Figure 2: Number of Months since Stable Housing is Associated with NST Service Level Recommendation
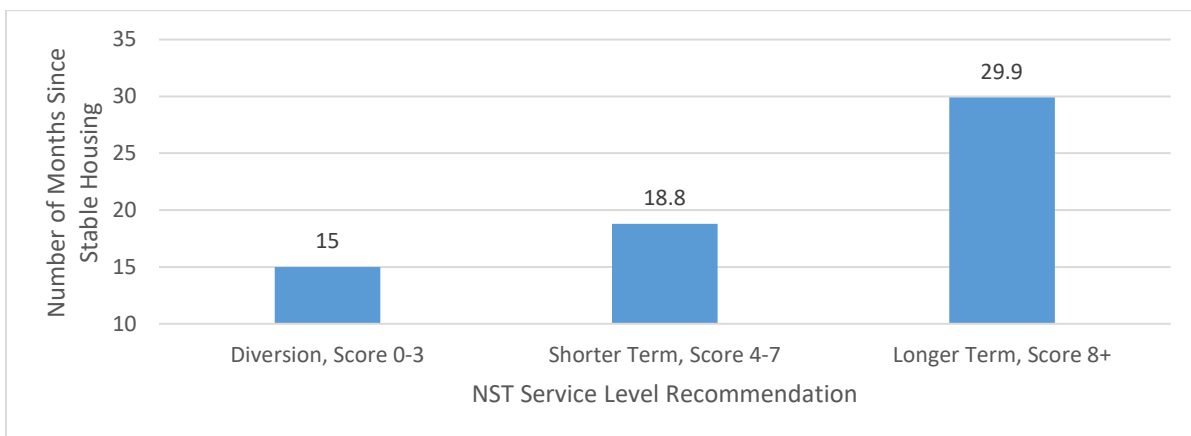
Figure 3: Number of Times Homeless is Associated with NST Service Level Recommendation
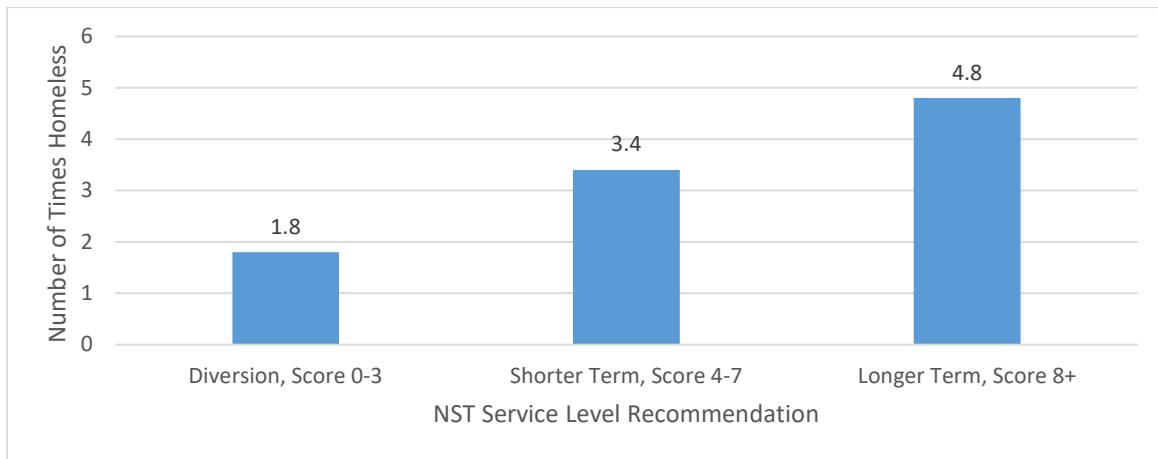
In general, NST scores and service level recommendations are related to homeless history characteristics in ways that we would expect. More times homeless and longer periods of homelessness are associated with higher scores. We note, however, that even the 0-3 group recommended for diversion averages greater than one year of unstable housing and nearly two episodes of homelessness in three years.

Further, for the most part, demographic characteristics are unrelated to scores, indicating that ethnic, racial, gender, and sexual orientation biases do not appear to be occurring. The only exception to this is the association of age and score, whereby older youth receive a higher NST score than younger youth. This association, however, is to be expected in that youth who are older are also more likely to have had the opportunity to experience greater levels of homelessness.

Although sexual orientation is not related to NST score, there is an association between score and whether youth cite conflict around gender identity or sexual orientation as a cause for their unstable housing. Specifically, NST score is significantly higher when youth endorse that as a reason for their unstable housing (average score = 7.6) than when they don't (average score = 6.6; ($F_{(1, 509)}$ = 11.6, p<.001). This again underscores the need to capture valid information about sexual orientation for this population of young adults experiencing homelessness.

Repeated NST Assessments

As previously mentioned, 50 youth had more than one NST assessment. For these 50 youth, the first and last assessments were separated by an average of 94 days, and ranged from 13 to 313 days. During that time, the average NST score of these youth did not change significantly (first NST average = 6.3, most recent NST average 6.6; $t_{(49)}$ =-.75, ns). Even though the average score was not different, Table 4 shows that a substantial minority of youth's service level recommendations changed from initial to most recent assessment. Specifically, over time, the percent of youth whose service level recommendation remained the same was just 54%, while those whose service level indicated increased need was 28% (highlighted red), and those whose service level indicated lesser need was 18% (highlighted green).

Table 4: NST Service Level Recommendation on Initial vs. Most Recent Assessment

		Most Recent NST (N=50)		
		Diversion (N=7)	Shorter Term (N=26)	Longer Term (N=17)
Initial NST (N=50)	Diversion (N=11)	4 (8%)	7 (14%)	0
	Shorter Term (N=22)	2 (4%)	13 (26%)	7 (14%)
	Longer Term (N=17)	1 (2%)	6 (12%)	10 (20%)

Table 5 provides demographic information provided by youth for their initial and most recent assessments. The most noteworthy thing about these data is that there is less missing descriptive information about youth by the time of their most recent NST assessment (see highlighted values associated with gender, race, and education). This may reflect more willingness on the part of youth to provide the information, as well as more opportunity for those working with youth to capture it.

Table 5: Clients with Repeat NST Assessments

		Clients With Repeat Assessments (N=50)			
		First Assessment		Second Assessment	
		N	%	N	%
Gender	Male	30		31	
	Female	13		14	
	Transgender MTF	1		4	
	Missing	6	na	1	na
		N	%	N	%
Latino/Hispanic		12	24	13	26
		N	%	N	%
Race	Black	26		26	
	White	12		17	
	Multiple Race	4		4	
	Other	0		1	
	Missing	8	na	2	na
		N	%	N	%
Education	Less than High School	12		14	
	HS (diploma/GED)	29		33	
	More than HS	3		2	
	Missing	6	na	1	na

G. Connecting Youth to Housing

The most important goal of Youth CES is, of course, to connect youth experiencing homelessness or housing instability to housing resources. A primary outcome of the pilot, therefore, is the extent to which the Youth CES was successful in connecting youth to various housing options. Further, describing the youth for whom those connections appeared most positive is useful as Youth CES becomes integrated across the entire continuum.

Table 6 provides information about where youth went following assessment for and interaction with Youth CES.[6] Specifically, it shows the exit destinations for 168 youth whose CES record had been closed and included an exit destination in HMIS, 20 youth whose CES record was closed and the exit destination was documented as unknown or missing, and 331 youth with no documented exit destination in HMIS. We refer to the latter group as the "Null" group; these young people most likely represent a combination of those who are currently actively waiting to be matched to a housing resource (e.g., are still fully engaged in the CES process), those who have not been in contact for an extended period of time and have not yet been "closed" in the CES program in HMIS (but perhaps should be), and youth who providers have had no recent contact with and are keeping open in CES in the hopes of the youth reconnecting.

Table 6: Exit Destination in HMIS

Destination	Number of Youth (N=519)	Percent of Youth	Percent of Valid Responses
Unsheltered	2	.4	1.2
Emergency Shelter	24	4.6	14.3
Other (foster care, detention, other)	6	1.2	3.6
Transitional Housing	59	11.4	35.1
Family/Friends Temporary	12	2.3	7.1
Family/Friends Permanent	29	5.6	17.3
Rental With Subsidy	23	4.4	13.7
Rental No Subsidy	13	2.5	7.7
Don't know, Refused, No Exit Interview Completed	20	3.9	
Null	331	63.8	

An important ensuing question is whether exit destinations correspond to a youth's NST score recommendation. The next set of analyses investigated the relationship of NST score and service level recommendation with exit destination.[7] Table 7 shows average NST scores in each of the exit destination categories. Results showed that those in both the null group and the group with documented missing destinations had significantly higher NST scores than those in any other exit destination except those who exited to a rental with a subsidy ($F_{(7, 511)} = 6.44$, $p<.001$). Scores of youth who exited to permanent housing with a subsidy were not significantly different from those of any other group of youth. In other words, being high scoring is related to youth being more likely to be either still unhoused and in the CES system or to have been exited with no information. And while exits to a housing situation with a rental subsidy had a slightly higher score, it was not different statistically from those

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[6] Youth CES was set up as a "program" in HMIS to allow for the tracking of youth who had been assessed for the Pilot. One by-product of this data structure is that there are HMIS fields associated program start and end dates, as well as "exit destinations," which ultimately refer to the matching and connection of youth to subsequent services. In this section of the report, we therefore refer to exit destination for ease of presentation. In discussion of findings and their implications, we endeavor to use language that reflects the underlying system process.

[7] For the purposes of analyses, youth who exit to unsheltered locations, emergency shelter, and "other" were combined to represent a non-housed group of youth.

who went to other destinations. Notably, the average score for rentals with subsidy was 6.4, below the 8 score which is assumed to be the starting place for long-term housing placements.

Table 7: Exit Destination is Associated With NST Score

Exit Destination	NST Score	
	Avg	Range
Non-housed	5.3	1-11
Friends/Family temporary	5.0	1-10
Transitional housing	5.8	2-13
Friends/family permanent	5.3	1-14
Rental no subsidy	5.5	1-12
Rental with subsidy	6.4	1-12
Documented Missing	7.7	1-15
Null	7.5	1-16

Figure 4 illustrates the association of NST service level recommendation with exit destination. Again, a significant relationship exists between the two variables (X^2 (14) = 45.2, p<.001), with the higher the NST score the more likely youth are represented in the null group. For young people whose exits are known, those with a score of 8 or above (a service level recommendation for longer term housing) are most likely to have exited to transitional housing, had a non-housed, or a documented missing exit. Those scoring 4 to 7 (indicating a shorter term housing recommendation) are most likely to have exited to transitional housing, and those with a score of 0 to 3 (indicating diversion) are most likely to experience a non-housed exit.

Figure 4: Exit Destination is Related to NST Service Level Recommendation
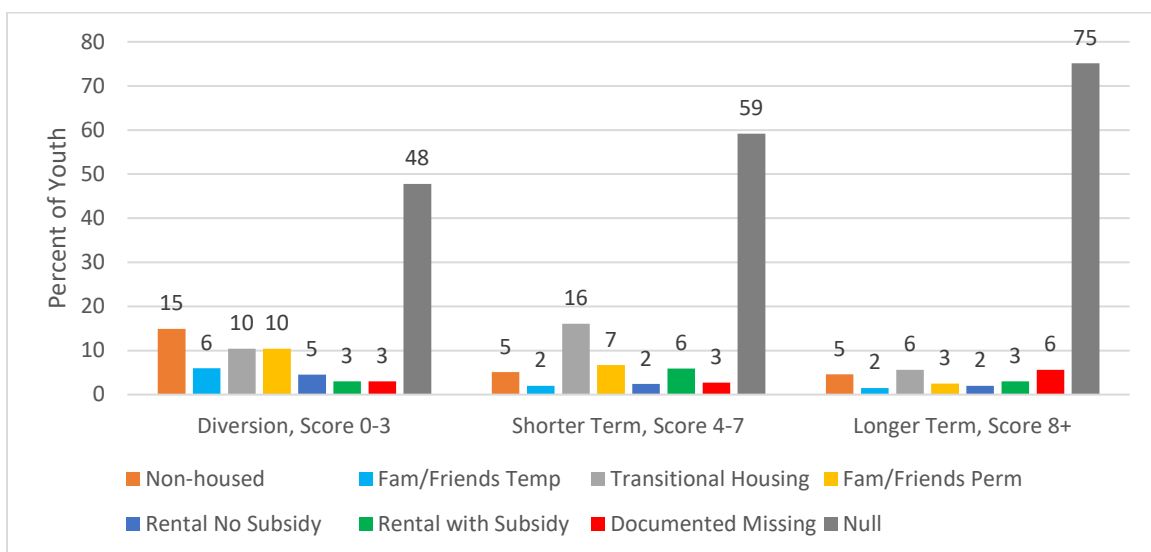
Both sets of analyses indicate that higher scoring youth are less likely to leave Youth CES to a permanent housing destination. Rather, youth scoring in the mid-range of the NST experience the most positive housing outcomes and youth with the lowest scores are most likely to exit to a non-housed destination.

Other Factors Associated With Exit Destination

One factor hypothesized to impact where youth exit to from CES is the length of time between being assessed and being linked to a housing resource. Table 8 shows the average number of days between assessment and CES closure for each of the exit categories (the Null group is investigated in further detail below). Analyses indicated that there were significant differences in the length of time open in CES ($F_{(6, 159)} = 3.0$, $p<.01$), with those exiting to permanent destinations with subsidies having significantly longer lengths of time open than any of the other groups. No other significant differences were found, which is likely a result of the relatively small number of youth (see Table 6) and the large variability in each group.

Table 8: Exit Destination is Related to Length of Time on Youth CES List

Exit Destination	Days to Exit	
	Avg	Range
Non-housed	68.3	43-94
Friends/Family temporary	53.6	17-141
Transitional housing	75.4	3-300
Friends/family permanent	81.2	1-274
Rental no subsidy	66.0	2-188
Rental with subsidy	129.2	5-281
Documented Missing	52.5	25-80

Because the Null group does not have an "exit" date, for comparison purposes the days to "exit" were calculated based on the time between the date of NST assessment and the last date of HMIS data included in this analysis (November 30, 2016). Table 9 shows that although the average length of time this group has had an open CES record is 215 days, there is also a tremendous variability associated with this group. Approximately 40% of youth have been open for less than six months while 40% have been open in CES ten months or longer.

Table 9: Length of Time on Youth CES List for the "Null" Exit Destination Group

Exit Destination	Days on CES List	
	Avg	Range
Null Group	215.0	1-379
	N	%
Less than 1 month	21	6.3
2 to 3 months	47	14.2
4 to 6 months	65	19.6
7 to 9 months	62	18.7
10 to 12 months	105	31.7
More than 1 year	31	9.4

The next set of analyses investigated the association of exit destination with demographic and homeless history characteristics.

Analyses investigating the association of demographic characteristics showed no relationship between exit destination and race (X^2 (35) = 40.7, ns), ethnicity (X^2 (7) = 6.6, ns), gender (X^2 (14) = 20.4, ns), or sexual orientation (X^2 (9) = 7.5, ns). We also investigated whether exit destination was associated with youth having reported that conflict around gender identity or sexual orientation was a cause of their homelessness. Although this answer choice was related to higher NST score, it was not statistically related to exit destination. (X^2 (9) = 8.9, ns)

On the other hand, age of youth exiting to permanent housing with subsidies were significantly older than any of the other groups (see Table 10; F (7,516) = 4.9, p<.001). Youth in the null group were also significantly older than youth who exited to friends/family (temporarily or permanently), transitional housing, or to a rental without subsidy.

Table 10: Exit Destination and Age

Exit Destination	Age	
	Avg	Range
Non-housed	21.5	17-25
Friends/Family temp	21.2	18-24
Transitional housing	20.6	16-24
Friends/family perm	21.4	18-24
Rental no subsidy	21.6	18-24
Rental with subsidy	23.0	20-25
Documented Missing	21.8	19-25
Null	22.2	18-26

The next set of analyses investigated the relationship of homeless history characteristics and exit destination. Descriptive information for months since stable housing and the number of times homeless in the last three years is provided in Table 11. The number of months since stable housing was not statistically significantly related to exit destination (F (7, 504) = 1.7, ns), which is particularly surprising given the strong association between longer time since stable housing and higher NST scores shown in Figure 2 above. The number of times homeless in the last three years does differentiate youth who exit to the various destinations (F (7, 510) = 2.1, p<.05). Specifically, those exiting to non-housed destinations having experienced more previous episodes of homelessness than those exiting to any other destination except for those in the documented missing group.

Table 11: Exit Destination and Homeless History Characteristics

Exit Destination	Months Since Stable Housing		Times Homeless Last 3 Years	
	Avg	Range	Avg	Range
Non-housed	28.3	14-43	6.6	0-72
Friends/Family temporary	43.2	1-276	1.8	0-5
Transitional housing	21.2	1-108	3.2	1-19
Friends/family permanent	12.5	1-60	2.0	0-6
Rental no subsidy	20.2	2-60	3.4	1-10
Rental with subsidy	19.5	0-84	3.1	0-15
Documented Missing	31.4	13-50	5.2	1-32
Null	23.3	20-26	3.8	0-50

The above analyses point to a system that may not be working well for highest need youth. The data indicate that high-need youth wait longer and have more negative outcomes than moderate-need youth. The analysis also indicates, somewhat surprisingly, that the lowest-need youth also experience a higher rate of negative outcomes. We will return to this in our findings.

Youth Who Return to Shelter After Being Housed

The previous section investigated what kind of housing destination youth assessed through CES went to. Another important indicator of the effectiveness of a system is whether youth can stably maintain housing after they get it. Because we cannot identify youth who leave their housing for situations not included in HMIS, returns to the homeless system are often substituted to capture subsequent instability. In this case, a low incidence of returning to the system is determined to be a positive outcome.

At the time the data for this report was made available, the HMIS did not have the ability to capture a youth's return to CES, which is the "system" in the Youth CES Pilot. The proxy of a subsequent entry into an emergency shelter was used instead.[8] Data indicate that only 7 of the 124 youth (5.6%) with exits to temporary or permanent locations subsequently returned to shelter. The exits occurred across the entire timeframe of the pilot (between January and October 2016). Recorded exits for youth who later entered or reentered shelter were transitional housing (4 youth), rental with subsidies (2 youth), and rental without a subsidy (1 youth).

Descriptive information for these seven young people are provided in Table 12. The same data for the group of all youth assessed is also provided; there are some interesting differences to note. Youth who have returned are less likely to be Caucasian and more likely to report being of Hispanic ethnicity. Their NST service level recommendation was predominantly for shorter term housing, and they are less likely to have reported sleeping

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[8] Returning to shelter is a common measure of returning to the system, so is an appropriate data point to examine. We note that it is likely to underrepresent the number of youth who may have lost housing since placement.

outdoors as their most frequent sleeping location. We note, however, that the total number of shelter entries after a CES exit is small and difficult to generalize from.

Table 12: Demographic and Homeless History Characteristics of Youth Returning to Shelter

	Total Returning (N=7)		All Youth (N=519)
	N	%	%
Race			
African American	3	43	54
Caucasian	1	14	33
Multiple Races	2	29	10
Other	1	14	2
	N	%	%
Hispanic/Latino	3	43	25
	N	%	%
Gender			
Male	4	57	60
Female	2	29	31
Transgender			9
Does Not Identify as Either	1	14	
Average Age	22.3		22.0
Age Range	21-24		16-26
Average NST Score	6.0		7
NST Score Range	5-9		0-16
	N	%	%
NST Recommendation			
Diversion			14
Shorter Term Housing	6	86	48
Longer Term Housing	1	14	38
	N	%	%
Where Sleep Most Frequently			
Outdoors			31
Shelters	4	57	36
Couch Surfing	2	29	17
Transitional Housing	1	14	5
Other			10
	N	%	%
Times Homeless Last Three Years			
0 or 1	3	43	36
2 or 3	1	14	27
4 or 5	2	29	22
6 or more	1	14	15

All of the above data analyses indicate some important patterns and findings. First, the NST tool as it is being delivered in this pilot does not seem to have differential results by race, ethnicity, or gender, an important result. Secondly, it does consistently result in youth with longer period of homelessness and housing instability receiving higher scores.

While the tool appears to function as intended, the system of placements and other assistance post scoring appears to favor moderate scoring youth over both low- and high-need youth. This may be accounted for by that fact that the most resources exist for this group. The impact appears to go beyond that, however, as even resources for long-term housing appear to be going to youth with an average score in the moderate range. And youth with the highest scores on average are most likely to be still waiting for assistance or possibly to have been lost to the system (as we don't know whether still open cases are actively waiting or have disappeared but not been closed out.) Likewise, the high rate of negative outcomes for the lowest scoring youth indicates that they may not be receiving any assistance that could help resolve their housing crisis. We will return to these findings and their implications below.

H.   Summary of TAY Triage Tool (TTT) Comparison Report

An additional part of this evaluation requested by CHLA is a comparison of the results of the NST Tool with the potential results of using a different tool, the TAY Triage Tool, to assess and prioritize youth. As described above, many partners have expressed concerns about the NST, including the time it takes to administer, the perceived personal nature of the questions and the accuracy of the responses. The CES leadership is interested in understanding the potential benefits or tradeoffs of using a different method. We have submitted a separate report on this topic and here summarize the key findings.

The NST tool includes 17 questions and takes between 15 and 60 minutes to administer. It produces a maximum score of 17 and recommends using a score of 8 or above to designate highest priority, which is used to prioritize long-term housing support. The TTT includes six questions, has a maximum score of 6 and recommends using a score of 4 or above for prioritization for permanent supportive housing specifically. Because the questions in the TTT are also used (with slightly variant wording) within the NST, the Youth CES Pilot provided an opportunity to conduct exploratory analyses addressing whether the TTT potentially offers screening information that may be just as, or more, useful than the NST.

Our analysis found differences and similarities between a derived TTT score and the Next Step Tool (NST) used in the pilot. The group of youth identified by a derived TTT score of 4 or above are much smaller in number (39 as comparted to 197) but are essentially (although not entirely) a subset of the same youth identified as highest priority by the NST. There is less, but still substantial, overlap of youth who are identified by a derived TTT score of 3 or above and the NST high priority group. Differences among the two groups in terms of which characteristics are more salient in the groups prioritized by each tool are explored in detail in our report.

I.   Summary Findings and Recommendations

As noted at the beginning of this report, the pilot was designed with the following goals:

1. At least 500 youth experiencing homelessness will be assessed using a standardized tool over a 12 month period.
2. At least 100 youth will be connected and linked with housing and/or other support services.
3. Identify and support at least two additional LA County communities to implement the next wave of Youth CES.

All three goals were fully achieved or exceeded and a functioning prioritization and placement system was created, operated, and has since been expanded. This is an enormous change within a year's time and its significance should not be undervalued. Moving from a set of loosely associated programs, in which youth must navigate multiple organizations seeking help, to a system that works together to allocate its resources and take the burden off youth is very important. Not only does it make the process more equitable, it opens the door for greater system improvements that are not possible without a functioning coordinated entry system. It allows the community to see and measure for the first time the extent of the problem and to identify the youth who have the most difficult time getting support.

We have seen from around the country that operating a coordinated entry system is an ongoing process in which continuous learning, refinement, and improvement are central to success – not only with coordinated entry, but with the creation of an effective crisis response system. Without functioning coordinated entry, a true system does not exist. However, coordinated entry alone is not enough. It must be used to inform decisions throughout the system that allocate resources, and focus energy around housing solutions. The Los Angeles Youth coordinated entry system pilot made significant progress and built strong practices that will serve the community well moving forward. It continues to need to focus on developing additional housing solutions and improving outcomes for youth, particularly those with the highest unmet needs. With that in mind, we make the following final recommendations:

Primary Recommendations

1. ***Continue refining approach to improve ability to respond to the housing needs of highest need youth***. The design of the pilot is intended to match youth in three priority categories (highest, moderate, and low) to interventions targeted to each group (long-term and short term housing, and diversion). Our work found that high-need youth appear to be served less well by this process than moderate need youth. Moderate-need youth are more likely to secure a placement in part because there are more resources currently targeted to them, but the data also indicate that high-need youth are more frequently lost to the system before gaining assistance, and have worse housing outcomes.

    A portion of the pilot's energy has been focused on preventing openings from going unfilled. While this is important, we continue to identify that the process disproportionally skips or loses higher-need youth, and the focus on filling program slots still seems to be a primary focus relative to ensuring the highest-need youth receive housing assistance. In our second quarter report we highlighted similar concerns. We stated then "the purpose of coordinated entry is *not* to fill programs slots or beds, which can be easily done without coordinated entry. The purpose of coordinated entry to is to find a housing solution for every

prioritized individual that the system encounters." In its recently issued Notice on coordinated entry, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development states that "the coordinated entry system must, to the maximum extent feasible, ensure that people with more severe services needs and level of vulnerability are prioritized for housing and homeless assistance before those with less severe service needs and lower levels of vulnerability."[9]

The data above about the overrepresentation of high-need youth among the Null and Missing groups and those with higher rates of negative exits, as well as comments from some stakeholders demonstrate that high-need youth continue to have greater difficulty being prioritized for and accessing the resources of the system. These youth also have fewer resources designated to meet their needs. We understand that effort has been made in the Care Coordination Meetings to determine what has happened to those with the highest scores and those longest on the list, which is important. We encourage the Youth CES oversight group to consider prioritization of high-need youth for most or *all* available interventions, as well as advocating for more resources suited for high-need youth. We also encourage Youth CES to treat the assessment process as resulting in a single prioritized list, rather than functionally treating them as three distinct lists. We encourage the partners to work together to think through a housing response for each youth on the list, with a focus on those with the highest priority.

Finally, there is a clear need for additional resources for high-need youth, as well as improvement of the process for getting the current longer-term housing resources, especially vouchers, in the hands of the youth who need them, and delivering the services and supports these youth need to successfully use vouchers to get and keep housing (See recommendation 9 below).

2. ***Develop a consistent approach for lower-need youth and youth scored for diversion.*** While high-need youth were not as well served as moderate need youth in the pilot system, the data also indicate that lower-need youth may not be receiving assistance that could be used to end their housing crisis and that many are continuing to be homeless or have other negative outcomes after assessment. While it is important to focus resources on the highest-need, it is also important to have a consistent response for lower-need youth, so that their situations can be resolved quickly, if possible, and not continue to deteriorate. Nowhere in our review of this program was an approach for serving low-need/diversion-recommended youth relayed to us or discussed. We believe that the pilot's focus on giving out the resources/slots thought of as being specifically within the system (short-term and longer-term housing resources) may have left the approach for lower-need youth not as well articulated, non-standardized and unresourced. We heard that youth-serving agencies do what they can for all youth to meet their needs, but we are not aware of a specific diversion approach or connections to other services for these youth, nor any flexible resources to assist this group of youth. Defining what the standard approach is for these youth is and how that will be supported, including with resources and training, is important. Alternatively, if the lowest-need category is not going to receive any assistance than that should be clearly stated in the prioritization process, perhaps identifying those youth as "expected to self-resolve." We caution, however, that even youth in this category have significant histories of homelessness and could likely benefit from assistance to resolve their housing crisis, even if it does not include ongoing supports.

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[9] Notice for Establishing Additional Requirements for a Continuum of Care Centralized or Coordinated Assessment system, Section I. C. 4. d. Page 5.

3. ***Track returns to homelessness closely and look for trends***. At the time of this report, the pilot was unable to track returns to the coordinated entry system and thus we looked only at returns to shelter. The rate of return to shelter is quite low for the pilot (under 6%), however we recognize that this may be underreported and that it may also increase as more time goes by. Nonetheless, it is encouraging, as some stakeholders were very concerned about potential instability among those assisted to gain housing. We do not see indications of significant instability after assistance.

   Moving forward, it is important to track this consistently and across the entire community – within the Youth CES, as well as in the other CES systems – to ensure the greatest likelihood of capturing those who return. It is also important to identify any trends to see if returns are disproportionality from specific program types or among specific groups of youth. We note that the preliminary return data showed higher rates of return for youth identifying Hispanic ethnicity and suggest watching this moving forward to see if this emerges as a trend.

4. ***Consider adopting the TTT tool or a similar brief screener for initial prioritization***. In section H above, we summarize findings on the differences and similarities between the derived TTT score and the NST tool. These findings are explored in greater detail in the companion report [Comparison of TAY Triage Tool (TTT) and Next Steps Tool (NST)]. Our conclusion is that it may be advantageous to move to a tool such as the TTT for initial assessments, though it may be necessary to have some additional information in making determinations for referrals, for eligibility purposes, and possibly for making distinctions among the moderate-need set of youth, if there are more people than resources available. To our knowledge, the information from the NST is not currently being used to create housing plans with youth or in lieu of other service intakes so it is unclear whether the more significant information gathered serves any purpose other than to make initial referral determinations. The TTT has the advantage of being brief and less personally– sensitive, and possibly more likely to produce more accurate results based on self-report. When used as intended with a 4-point cut off, it produces a much smaller number of high-need youth, more in line with what's currently available for highest need. However, it may not provide enough information to make distinctions about those youth who score in the 3 range, who would likely also need to be prioritized for assistance. HUD's recent guidance on coordinated entry suggests that assessments may be done in phases. It is possible that the TTT could be used to identify the highest need youth and then a more detailed tool, such as the NST, could be used for distinguishing among more moderate need youth. We also caution that with a tool as brief as the TTT, it may become well-known within the youth community that to receive assistance, one should answer affirmatively to many or all questions, which could then skew the results. For this reason, it may make sense to embed the TTT into a broader intake and housing planning tool that also gathers eligibility information and possible tie-breaker information.

   Ideally, all information gathered in the assessment phase would be used by the receiving programs to offer services and tailor housing plans to the youth, making additional intakes or assessments less necessary or building from the initial one.

Additional Recommendations

In addition to the primary recommendations above we make several process improvement recommendations including:

5. **Improve training and messaging:** As mentioned above, we identified that training on the assessment tool and HMIS is consistently provided, but that training on other matters, including how to talk about the entire process and how to work with youth who are not connected to a housing resource, is not currently provided. We recommend developing additional training and working on common messaging language.

6. **Build connections across agencies at line-staff level:** The case management mixer was well-received and helped to introduce staff across agencies to one another. Other than this, there have been few opportunities for direct service staff to meet one another and to work together. Common training of line staff may assist also in them meeting one another, but an ongoing learning collaborative where they can share information and troubleshoot would also potentially be beneficial.

7. **Consider allowing preferential movement within agencies if youth prefer it:** The system is designed to treat all youth the same and to move youth who qualify to the next available slot, independent of which organization has the opening. This is done to be fair and is in keeping with our recommendations regarding ensuring highest need youth get assistance. This should continue to be the primary practice. However, in some cases, the switch from one agency's program (drop-in or shelter) to another agency's program (short or long-term housing) breaks a relationship that youth have with that agency, requiring youth to build new case management relationships. In addition, organizational cultures may be different. This came up particularly between Covenant House and the LGBT center – youth reported that the transition between the two was particularly difficult and not preferred by some youth. Youth choice is important to honor, yet difficult in practice when there are so few openings. We recommend that at a Care Coordination meeting, the group discuss mechanisms to allow for continuation with a preferred agency, and at minimum, to not count against youth if they turn down an offer because they prefer to continue working with the agency of their choice.

8. **Strengthen mainstream connections with clear roles and responsibilities:** Mainstream agencies, such as DFCS and DMH, participated in the pilot. Our stakeholder interviews indicated, however, that they were not represented at the level that was needed to build strong links and to make policy changes within their departments to support the CES. Other mainstream entities, such as foster care and probation, were not directly involved and are seen as critical to the next phase of work. Mainstream agencies should participate at a level high enough to ensure that policy matters can be addressed and should have clearly defined roles and responsibilities in relationship to the functions of not only the coordinated entry system but the overall crisis response system designed to rehouse youth experiencing homelessness.

9. **Work to streamline voucher process**: While mentioned above in the recommendation regarding high-need youth and contemplated in the recommendation regarding the increased and better defined role of mainstream entities, it is particularly important to work right away to streamline the process for youth receiving and using vouchers. All the entities involved in access to vouchers (DMH, HACLA and HACoLA) were mentioned repeatedly as being challenging to navigate, inconsistent, and extremely labor-intensive to access. Such changes are likely necessary to improve access for all populations, not just transition-age youth. LAHSA and its partners should consider an immediate process for streamlining and standardizing requirements. A Lean process or similar approach to consider what steps can be eliminated or revised should be considered.

10. **Improve data collection on sexual orientation and use to assess and meet needs of LGBTQ youth:** As cited above, nearly three-quarters of the data on sexual orientation was missing from the HMIS data set. In the NST responses, nearly 30% of youth identified that gender or sexual orientation was a factor leading to their homelessness. Capturing this information is important to be able to assess whether and how sexual orientation is contributing to homelessness and whether engagement strategies and programs are effectively meeting their needs.

11. **Involve youth in the ongoing assessment and refinement of the system:** Youth who use the coordinated entry system are uniquely qualified to provide information about their experience, satisfaction and concerns. In the January 2017 Notice on coordinated entry, HUD added requirements that Continuums of Care solicit feedback at least annually from projects and persons participating in CES. The county-wide system should work to bring youth into design and planning roles as well as incorporating surveys, focus groups, and/or individual interviews of a representative sample of young people participating in coordinated entry and use that feedback to make necessary changes.

Conclusion

The Youth CES pilot achieved significant results in its first year of operation. All its initial goals were fully achieved or exceeded. A functioning prioritization and placement system was created and has since been expanded. This represents a substantial and important change within a year's time that sets the stage for continued improvement. With the implementation of this pilot, and now its expansion to the rest of the county, the youth system has moved from a set of loosely associated programs, in which youth must navigate multiple organizations to receive help, to a system where all the parts seek to work together toward common goals. The system allocates its resources more fairly and consistently, and reduces the burden on youth to figure out a path to be considered for the system's resources. For the first time, this system will also allow the community to see and measure the full extent of the problem of homeless youth, identify which youth have the most difficult time getting support, and assess the effectiveness of the interventions the system has to offer.

While important progress has been made, there is still work to be done to refine the youth CES and ensure it makes effective connections to housing solutions. Communities around the country are learning that operating a coordinated entry system is an ongoing process, in which continuous learning, refinement, and improvement are central to success – not only with coordinated entry, but with the creation of an effective youth crisis response system. Without functioning coordinated entry, a true system does not exist. But coordinated entry alone is not enough. It must be used to inform decisions throughout the system that allocate resources and focus energy around housing solutions. The Los Angeles Youth CES Pilot has built strong practices that will serve the community well moving forward. It continues to need to focus on developing additional housing solutions and improving housing outcomes for youth, particularly those with the highest unmet needs.

Appendix A: Stakeholder Interviewees in 2015 and 2016

Agency	Name(s) and Title(s)
LA County Supervisor's Office of Shelia Kuehl	Molly Rysman, Homelessness Deputy
LA County Department of Mental Health	Belen Fuller, TAY Division Manager Haydouk Zarkarian, TAY Supervisor Rudy Ramirez, Housing Stabilizer Mary Romero, Supervisor Reina Turner, Division Chief, Housing Policy & Development
LA County Department of Children and Family Services	Naftali Sampson, Housing Manager Greg Breuer, Transition Coordinator
LAHSA	Angela Rosales, Youth Systems Integration Manager
Children's Hospital Los Angeles	Arlene Schneir, Associate Director, Division of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine Jessica Ivey, Youth CES Coordinator (former) Audruin Pittman, Youth CES Coordinator
Blessed Sacrament	Liz Sanford, Adult CES Matcher
Covenant House	Ami Rowland, Associate Executive Director
My Friend's Place	Erin Casey, Director of Programs Erin Krummes, Health and Well-Being Manager
LA LGBT Center	Curtis Shepard, Director Children, Youth & Family Services Kris Nameth, Associate Director, Children, Youth & Family Services, Youth Services
LA Youth Network	Caitlin Crandall, Program Manager, Transitional Living Program
Salvation Army (The Way Inn)	Karen Weiner, Director (former)

Appendix B: Stakeholder Interview Questions at Beginning of Pilot 2015

Questions asked of staff of participating agencies

How will the Youth CES pilot work?

1. Will all homeless youth served by each of the participating agencies / programs be assessed using the Next Step Tool?
2. Who at each organization will do the assessments?
3. How will the assessment results be used to connect youth to the most appropriate housing option(s) and supports?
4. What is the full array of housing options (including permanent, transitional, emergency shelter, and other options) and services that may be made available to youth through the CES?
5. Which services will be available to youth who are still homeless and not prioritized for a short-term or long-term housing option through CES?
6. Which services will be available to youth who are linked to a short-term or long-term housing option through CES?

Questions asked of executive staff of participating agencies

Introductions

1. Please tell me a little bit about your organization and its role in serving homeless youth.
2. What has been your organization's role in planning for the Youth CES?
3. What role will your organization have in implementing the Youth CES?
   - Does your organization have staff members who are dedicated to CES, or will this be just part of the responsibilities of existing staff?
4. What role (if any) does your organization play in the other coordinated entry systems for people experiencing homelessness (Family Solutions System and/or CES for homeless adults)?
5. How do you expect the Youth CES to connect with the Family Solutions System and/or CES for homeless adults, for youth who might be parenting or eligible for other housing resources that are available through those systems?
6. Outside of your organization, who are the biggest champions (supporters) for the youth CES? Whose support will be critical to its success?
7. Is there a CES policy team that will be involved in helping to solve implementation challenges? What do you expect their role(s) to be?

Motivation / groundwork for implementation and change

8. Why did you / your organization get involved in this youth CES pilot?
9. What are your goals or hopes for this youth CES pilot?
10. What do you expect will be the biggest challenges in implementing the youth CES? Have those challenges been taken into account in planning and preparation for implementation?
11. How much flexibility do you think there will be as implementation gets underway? How much flexibility is needed?
12. Is there anything you think hasn't been taken into consideration in planning to launch the Youth CES Pilot?
13. How do you think participation in this youth CES pilot may change the way your organization / programs operate?

Housing and Shelter Options and Supply

14. Please describe the housing and/or shelter resources (e.g. units/ beds) your organization will be filling through the Youth CES pilot

15. Do you believe the Youth CES pilot has lined up the right <u>mix</u> of housing options to meet the needs of homeless youth in Hollywood?
16. Do you think there are gaps in the supply of housing options for youth who will be part of this CES pilot?

<u>Supportive services options</u>
17. Please describe the supportive services your organization will be providing to youth who will be referred through the CES pilot.
18. Do you believe the Youth CES pilot has lined up the right <u>mix</u> of supportive services to meet the needs of homeless youth in Hollywood? Are there gaps in services to meet the needs of these youth?
19. Is there anything else you want to tell me about the Youth CES pilot, or your perspective on what is needed to connect homeless youth to the most appropriate housing and supports?

Questions asked of other stakeholders
<u>Introductions</u>
1. Please tell me a little bit about your role in funding and/or serving homeless youth.
2. What has been your role in <u>planning</u> for the Youth CES?
3. What role (if any) will your organization have in <u>implementing</u> the Youth CES?
4. What role (if any) does your organization play in the other coordinated entry systems for people experiencing homelessness (Family Solutions System and/or CES for homeless adults)?
5. How do you expect the Youth CES to connect with the Family Solutions System and/or CES for homeless adults, for youth who might be parenting or eligible for other housing resources that are available through those systems?
6. Who are the biggest champions (supporters) for the youth CES? Whose support will be critical to its success?

<u>Motivation / groundwork for implementation and change</u>
7. If your organization has a role with this youth CES pilot, why did you / your organization get involved?
8. What are your goals or hopes for this youth CES pilot?
9. How do you think this youth CES pilot may have an impact on the way your organization / programs operate?

<u>Housing and Shelter Options and Supply</u> – *this set of questions is appropriate for housing providers and government agencies that fund or provide housing or other options that could be made available for youth*
10. Please describe the housing and/or shelter resources (e.g. units/ beds) your organization will be filling through the Youth CES pilot
11. Do you believe the Youth CES pilot has lined up the right <u>mix</u> of housing options to meet the needs of homeless youth in Hollywood?
12. Do you think there are gaps in the supply of housing options for youth who will be part of this CES pilot?
13. Do you believe the Youth CES pilot has lined up the right <u>mix</u> of supportive services to meet the needs of homeless youth in Hollywood? Are there gaps in services to meet the needs of these youth?
14. Is there anything else you want to tell me about the Youth CES pilot, or your perspective on what is needed to connect homeless youth to the most appropriate housing and supports?

Appendix C: Stakeholder Interview Questions at End of Pilot 2016

Questions for youth CES participating agencies

How did the Youth CES pilot work?

1. Were all homeless youth served by each of the participating agencies / programs assessed using the Next Step Tool?
2. Who at each organization did the assessments?
3. How were the assessment results used to connect youth to the most appropriate housing option(s) and supports?
4. What was the array of housing options (including permanent, transitional, emergency shelter, and other options) and services that were made available to youth through the CES?
5. Which services were available to youth who were still homeless and not prioritized for a short-term or long-term housing option through CES?
6. Which services were available to youth linked to a short-term or long-term housing option through CES?

CES roles

7. What role did your organization have in implementing the Youth CES?
8. What role (if any) does your organization play in the other coordinated entry systems for people experiencing homelessness (Family Solutions System and/or CES for homeless adults)?
9. How does the Youth CES connect with the Family Solutions System and/or CES for homeless adults, for youth who might be parenting or eligible for other housing resources that are available through those systems?
10. Outside of your organization, who are the biggest champions (supporters) for the youth CES? Whose support is and/or will be critical to its success?

Result of implementation and change

11. What have been some positive impacts of the youth CES pilot?
12. What were the biggest challenges in implementing the youth CES? Have those challenges been overcome?
13. Is there anything you think wasn't taken into consideration in planning the Youth CES Pilot?
14. How did participation in this youth CES pilot change the way your organization / programs operate?

Housing and Shelter Options and Supply

15. Please describe the housing and/or shelter resources (e.g. units/ beds) your organization filled through the Youth CES pilot
16. Do you think there were gaps in the supply of housing options for youth who participated in the CES pilot?

Supportive services options

17. Please describe the supportive services your organization provided to youth referred through the CES pilot.
18. Do you believe the Youth CES pilot had the right mix of supportive services to meet the needs of homeless youth in Hollywood? Were there gaps in services to meet the needs of these youth?
19. Is there anything else you want to tell me about the Youth CES pilot, or your perspective on what is needed to connect homeless youth to the most appropriate housing and supports?

Questions for funders/public agencies/County Board of Supervisors/other housing providers

CES roles

20. What role (if any) did your organization have in implementing the Youth CES?

21. What role (if any) did your organization play in the other coordinated entry systems for people experiencing homelessness (Family Solutions System and/or CES for homeless adults)?
22. How do you expect the Youth CES to connect with the Family Solutions System and/or CES for homeless adults, for youth who might be parenting or eligible for other housing resources that are available through those systems?
23. Who are the biggest champions (supporters) for the youth CES? Whose support is critical to its success?

Result of implementation and change
24. If your organization has a role with this youth CES pilot, why did you / your organization get involved?
25. What have been some positive impacts of the youth CES pilot?
26. Did the youth CES pilot have an impact on the way your organization / programs operates?

Housing and Shelter Options and Supply – *this set of questions is appropriate for housing providers and government agencies that fund or provide housing or other options that could be made available for youth*
27. Please describe the housing and/or shelter resources (e.g. units/ beds) your organization filled through the Youth CES pilot
28. Do you think there were gaps in the supply of housing options for youth who participated in the CES pilot?
29. Do you believe the Youth CES pilot lined up the right mix of supportive services to meet the needs of homeless youth in Hollywood? Were there gaps in services to meet the needs of these youth?
30. Is there anything else you want to tell me about the Youth CES pilot, or your perspective on what is needed to connect homeless youth to the most appropriate housing and supports?

Appendix D: Stakeholder Interview Questions During Pilot (March and June 2016)

This set of questions is intended to elicit information about how the Youth CES implementation over the last 3 months has been, important lessons learned, and factors to consider in future expansion to other regions in LA.

1. How has your organization been involved in Youth CES implementation over the past 3 months?
   - What role(s) has it played?
   - How does this fit with your original expectations?

2. How would you describe the first three months of the Youth CES?
   - Numbers of youth assessed
   - Results for youth who were assessed
   - Allocation of housing resources
   - Communication and problem solving among the partners
   - Usability of tools and guidance
   - CES/NST useful in connecting youth to other resources/services?

3. Do you see any operational changes in your organization since CES was implemented? What about system changes?

4. What is the biggest success related to CES implementation you are aware of?

5. What has been the biggest challenge?

6. In what way do you anticipate the next three months to be different from the first three?

Appendix E: Staff Focus Group Questions

1. Please introduce yourself (name, agency, time with CES, time/experience before CES)

2. What is the goal of CES?

3. Is it working in terms of the goal or goals?

4. (Preface with what we heard from young people about their knowledge/understanding of process.) How do you talk to young people about the process?
   a. when you give the NST
   b. What they are waiting for housing

5. Do you think the process should be described or messaged consistently?

6. Once a young person is matched to a resource that requires housing search or applications, what support is offered?

7. Do you offer any housing support when a young person is unmatched? Explore other options?

8. Did you get the orientation or training you needed when CES started? Do you feel you have gotten or are getting it now?

9. What would make the process work better?

10. What are your thoughts about countywide implementation.

Appendix F: Characteristics of Young People in Focus Groups

Youth who participated in focus groups completed a short, anonymous survey to provide descriptive information. The table below shows the age, gender, race/ethnicity, and current living situation of youth we spoke with. The most noteworthy thing about these data is that youth who participated in the focus groups were more likely to be African American (64%) than those in the sample as a whole (54%), and less likely to be Caucasian (0% vs. 33 % in the sample as a whole).

	Short Term Housing (N=10)	Waiting for Housing Match (N=7)	Rapid Rehousing (N=5)[10]
Average Age	21.4	22.9	23.4
Age Range	18-24	21-24	22-24
	N	N	N
Gender			
Female	6	3	1
Male	4	4	3
Transgender			1
	N	N	N
Race/Ethnicity			
African American	6	5	3
Caucasian			
Latino	1	1	
Asian/Pacific Islander			1
Mixed Race	3	1	1
	N	N	N
Current Living Situation			
Own Apartment	1		4
Living/Staying with Friends/Family		3	
Couch Surfing		1	1
Short Term Housing	6		
Long Term Housing	1		
Shelter	2	1	
Streets/Outside		2	

[10] We note that the group of youth in rapid rehousing was intended to be a group of youth in long-term housing but no youth with permanent subsidies ended up participating.

Appendix G: Youth Focus Group Questions

1. Please briefly introduce yourself – (You don't have to give your name and we are not writing anything down that identifies you)

2. You have been asked to this focus group because you are part of a new process - called Youth Coordinated Entry (Youth CES) -- to help young people experiencing homelessness find and get back into suitable and stable housing. In this new way of doing business, you might remember being asked a lot of questions that were related to what kind of housing would best meet your needs. Do you remember how you first heard about this – the new process? What you were told?

3. Please describe the process by which youth in Hollywood are assisted to get housing as you understand it.

4. When this process started at the agency you are connected to, they asked you a series of questions about your history of housing, your health needs, and other experiences you may have had in the past. Can you describe how you felt about answering those questions? (were they important, too personal; did you feel comfortable; were you able to share your whole story or did you hold important details back?)

5. Depending on group composition:

    a. Parenting youth: any experience with the Family CES? If yes, what are the differences? Was there coordination? Suggestions about the best place for parenting youth to access support to meet needs.

    b. Adult aged youth: any experience with the Adult CES? If yes, what are the differences? Suggestions about the best place for adult aged youth to access support to meet needs.

    c. Aging out of Foster Care: specific needs unique to those coming from the Foster Care system?

6. (For those not yet in stable housing) Since you were first assessed, what has the process been like for you? Why do you think you don't have a place yet?

    a. What about the services and supports you are getting – what do you like and what don't you like? Support with getting documents ready? Support in finding a place?

7. (For those in stable housing) How was the process to get to where you are living? How long did it take? Did you get help preparing documents you needed, interviewing or other support to get into housing?

    a. What do you like about where you live now? What don't you like?

    b. What about the services and support from this program - what do you like and what don't you like? Support with getting documents ready? Support in finding a place? Supports since you moved in?

8. Where do you think will be and what will you be doing two years from now?

9. Do you have any other suggestions for what could make the process of connecting youth to housing opportunities better for you or for other young people?