

Targeted Assertive Outreach: An innovative outreach method to support efforts to end youth homelessness

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Ending youth homelessness in Austin

- In 2017, Austin was awarded funding as part of the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project (YHDP) to create an innovative community plan to end Youth Homelessness.
- As a community, Austin seeks to:
 - Address systemic causes of homelessness
 - Create innovative housing programs to address youth homelessness
 - provide wraparound support services to prevent homelessness
 - Make youth homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring

YHDP in Austin: Connecting Youth

- Youth experiencing homelessness who seek to access services complete an assessment and are entered in the Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS).
- Youth complete a Coordinated Assessment to determine what housing intervention best matches their needs based on their vulnerability.
- Youth waiting for housing services have an active record in HMIS and are placed on the By-Name List, which prioritizes youth for housing services based on vulnerability.

Assessing the scope of youth homelessness in Austin

- Need a clear number to inform broader community engagement efforts, to inform fundraising goals, and to better understand our progress toward the federal benchmarks
- Homelessness Management System records remain open for the youth, unless someone informs our local CoC (ECHO) that a youth is no longer in need of services (or until true outreach efforts begin when a youth is selected for housing)
- The number of youth who are in need of services is likely overinflated, based on the number enrolled in HMIS (some may have relocated, self-resolved, or entered an institutional setting)

What is Targeted Assertive Outreach?

- An effort to determine the housing status of every youth currently in our local HMIS
 - Intentionally reaching out to youth identified as experiencing homelessness to proactively provide services or inactivate the records of youth no longer in need of services
 - We hope to divert youth from homelessness (or resolve their homelessness episode) before they are selected for a more intensive housing intervention
- Involves systematic outreach efforts to every youth, including those who are not yet selected to receive housing

Targeted Assertive Outreach: Contacting Youth

- 1 email per listed email address
- 3 phone calls per listed phone number (including any backup contacts listed)
- Letter mailed to any listed mailing addresses
- Physical outreach to any listed day locations or mailing addresses
- Outreach to any service providers listed as backup contacts, mailing addresses, or day locations

Youth Outreach

- Youth who staff were unable to contact were put on a “Be On the Lookout” list (BOLO), where they remained for 30 days. After 30 days, the youth’s record is inactivated.
- For youth who were successfully contacted, their housing status was determined and their record was inactivated or they were referred to services.

Summer 2019: Who was contacted?

- Staff attempted to contact 234 youth with active records in the homelessness management system
 - 63 youth (27%) reported that they had self-resolved their homelessness (housed locally or moved out of Austin to housing, staying with friends or family for more than 7 days)
 - 98 youth (42%) were put on the community's "Be On the Look-Out" (BOLO) list
 - 87 youth (37%) were referred to Diversion services
 - Some of these youth also self-resolved, but still needed support to maintain their housing
 - 9 youth (4%) were incarcerated
 - 11 (5%) youth refused services or were enrolled in other services

Who was included in the analysis?

- Contact attempts were made to a total of 234 youth as part of Targeted Assertive Outreach
 - 12 youth were missing demographic data
 - 11 clients moved out of Austin, but it was not clear if they had self-resolved.
- **Total # of youth included in analysis: 211 youth**

Youth Characteristics

- Mean age at first outreach attempt: 22 (range: 18-25).
- Mean # of entities contacted per person: 2.24 (range: 1-8)
- **23% (48)** reported that they had self-resolved.

Table 1: Gender & race of youth included in outreach

Gender	Count	%
Male	112	53
Female	99	47
Race	Count	%
White, Non-Hispanic	50	24
White, Hispanic	62	29
Black	93	44
Other	6	3

What characteristics are associated with self-resolution?

- *Does the likelihood of (a) self-resolution vary as a function of youth's **personal characteristics, vulnerability, or services received**?*
- Personal characteristics:
 - Gender
 - Race
 - Age
- Vulnerability: Transition-Age Youth Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (TAY VI-SPDAT)
- Service Utilization
 - Support services (e.g., Street Outreach), Housing Services (Transitional Housing, Shelter Services, Permanent Housing)

TAY-VI-SPDAT

A. History of Housing and Homelessness

- Where do you sleep most frequently?
- Episodes of homelessness
- Consecutive years of homelessness

B. Risks

- Emergency service utilization
- Risk of Harm
- Legal Issues
- Risk of exploitation

C. Socialization and Daily Functioning

- Money management
- Meaningful daily activity
- Self-care
- Social relationships
- Abuse/Trauma

D. Wellness

- Physical health
- Substance use
- Mental health
- Medication

TAY-VI-SPDAT – Measuring Vulnerability

Recommendations based on vulnerability score (out of 17)

- 0-3: no moderate or high intensity services be provided
- 4-7: assessment for time-limited supports with moderate intensity
- 8+: assessment for long-term housing with high service intensity

Youth included in Targeted Assertive Outreach:

- Mean SPDAT score: 8.4
- Range: 3-16 ($SD=2.83$)

What variables were included in the analysis?

- Outcome = Self-Resolved Homelessness
 - Gender
 - **Race (categorical)**
 - Age at first outreach contact
 - **SPDAT: Housing score**
 - SPDAT: Risk score
 - SPDAT: Socialization score
 - SPDAT: Wellness
 - Service Utilization (dichotomous)

What variables were significantly associated with self-resolution?

- **Race**

Black youth reported **56% lower odds** of self-resolution compared to non-Hispanic White youth.

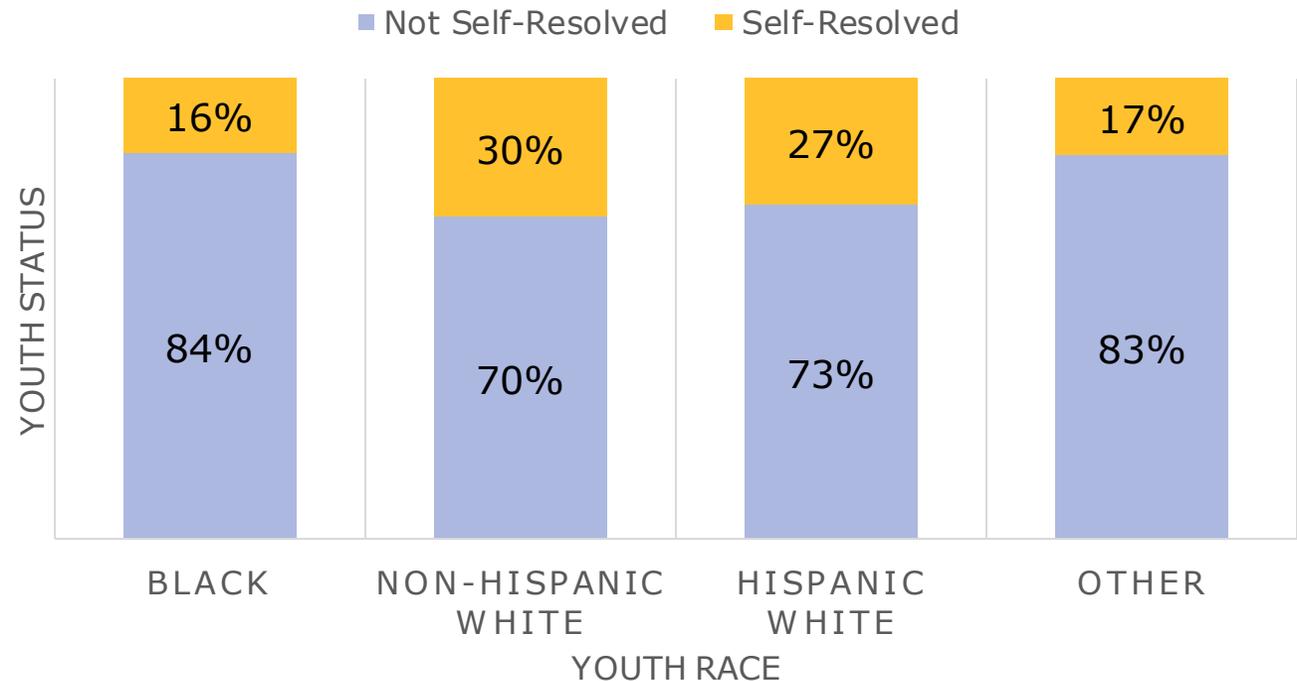
- **SPDAT Housing Score**

For every 1 point increase in SPDAT: Housing score the odds of self-resolution were reduced by **53%**

Race and Ethnicity

- Youth of color had lower odds of self-resolution compared to their non-Hispanic White peers.
- This is especially pronounced for Black youth, who had the lowest odds of self-resolution of homelessness

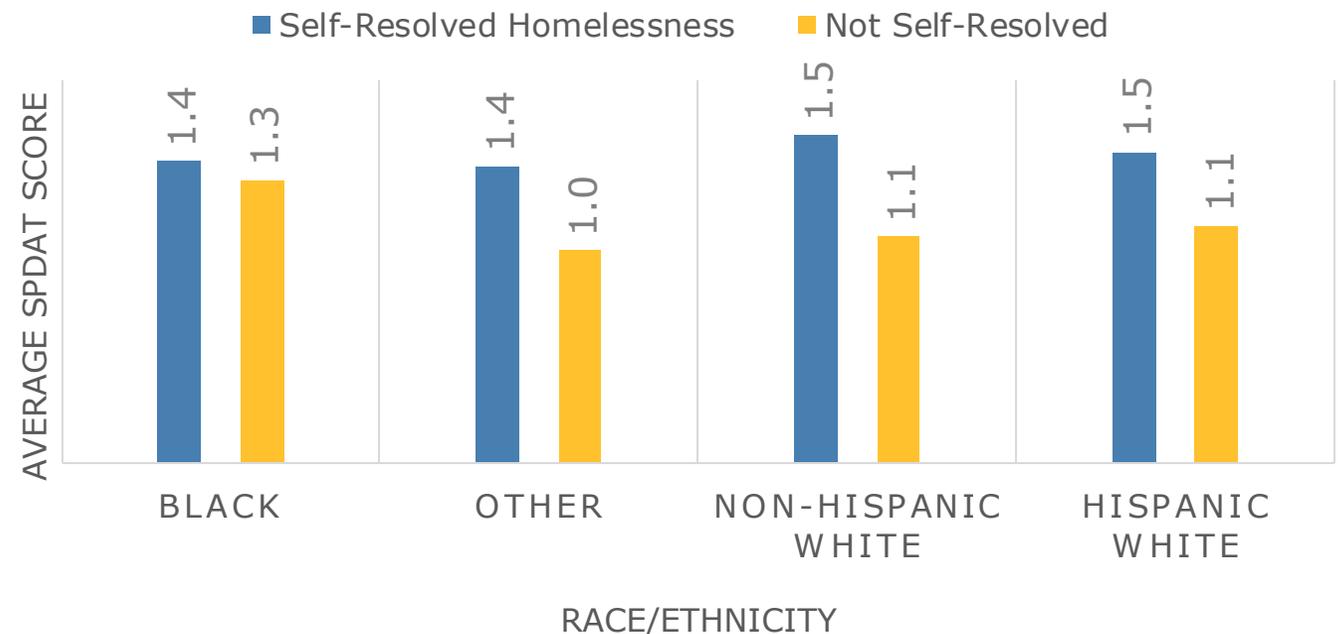
Self-resolution By Race And Ethnicity



History of Housing and Homelessness

- SPDAT Scores for History of Housing and Homelessness did not vary as a function of race, but were significantly different for youth who self-resolved compared to youth who did not self-resolve

Average history of housing and homelessness score by race/ethnicity and self-resolution



SPDAT: History of Housing and Homelessness

History of Housing and Homelessness Score is made up of three items:

- 1. Where do you sleep most frequently (0: Shelter, Transitional Housing; 1: Couch Surfing, Outdoors, Other)**
2. How long has it been since you lived in permanent stable housing?
3. In the last three years, how many times have you been homeless?

Housing: where do you sleep most frequently?

Housing as a categorical variable: Youth who reported that they most frequently slept at a Shelter or transitional living housing had a significantly higher odds of self-resolution compared to youth who reported sleeping outdoors, couch surfing, or other (controlling for race).

Table 2: Where youth slept most frequently by self-resolution status

Where do you sleep most frequently?	Self-Resolved	Not Self-Resolved
Outdoors (n=118)	21%	79%
Shelter/TLP (n=34)	42%	58%
Couch Surfing (n=30)	10%	90%
Other (n=32)	22%	78%

Summary

- Targeted Assertive Outreach helped identify how many youth are still experiencing homelessness in Austin and will likely need services as we work to end youth homelessness
 - Knowing who is likely to self-resolve and who is not can help us target services more effectively
- Black youth were less likely to report self-resolution of their homelessness
 - 16% of Black youth reported that they had self-resolved, compared to 30% of non-Hispanic White youth

Summary, continued

- History of Homelessness and Housing emerged as significantly associated with self-resolution.
 - Youth who reported that they most often stayed at shelters were most likely to report self-resolution (40%)
 - Shelters may provide the needed supports for youth to reconnect with family and/or get back on their feet and self-resolve.

Implications for other communities

- Targeted Assertive Outreach in your community
 - Opportunity for Board members, volunteers, and staff members to contribute to efforts to identify youth in need of services.
- Improved understanding of the need in the community
 - Coupled with a cost-analysis, Targeted Assertive Outreach can determine a funding and staffing needs to address youth homelessness gaps.
- Using Targeted Assertive Outreach to keep in touch with youth who are waiting for housing can help get them connected to services faster when housing is available.

Questions?

Thank you!

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