

The Racial Disparities Between Homeless Youth

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BACKGROUND

- According to Greater Cincinnati Homeless Coalition, it was reported in 2015 that of people experiencing homelessness, about 66% were African American/Black (Fact Sheet, 2016).
- Homelessness is not a stand-alone issue. African Americans/Blacks have faced systemic, structural, and institutional racism since slavery

IMPORTANCE TO SOCIAL WORK

- Understanding what factors play a role in African American/Black homelessness will lead to culturally competent practice
- Understanding why homelessness disproportionately affects African American/Black youth can have an influence on macro practice, and decrease the gap in rates of homelessness

PURPOSE

- The purpose of this research study is to identify factors that play a role in African American/Black youth homelessness
- The purpose of this study is to evaluate the rate at which African American/Black youth experience homelessness compared to their white peers.

PARTICIPANTS

- Age: 10-17
- Criteria: Youth who came and completed the intake process at Mecum House (Mecum House clients)
- Dates: 3/15/2020 through 10/15/2020 and 1/18/2021 through 3/18/2021

METHODS

- Type of Study: Exploratory, qualitative and quantitative
- Demographic information is collected for all youth served by Mecum House through the intake process
- Interviews with youth will be conducted
- Exit surveys are given to youth

DATA ANALYSIS

- After collecting all of the data, graphs were created to show the data
- Software used includes Microsoft Excel and Clarity (a system used by Lighthouse Youth and Family Services – the parents of Mecum House)
- Results of the interviews were qualitatively analyzed
 - Looking for patterns and similarities between interviews with youth based on race

RESULTS

- Between 3/15/2020 and 10/15/2020:
 - 71% of clients were Black or African American
 - 67% of clients were previously staying or living with a family member
- Between 1/18/2021 and 3/18/2021:
 - 36% of clients were in custody of JFS
 - All clients not enrolled in school were Black or African American
 - 62% of Black or African American clients were brought in by police
- Factors influencing homelessness
 - Family violence
 - Police involvement
 - Access to education



DISCUSSION

- Mecum House serves Black and African American youth at a disproportionate rate
- Black and African American youth are more likely to have police involvement
- Black and African American youth are more likely to runaway or be removed for safety reasons
- The most common reason there is police involvement is a domestic violence issue
- It is more likely for Black and African American youth to return to homelessness

CONCLUSION

- Systemic racism impacts youth homeless in many areas including, but not limited to,
 - Policing
 - Generational poverty
 - Schooling
 - Housing
- Interventions need to target the system, not just the individual
- Further research about interventions for Black and African American homeless youth needs to be conducted

LIMITATIONS

- The data collected is coming strictly from Mecum House in Cincinnati, Ohio
- Since some data is going to come from interviews, it is possible that subjects will not be completely honest, so the data may be biased

REFERENCES

Fact Sheet. (2016). Retrieved from Greater Cincinnati Homeless Coalition: <https://cinhomeless.org/about/education/fact-sheet/#>

