Homeless Youth in Hollywood HIV and HIV Risk: Implications for Prevention

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Acknowledgements

No Way Home: *Understanding the Needs and Experiences of Homeless Youth in Hollywood*
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• Leslie Clark, PhD, MPH

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Pathways to Homelessness
Overview of Needs Assessment

- Project of the Hollywood Homeless Youth Partnership (HHYP)
- Survey with homeless youth
- Focus groups with homeless youth
- Qualitative interviews with homeless youth
Goals of Needs Assessment

• Characterize homeless youth in Hollywood;
• Assess the adequacy of existing services and use data to;
  – Make agency changes in programming;
  – implement network improvements;
  – Develop recommendations for public agencies and policy makers
Creating the Survey Instrument

- Convened data committee
- Used a participatory process
- Selected questions from existing surveys
- Selected standardized measures
Ensuring the Value of Questions

- Vetted the survey among agencies
- Distributed the survey to 22 stakeholders
- Secured feedback from elected officials
- Received feedback from Departments of Probation, Mental Health, and Children and Family Services, and County Office of Education
- Received feedback from other researchers in the field
Survey Methodology

- 2/07 - 7/07, CHLA recruited homeless youth for an hour-long computer assisted survey.
- 3/08 – 6/08 conducted 19 focus groups with 137 youth.
- 6/08 – 10/08 conducted 53 qualitative interviews.
- Eligibility: homeless or at risk of being homeless (precariously housed, couch-surfing, etc.) and ages 12 through 25.
Implementing the Survey

- Recruited youth from “fixed” sites (shelters, drop-in centers, TLPs) and “natural” sites (corners, parks, restaurants)
- Screened 642 youth; 532 eligible youth
- 413 completed surveys; 78% response rate
- Final sample = 389 youth
Supplemental Data

Additional needs assessment conducted in Spring 2009

• 110 homeless youth ages 18 – 24
  – homeless in the past 6 months
  – report sexual activity in the last 90 days
  – Recruited from agencies only (no street recruitment)
  – Q focused on substance use, sexual risk, HIV testing behaviors, ethnic and LGBT identity, future planning

• Surveys and focus group with providers
Race and Ethnic Breakdown

- Black/African American: 42%
- Latino/Hispanic: 24%
- White/Caucasian: 16%
- Multi-racial: 6%
- Other: 6%
- Asian/Pacific Islander: 3%
- American Indian/Native: 3%
- Latino/Hispanic: 24%
Prior to First Episode of Homelessness

Los Angeles County 56%

Other US State 24%

Outside of US 2%

California (Not Specified or N. CA) 13%

Southern CA, Excluding LA County 5%
Characteristics of Homeless Youth

• 14.4 Years - Average age first left home
• 2.8 Years – Average total amount of time homeless
• 40% of youth reported 6 or more episodes of homelessness
Reasons for Leaving Home

- Family Reasons – 78%
- Personal Reasons – 74%
- Economic Reasons – 39%
- Safety Reasons – 27%
LGBTQ Youth

- 23% gay or lesbian
- 13% Bisexual
- 4% Not Sure/Undecided
- 5% transgender
- 3% unsure/questioning or use other terms for gender
Housing Status/Homelessness Hx

- 61% of youth had stayed in a shelter, group home, or transitional living program at least once in the last 30 days
- 58% had slept on the street at least one night in the past 30 days
- 25% spent previous night in a place not meant for human habitation
Family Breakdown

• 45% had witnessed physical abuse between their parents or caregivers
• 56% reported that their parents drank heavily or had problems with alcohol
• 41% reported that their parents used illegal drugs
• 69% were victims of any type of child abuse (verbal, physical, or sexual) and/or neglect
CPS Involvement

- 48% reported involvement with Child Protective Services (CPS)
- 40% of the total sample reported being removed from their home by CPS
- Mean age when removed from home = 9.32
- Youth had been in multiple placements
- 77% of those who were removed from home by CPS went AWOL from their group, foster, or relatives home (n=157)
70% reported involvement in the criminal justice system
- 47% had been on probation at some point in their lives
- 44% had a history of incarceration as a juvenile and/or an adult
- 16% had a history of incarceration as a juvenile (excluding juvenile detention)
- 39% had a history of incarceration as an adult
- 14% had outstanding warrants.
Mental Health

- 49% met criteria for clinical depression
- 31% of youth reported self-injurious behavior (ever)
- 18% met criteria for PTSD
Substance Use

- 15% report hard drug use (cocaine, heroin, and/or meth) in the past 30 days
- 12% reported injection drug use (ever)
Sexual Risk

• 16% reported involvement in survival sex in last 3 months
• 13% reported being forced into prostitution by parent or other adult
• 39% reported consistent condom use
• 55% reported condom use at last sex
• 22% reported never using condoms
## Unprotected Sex Last 90 Days

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total % (n=110)</th>
<th>MSM % (n=28)</th>
<th>Non-MSM % (n=82)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral Sex</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaginal Sex *</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receptive Anal Sex*</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insertive Anal Sex*</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaginal / Anal Sex</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Youth Most At Risk of Poor Outcomes
Older Youth

• More likely to have slept on the street in last 30 days
• More likely to have been robbed, physically assaulted, and threatened with a weapon
• More likely to have experienced partner violence
African American Youth

• More likely to have been in juvenile detention, youth camp
• More likely to have been incarcerated before becoming homeless
• More likely to have ever been a gang member
GLBT Youth

• More likely to have been physically and sexually abused
• More likely to have used hard drugs in last 12 months
• More likely to have engaged in survival sex
• More likely to have been victimized while homeless
Slept on Street in Last 30 Days

- Had a greater number of episodes of homelessness (9 episodes vs. 4 episodes)
- More likely to have mental health issues
- More likely to have significant substance abuse issues
- More likely to engage in survival sex
- More likely to have criminal justice involvement
CPS History

More likely to:

• Become homeless or left home at a younger age
• Report more episodes of homelessness
• Have slept on the street in the past 30 days
• Have mental health issues
• Have engaged in survival sex
• Report educational problems
• Be engaged in the street economy
• Have criminal justice involvement
History of Incarceration

More likely to:

- Have more homeless episodes
- Have spent a night on the street
- Have mental health and substance abuse issues
- Have engaged in survival sex
- Report past school problems
- Be engaged in the street economy
- Be victimized
- Have been threatened with a weapon and to carry a weapon
Findings Regarding HIV Testing and Risk
HIV Testing

- Ever Tested for HIV = 39%
- Tested for HIV in last year = 32%
- No differences by race/ethnicity for “ever testing”
- No differences by sexual orientation or gender for testing (either variable)
- African American youth were more likely to have been tested for HIV in the last year than non-AA youth (35% vs. 30%)
HIV Sexual Risk Behavior- MSM

61 MSM in the total sample

• 55% reported ever exchanging sex for money
• 35% reported consistent condom use
• African American MSM youth reported significantly lower number of lifetime male sexual partners than non-AA MSM youth (15 vs. 31.4)
• AA MSM reported greater use of sexual health services than non AA MSM
123 Females in the total sample
- 15% reported ever engaging in exchanging sex for money/goods
- 37% reported consistent condom use (ever)
- AA females reported greater use of total services than non-AA females.
HIV Sexual Risk – Heterosexual Males

152 in the sample

- 10% reported exchanging sex for goods/money
- 43% reported consistent condom use (ever)
- AA heterosexual males more likely to report consistent condom use than non-AA males
- AA reported using more types of sexual health and total services over the past year.
5.1% of the sample reported being HIV positive (20/356)

- 15% were White
- 45% were AA
- 40% were Latino
- 25% were female
- 50% were male
- 60% of positive males identified as heterosexual
- 25% were transgender MTF
### HIV Testing and HIV Infection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total % (n=110)</th>
<th>MSM % (n=28)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIV Test Ever</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV Test Within Last 90 Days</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=101)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV Positive (n=99)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Differences between + and - youth

Youth reporting HIV infection were

• More likely to report exchange of sex ever

• Less likely to be depressed
Differences between + and - youth

No statistically significant differences by
- % reporting hard drug use in last 12 months
- % involved with juvenile justice
- % removed from home by DCFS

Significant differences by
- History of sex exchange ever
Provider Perceptions

Surveys with providers Feb/March 2009
Focus group with providers in May 2009
(17 participants/ 8 agencies)
• The threat (HIV) has dropped off the radar
• There’s a lot of mixing of drugs and sex
• Youth have a don’t ask/don’t tell policy
• Don’t ask older partners to use condoms
• False perception that youth are informed
• Some youth engaging in survival sex avoid testing because of legal consequences
• Diminished expertise at RHY agencies since change to BRG focus
### 2009 Provider Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
<th>Not very well</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How prepared are line staff about HIV risk and RR</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How prepared are professional staff about HIV risk /RR</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How prepared are line staff to provide SA prevention education</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How prepared are prof. staff to provide SA prev./education</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Limitations

• Not generalizable to homeless youth in other communities
• Likely under-reporting of some risk behaviors
• Survey fatigue
• Reliance on self-report
Relevance for HIV Prevention in LAC

- Population of vulnerable youth in Hollywood.
- Need to increase utilization of HIV testing.
- Need to understand the hetero men that are testing positive.
- LGBT youth, youth that have slept on the street, and youth involved in justice or dependency system appear most at risk.
- Providers working with this population need more education and support.
Service Environment

• Street Smart (group HIV prevention intervention)
• Project Legacy (group HIV/SA prevention intervention)
• Mobile Testing and Clinic-based testing
• Condoms
• Programs that try to move youth from the street to more stable housing
Accomplishments/In Process

• CHLA began providing HIV testing at My Friend’s Place
• CHLA provided training for HHYP agency staff on HIV, Substance Use, and Transgender Issues
• CHLA is developing an elearning module on HIV testing
Questions

• aschneir@chla.usc.edu or mdesai@chla.usc.edu

• To download the report, No Way Home, go to www.hhyp.org

• For access to elearning, go to www.hhyp.org