

Preventing Young Adult Homelessness among Students at Risk

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The City of New York
Mayor Eric Adams

NYC[®]
Center for Innovation
through Data Intelligence

ABOUT

The Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence (CIDI) is a research and policy center located in the Office of the Mayor of New York City, reporting directly to the Deputy Mayor for Strategic Initiatives. CIDI fosters collaboration with all Health and Human Services agencies to promote citywide policy change toward the goal of improving the effectiveness of New York City government. CIDI embraces the Mayor's goal of delivering cross-agency solutions to big, bold issues that impact the health and well-being of the city's most vulnerable people.

To learn more about CIDI, please visit [**www.nyc.gov/cidi**](http://www.nyc.gov/cidi).

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With much gratitude,
Maryanne Schretzman, DSW
Executive Director
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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	8
BACKGROUND/LITERATURE REVIEW	14
METHODOLOGY	22
FINDINGS	24
CONCLUSIONS	38
GLOSSARY	44
APPENDIX	47
REFERENCES	49

CHAPTER 01

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND/ LITERATURE REVIEW

The transition to adulthood is a particularly difficult time for most youth, and this difficulty is magnified for young adults experiencing homelessness. These young people have often already survived adverse childhood experiences such as foster care, family conflict, and housing instability. Existing support systems designed for youth were strained by the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in heightened social isolation, trauma, financial stress, and reduced school engagement for these young people. Preventing homelessness among youth requires multifaceted approaches and presents new opportunities for cross-agency interventions.

This research study by the New York City Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence (CIDI), conducted in collaboration with partners at the University of Pennsylvania, examines the characteristics and experiences of New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) students who experienced homelessness as young adults between the ages of 18–21. The study compares the experiences of these students to those of all students in NYCPS. Its goal is to enable the creation of new supports that facilitate pathways to success.

BACKGROUND/ LITERATURE REVIEW (Cont'd)

In a prior study (2023), CIDI found that student race/ethnicity, child welfare involvement, and educational factors such as school transfers and chronic absenteeism were risk factors for students experiencing homelessness in the following academic year. However, imminent student homelessness was so rare (0.3 percent) and the extent of the risks among the population so broad that it was difficult to identify those who would experience homelessness.

This study builds on CIDI's previous findings, **shifting the focus from imminent student homelessness to identifying upstream factors** for students who later experience homelessness as young adults between the ages of 18–21.

The study aims to identify which educational, child welfare, and homelessness experiences are associated with young adult homelessness. It also seeks to identify, among those with prior child welfare and homelessness experience, those students who may be most at risk of future homelessness. Navigating young adulthood requires resilience and support, and the results of this study can bolster this support by guiding targeted resource allocation and improving service efficiency for these youth.

METHODOLOGY

This study leverages administrative data to follow a cohort of 446,094 NYCPS students born between 1999 and 2002 who attended at least one year of middle school or high school. For this study, the term “young adults experiencing homelessness” (YAEH) refers to NYCPS students who, between the ages of 18–21, utilized a New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) facility without their parents or guardians or resided in a New York City Department of Youth & Community Development (DYCD) shelter.

This report includes a Glossary that lists detailed descriptions of terminology used in this analysis.

Demographics, educational experiences, child welfare involvement, and prior homelessness are described and compared between all students and those students who experienced young adult homelessness. A univariate logistic regression was conducted to identify which factors among all students were associated with the increased likelihood of experiencing homelessness as a young adult.

Based on the findings of the univariate logistic regression, three distinct groups of students were identified as most likely to experience young adult homelessness. The characteristics and experiences of these groups were further examined.

FINDINGS

This study finds that of the birth cohort's 446,094 students, only 7,199 (1.6 percent) experienced young adult homelessness. Findings highlight system involvement, educational and demographic factors which had the strongest associations with young adult homelessness.

Youth who had resided in DHS shelters or experienced foster care or family prevention services at the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), all during high school, had the strongest associations with experiencing homelessness as young adults.

Factors Associated with Young Adult Homelessness

ACS and/or DHS Experience

High school students receiving ACS family prevention services were 23 times more likely to experience homelessness as young adults compared to those who did not receive these services. Experiences during high school with ACS foster care (13.7 times more likely) or residing in a DHS shelter (14.4 times more likely) were both strongly associated with young adult homelessness.

Educational Factors

The educational factors associated with a three- to six-fold increase in the likelihood of experiencing homelessness as a young adult include: attending a District 75 or District 79 high school (districts that denote special education and alternative schools, respectively), not graduating high school within four years, transferring high schools mid-year, chronic absenteeism during high school, repeating 9th grade, and being assessed as a student with a disability (SWD) during high school.

Demographic Factors

Female students and Black or Hispanic/Latina/o/x students were also at higher risk of experiencing young adult homelessness compared to male and white students, respectively.

CONCLUSIONS

This research study found that educational factors such as attending a District 79 school, not graduating within four years, transferring schools mid-year, chronic absenteeism, and repeating 9th grade are associated with future young adult homelessness. The study also found that high school students with experiences in ACS foster care, receiving ACS family prevention services, or residing in a DHS shelter face an elevated risk of future homelessness between the ages of 18–21. Moreover, the risk of future homelessness doubles for students with both shelter and child welfare involvement.

ACS and/or DHS involvement do not determine young adult homelessness. Instead, this association underscores the precarious life circumstances and challenges that youth experience prior, during, and after their family's involvement with homeless or child welfare services. Although young adults experiencing homelessness demonstrate remarkable resilience in overcoming familial strain, instability, and disruptions to education, it is imperative that both family and structural supports are available for youth, their families, and their communities.

Youth at risk of homelessness will benefit from economic, social, and emotional supports.

Specifically, youth with these prior experiences will benefit from a range of holistic interventions—economic, social, and emotional supports—through multi-agency collaboration and accessible service delivery that matches their needs at critical times during their transition to young adulthood. These efforts must aim at upstream prevention of young adult homelessness and provide support to youth transitioning into adulthood.

The expansion of promising existing strategies, the creation of new strategies, and targeted resource allocation provide avenues for a comprehensive approach to addressing these important needs.

CHAPTER 02

BACKGROUND/ LITERATURE REVIEW

Young Adult Homelessness

Young adulthood is recognized as a challenging period of transition, most acutely for those young adults experiencing homelessness.

Prior studies report one in ten young adults between the ages of 18–25 experiences homelessness (defined as an unstable living condition such as couch surfing, shelter stay, etc.), unaccompanied by or without the support of a parent or guardian (Morton et al., 2017). While most youth are surrounded by support systems as they enter adulthood, such as families and schools providing social networks that allow them to overcome obstacles and prevent homelessness, young adults who experience homelessness often lack these supports.

Despite their resilience to overcome many challenges, young adults can experience homelessness due to myriad and commonly intersecting reasons, including family conflict and maltreatment (Heerde et al., 2021; Thrane et al., 2006; van den Bree, 2009); poverty and housing insecurity (Center for Law and Social Policy, 2018; Center on Poverty and Social Policy, 2021; Hawkins, 2019); family tensions related to youth sexual orientation and/or gender identity (Fraser et al., 2019); aging out of institutional care, including foster care (Kelly, 2020); and mental health and substance use issues (Barnes et al., 2021; Chassman et al., 2022). Many young adults experiencing homelessness (YAEH) have persevered through substantial trauma preceding and following homelessness, with the experience of homelessness itself traumatic (Kim et al., 2018).

The COVID-19 pandemic also severely impacted the social support and community systems young people previously found at school, and increased social isolation, trauma, and stress from financial pressures within families (Xiao et al., 2023). A better understanding of the educational and familial experiences of YAEH—especially considering the pandemic—is key to building supports and interventions to improve outcomes for youth at risk of experiencing homelessness.

The current study focuses on the educational, child welfare, and homelessness experiences of New York City young adults between the ages of 18–21 preceding their entry into homeless shelters. Its findings provide a deeper understanding of the intersection between education, child welfare, childhood homelessness, and young adult homelessness by identifying experiences associated with young adult homelessness and comparing the characteristics and educational experiences of students involved in ACS and DHS to those of all students. The findings can inform targeted resource allocation and efforts to streamline services for youth at risk of experiencing homelessness when they reach young adulthood.

Youth Populations at Risk of Homelessness

Among emerging adults, the risk of homelessness is disproportionately borne by youth of color, particularly Black, Hispanic/Latina/o/x, and Native American youth; youth who identify as LGBTQIA+; pregnant and parenting youth; youth with special needs or disabilities; and youth exiting foster care (Berger Gonzalez et al., 2021; HUD, 2023a; Morton et al., 2018; National Center for Homeless Education, 2023; Shah et al., 2017).

Inequitable access to employment, education, healthcare, and quality housing makes Black Americans of all ages more susceptible to housing instability and homelessness (Aitken, 2021; Fowle, 2022; Willse, 2010). Furthermore, daily exposure to racism impacts mental and physical health, compounding the negative effect of homelessness on a person's health (Bourabain & Verhaeghe, 2021; Williams et al., 2019).

Transgender and gender nonconforming youth nationwide experienced an increase in homelessness between 2020 and 2021, by 26 percent and 29 percent, respectively (HUD, 2022). The increase coincides with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, when isolation and general stress could have weakened support systems for these youth and increased tensions within their families of origin.

Pregnancy and parenthood rates are notably high among youth experiencing homelessness or temporary living situations. Nationally, 44 percent of young women experiencing homelessness are either pregnant or already parenting, while 18 percent of young men experiencing homelessness are parenting (Dworsky et al., 2018). The difficulties of young parenthood are numerous, and the absence of family support can heighten these challenges.

Child welfare involvement and foster care placement strongly correlate with poverty, a lack of material supports, and social isolation, and are also associated with future homelessness (Ehrle & Geen, 2002; Font et al., 2021; Walsh, 2004).

Young adults transitioning out of foster care or reuniting with families in unstable situations are at risk of experiencing homelessness (Dworsky et al., 2019). In New York City, young adults in foster care can choose to be discharged from care at the age of 18 but do not age out of care (i.e., lose access to foster care supports) until the age of 21.

Research shows that differential services and the increased involvement of child welfare agencies in preventing homelessness may be required to address the needs of young people in foster care (Shah et al., 2017).

Additionally, foster care involvement and previous housing instability are associated with lower educational attainment, defined as earning less than a general education diploma (GED) (Chassman et al., 2020), putting youth at a further disadvantage in securing stable income and housing.

Education and Young Adult Homelessness

The relationship between homelessness and poor educational measures is intertwined and complex. A lack of stable housing impedes access to consistent schooling while limited educational attainment exacerbates the difficulties of securing stable housing and economic stability. Addressing these related issues requires holistic approaches that integrate housing stability with educational support to break the pattern of combined disadvantage. A high school diploma is a key steppingstone to future success and independence, without which students are at increased risk of young adult homelessness (Morton et al., 2018). Despite overcoming many challenges in their youth and young adulthood, many youth face seemingly insurmountable obstacles to attaining a high school diploma.

Their pathway to graduation is often disrupted by adverse experiences and challenges that are out of their control. For example, repeating a grade, missing a significant number of school days, and school transfers during the school year are increasingly common among students experiencing housing instability and homelessness.

It is crucial to recognize how the intersectionality of educational factors, race, and familial experiences affects student outcomes and creates the risk of young adult homelessness. Black students, for example, are more likely to experience foster care and to repeat a grade, and are also more likely to experience homelessness (Baron et al., 2024; Gamoran 2001).

Grade retention—the requirement that students repeat a grade level due to failure to meet required benchmarks—is the primary cause of students being over-age for their grade. Over-age students have an increased likelihood of dropping out of school (Roderick, 1994; Garcia et al., 2017) and, therefore, have poorer economic outcomes as adults due to limited options in the labor market. Housing stability and grade repetition affect one another. Students who experience grade retention are often in families with multiple stresses that undermine educational performance and housing stability. Grade retention is associated with poor educational outcomes and is therefore also a risk factor for future homelessness. Should students become homeless, they face an additional obstacle: attitudes and stigma regarding the cognitive capabilities of homeless students, which can lead to grade retention (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998).

School absenteeism disrupts educational progress, impeding the pathway out of poverty for homeless students. Homeless students experience higher rates of absenteeism than stably housed students (Bassuk & Rubin, 1987; Allison et al., 2019). Further, absenteeism is associated with other poor educational outcomes and therefore increases a student's risk of future housing and economic instability.

Students who transfer schools mid-year due to housing instability have poorer academic performance (Alexander et al., 2001). Diminished learning may occur due to difficulty in adjusting to a new curriculum, a new social environment, or the underlying family challenges that led to a mid-year transfer (Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003).

Not only do frequent school moves occur among students who are experiencing housing instability, but Shah et al. (2017) found that youth experiencing four or more school moves within the two years prior to exiting school were more likely to become homeless post-exit than their counterparts with fewer than two school moves.

Challenges Faced by Young Adults Experiencing Homelessness

Homelessness places young adults at risk for poor outcomes in many areas, including education, employment and economic stability, justice system involvement, and mental and physical health. YAEH are less likely to complete their secondary education (high school or GED) and, consequently, less likely to enroll in college (Kull et al., 2019).

A decreased likelihood of completing high school diminishes employment opportunities. Homeless youth are susceptible to physical, sexual, and financial exploitation and often take risks to secure necessities like money, food, or shelter, increasing their vulnerability to arrest and incarceration (Ferguson et al., 2015).

Formerly homeless young adults, especially those who identify as female, experience significantly poorer health later in life, including depression and substance misuse during and after homelessness (Stablein & Appleton, 2013). Housing stability, especially when combined with enhanced service accessibility and its connection to education, plays a crucial role in mitigating the numerous challenges confronted by youth entering adulthood, fostering their ability to flourish and successfully transition into independent life.

Building on a Previous CIDI Study

A previous study by CIDI (2023) identified risk factors for imminent homelessness among school-aged youth. The study found that only 0.3 percent of students experienced homeless for the first time in any given academic year. Moreover, the data suggest that students who are in shelter are likely to remain in shelter for the next academic year. Additionally, experience in foster care, residing in overcrowded conditions, being over-age for one's school grade, chronic absenteeism, undergoing a mid-year school transfer, and identifying as either Black or Hispanic/Latina/o/x increased a student's likelihood of experiencing homelessness the following academic year. The research also identified supplementary risk factors, irrespective of racial or ethnic background, such as attending a District 75 or District 79 school, being a high school student with an individualized education plan (IEP), past engagement in any ACS prevention services, and attending a school in the Bronx.

This current study builds on CIDI's previous findings by **shifting the focus from predicting imminent student homelessness to identifying upstream factors** for students who are at risk of experiencing homelessness as a young adult between the ages of 18–21.

Young Adults Experiencing Homelessness (YAEH)

For this study, **YAEH are defined as** NYCPS students who utilized at least one of the following shelter types between the ages of 18–21:

- DHS Single Adult Shelter
- DHS Adult Family or Family with Children Shelter, unaccompanied by a parent or guardian
- DYCD Transition to Independent Living or Runaway Homeless Youth Crisis Shelter

It describes the demographics, educational experiences, child welfare involvement, and prior homelessness among students who experience homelessness between the ages of 18–21, comparing these characteristics to all students to identify potential factors associated with young adult homelessness.

Research Questions

1

Which educational, child welfare, and homeless experiences are associated with young adult homelessness between the ages of 18–21?

2

Among students with prior child welfare and homeless services experiences, which are most at risk of young adult homelessness between the ages of 18–21?

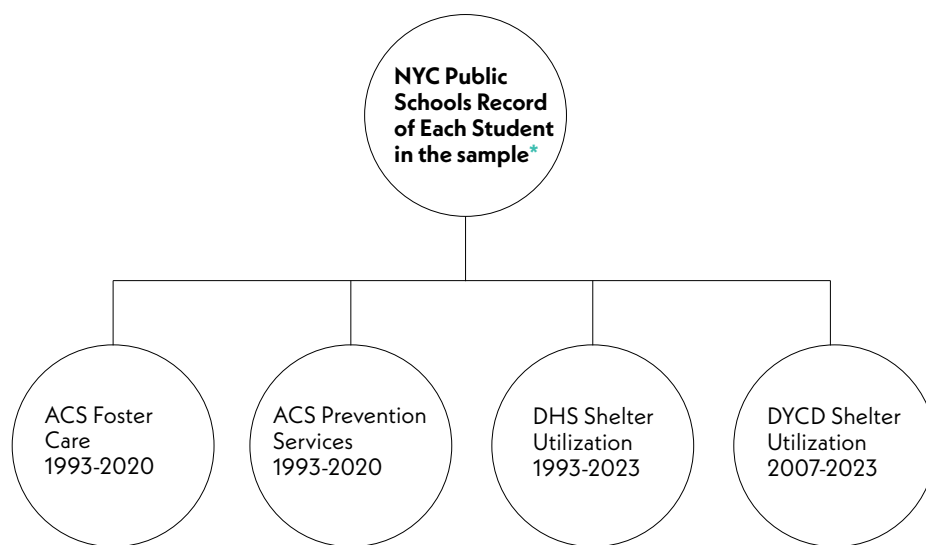
CHAPTER 03

METHODOLOGY

Data Linkage

NYCPS student records were matched to administrative records from the City agencies as shown in Figure 1 by using probabilistic and deterministic matching with the fastLink and dplyr packages for R statistical software.

Figure 1. Sample Design



* The sample consists of students born between 1999 and 2002 who were in a New York City public school for at least one year between the 6th and 12th grade.

The match rate varied by agency and program and was contingent upon data quality. For example, the match rate for students in ACS prevention was only 45 percent, meaning that 45 percent of youth born between 1999 and 2002 who were in ACS prevention services between the ages of 14–17 were matched to a NYCPS high school record. However, the match rate was 70 percent for students in ACS foster care during high school. There were no differences in demographics or program experiences between youth who matched and those who did not.

Statistical Methods

The study describes demographics, educational experiences, child welfare involvement, and prior homelessness of all NYCPS students born between 1999 and 2002 who were enrolled for at least one year between 6th and 12th grades. Descriptive analyses compare all students to students who experience homelessness as a young adult. Univariate analyses estimate the association between these characteristics and experiences with young adult homelessness. Analyses were conducted for all students and three distinct populations of students found to be at the highest risk of experiencing young adult homelessness.

CHAPTER 04

FINDINGS

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH YOUNG ADULT HOMELESSNESS

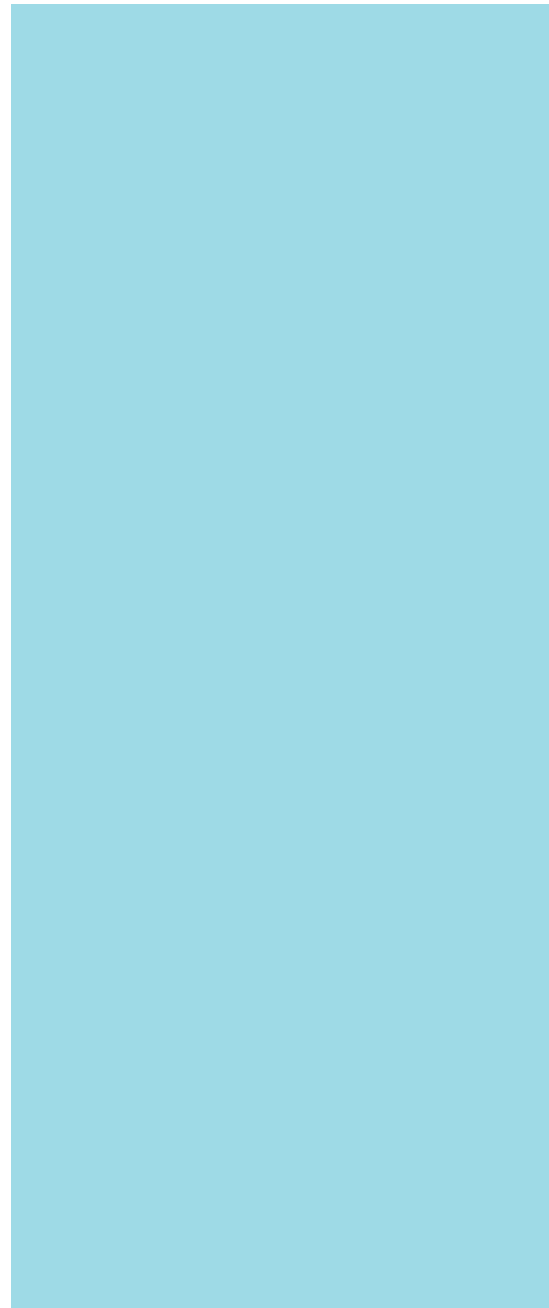
In the Findings section, we identify and describe the factors most strongly associated with young adult homelessness for the populations outlined below.

1

All NYCPS Students

2

NYCPS Students with ACS and/or DHS Experience during High School



ALL NYCPS STUDENTS

This section of the study first examines factors and experiences to determine their association with young adult homelessness among all NYCPS students in the cohort.

1

All NYCPS Students

Table Highlights

ACS Foster Care, ACS Prevention Services and DHS Shelter Experience

- Approximately **one in four** students who received ACS family prevention services during high school later experienced homelessness as a young adult. These prevention programs are designed to meet the needs of families at risk for abuse or neglect of their children.
- Students who either resided in DHS shelter or experienced ACS foster care during high school were approximately **14 times as likely** to experience homelessness as other young adults.

Demographic Factors

- **52.2 percent** of YAEH identified as Black race/ethnicity, while Black students comprised just **27.7 percent** of all NYCPS students in this study.
- Hispanic/Latina/o/x students were **4.8 times as likely** to experience young adult homelessness compared to white students.
- Students who identified as female were almost **twice as likely** to experience homelessness than students identifying as male.

Educational Factors

- **11.8 percent** of all students did not graduate high school within four years; however, among YAEH, **41.8 percent** did not graduate high school within four years.
- **42.7 percent** of YAEH were chronically absent in high school, but **15.2 percent** of all NYCPS students in this study were chronically absent.

TABLE 1. CHARACTERISTICS AND EXPERIENCES ASSOCIATED WITH YOUNG ADULT HOMELESSNESS AMONG ALL NYCPS STUDENTS

1.59 percent (7,119 of 446,094) of NYCPS students experienced young adult homelessness, i.e. were identified as YAEH.

FACTORS	NYCPS Students N: 446,094		YAEH N: 7,119		YAEH/ NYCPS Students Ratio %: 1.6	Association with Young Adult Homelessness
	N	%	N	%	%	Odds Ratio
Received ACS Prevention Services During HS	6,952	1.55	1,601	22.5	23.0	23.5
Resided in DHS Shelter During HS	8,816	2.0	1,409	19.8	16.0	14.4
Experienced ACS Foster Care During HS	3,551	0.8	603	8.5	17.0	13.7
Identified as Black	123,671	27.7	3,718	52.2	3.0	8.7*
Attended a District 79 HS	17,621	4	1,322	18.6	7.5	5.9
Did not graduate HS in 4 Years	52,528	11.8	2,978	41.8	5.7	5.7
Transferred High Schools Mid-Year	19,120	4.3	1,210	17.0	6.3	4.8
Identified as Hispanic/Latina/o/x	172,937	38.8	2,923	41.1	1.7	4.8*
Were Chronically Absent During HS	67,788	15.2	3,038	42.7	4.5	4.7
Repeated 9th Grade	28,445	6.4	1,613	22.7	5.7	4.5
Attended a District 75 HS	9,961	2.2	492	6.9	4.9	4
Were Assessed as Student With Disability (SWD) During HS	61,041	13.7	2,413	33.9	4.0	3.3
Identified as Female**	215,630	48.3	4,423	63.5	2.1	1.9
Identified as Asian/Alaskan Native/American Indian/Other	73,021	16.4	171	2.4	0.2	0.7*

* Compared to White students.

** Sex/gender is reported as a binary male/female in NYCPS records.

Factors are listed in order based on the strength of the association between the factor and young adult homelessness, as conveyed by the odds ratio.

The values that are considered not statistically significant are grayed out.

☐ Included in the Highlights Section

How to read this table for

"Received ACS Prevention Services During HS":

Full Cohort:

1.55 percent (6,952) of NYCPS students received ACS Prevention Services during high school.

YAEH:

22.5 percent (1,601) of YAEH received ACS Prevention Services during high school.

YAEH/Full Cohort Ratio:

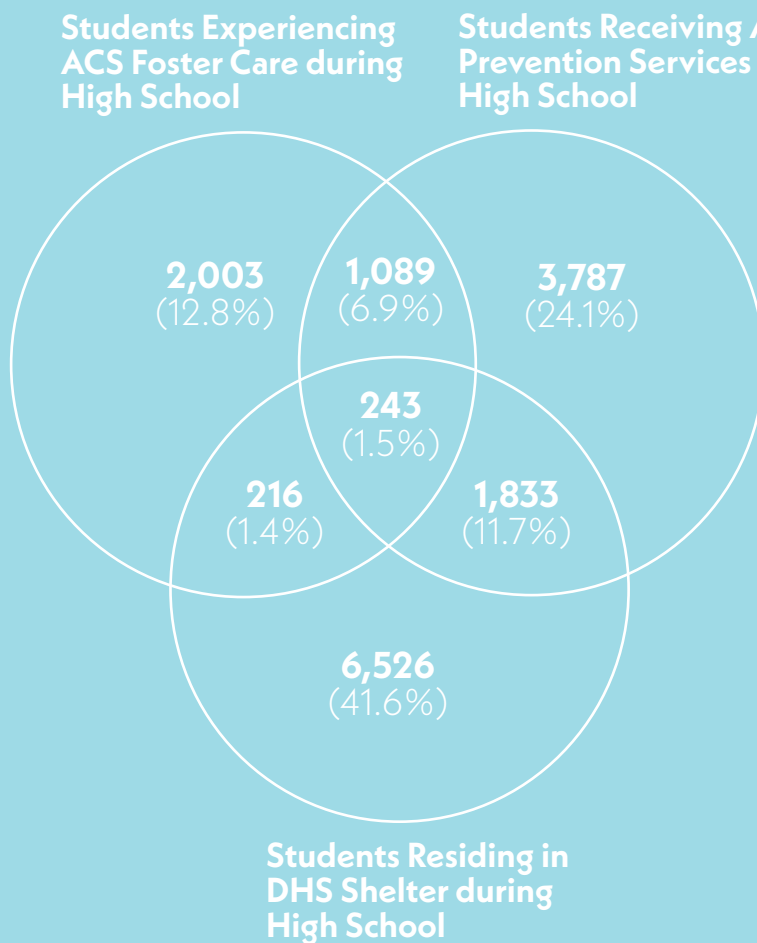
23 percent of NYCPS students who received ACS Prevention Services during high school experienced young adult homelessness, i.e. were identified as YAEH.

Association with Young Adult Homelessness:

NYCPS students who received ACS Prevention Services during high school were **23.5 times more likely** to experience young adult homelessness compared to students who did not.

NYCPS STUDENTS WITH ACS AND/OR DHS EXPERIENCE DURING HIGH SCHOOL

The second section of the study examines factors and experiences impacting the likelihood of young adult homeless among NYCPS students with ACS and/or DHS experience.



More students reside in DHS shelter than experience ACS foster care or receive ACS prevention services. There is more overlap between students receiving ACS prevention services and students residing in DHS shelter than between other groups.

Students Experiencing ACS Foster Care during High School

Table Highlights

ACS Foster Care and DHS Shelter Experience

- **31.2 percent** of NYCPS students who both experienced ACS foster care and resided in DHS shelter during high school were homeless as a young adult, i.e. were identified as YAEH.
- The group of students with both ACS foster care and DHS homelessness experiences during high school were **2.6 times as likely** to experience young adult homelessness compared to those with only ACS foster care experience during high school.

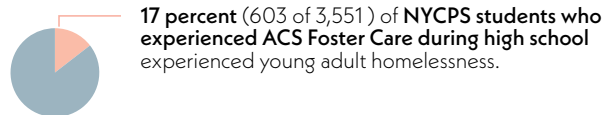
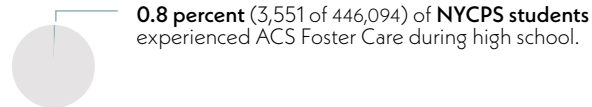
Demographic Factors

- Race/ethnicity and gender did not statistically impact the likelihood that a student who experienced ACS foster care would be homeless as a young adult.

Educational Factors

- The educational factors of attending a District 79 or District 75 high school or not graduating high school within four years **doubled** the chances that a student who experienced ACS foster care would be homeless as a young adult.
- While high school graduation rates were very low among students experiencing ACS foster care during high school (**75.9 percent**), among YAEH who had experienced ACS foster the rate was even higher (**91.2 percent**).
- Students in ACS foster care during high school who did not graduate within four years were nearly **twice as likely** to experience homelessness as a young adult.
- Chronic absenteeism was common among students experiencing foster care during high school, with **93.8 percent** of YAEH chronically absent during high school. Chronic absenteeism was still associated with a **50 percent increase** in the risk of young adult homelessness among this population of students.

TABLE 2.1 CHARACTERISTICS AND EXPERIENCES ASSOCIATED WITH YOUNG ADULT HOMELESSNESS AMONG STUDENTS EXPERIENCING ACS FOSTER CARE DURING HIGH SCHOOL



FACTORS

Resided in DHS Shelter During HS
Attended a District 75 HS
Attended a District 79 HS
Did not graduate HS in 4 Years
Assessed as SWD during HS
Repeated 9th Grade
Were Chronically Absent During HS
Received ACS Prevention Services During HS
Transferred High Schools Mid-Year
Identified as Black
Identified as Female**
Identified as Hispanic/Latina/o/x
Identified as Asian/Alaskan Native/American Indian/Other

NYCPS Students experienced ACS Foster Care During HS N: 3,551		YAEH experienced ACS Foster Care During HS N: 603		YAEH/ NYCPS Students Ratio experienced ACS Foster Care During HS %: 17	Association with Young Adult Homelessness
N	%	N	%	%	Odds Ratio
459	12.9	143	23.7	31.2	2.6 -
677	19.1	180	29.9	26.6	2.1 -
808	22.8	205	34.0	25.4	2.0 -
2,696	75.9	550	91.2	20.4	1.8 -
1,749	49.3	357	59.2	20.4	1.6 -
1,075	33.1	228	42.4	21.2	1.5 -
1,129	31.8	531	93.8	47.0	1.5 -
1,132	37.5	271	44.9	23.9	1.5 -
915	25.8	181	30.0	19.8	1.3 -
1,869	52.6	343	56.9	18.4	1.3* -
2,050	57.7	367	60.8	17.9	1.1 -
1,243	35.0	204	33.8	16.4	1.1* -
157	4.4	14	2.3	8.9	0.6*

* Compared to White students.

** Sex/gender is reported as a binary male/female in NYCPS records.

Factors are listed in order based on the strength of the association between the factor and young adult homelessness, as conveyed by the odds ratio.

The values that are considered not statistically significant are grayed out.

□ Included in the Highlights Section

How to read this table for "Resided in DHS Shelter During HS":

- Full Cohort:**
12.9 percent (459) of students who experienced ACS Foster Care in high school also resided in a DHS Shelter during high school.
- YAEH:**
23.7 percent (143) of YAEH who experienced ACS Foster Care during high school also resided in DHS Shelter during high school.
- YAEH/Full Cohort Ratio:**
31.2 percent of NYCPS students who both experienced ACS Foster Care and resided in DHS Shelter during high school experienced young adult homelessness, i.e. were identified as YAEH.
- Association with Young Adult Homelessness:**
NYCPS students who both experienced ACS Foster Care and resided in DHS Shelter during high school were 2.6 more likely to experience young adult homelessness compared to students who only experienced ACS Foster Care during high school.

2.2

Students Receiving ACS Prevention Services during High School

Table Highlights

ACS Prevention Services Experience

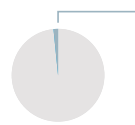
- 23 percent of NYCPS students who received ACS Prevention Services during high school experienced young adult homelessness.

Demographic Factors

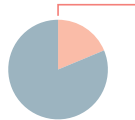
- Female students who received ACS prevention services were nearly **twice as likely** to experience young adult homelessness compared to males who received the same services.
- Black and Hispanic/Latina/o/x students who received ACS prevention services in high school were also **more likely** to experience young adult homelessness compared to their White counterparts (Odds ratios for both Black and Hispanic/Latina/o/x students: **1.4**).

Educational Factors

- Educational experiences such as not graduating high school within four years (Odds ratio: **1.7**) and chronic absenteeism (Odds ratio: **1.6**) also increased the likelihood that a student who received ACS prevention services during high school would experience homelessness.
- Among students who received ACS prevention services, those who had attended a District 79 high school were **50 percent more likely** to experience young adult homelessness.

TABLE 2.2 CHARACTERISTICS AND EXPERIENCES ASSOCIATED WITH YOUNG ADULT HOMELESSNESS AMONG STUDENTS RECEIVING ACS PREVENTION SERVICES DURING HIGH SCHOOL

1.6 percent (6,952 of 446,094) of NYCPS students received ACS Prevention Services during high school.



23 percent (1,601 of 6,952) of NYCPS students who received ACS Prevention Services during high school experienced young adult homelessness.

FACTORS

Identified as Female**	3,764	54.1
Did not graduate HS in 4 Years	5,340	76.8
Were Chronically Absent During HS	6,300	90.6
Attended a District 79 HS	1,409	20.3
Identified as Black	3,323	47.8
Identified as Hispanic/Latina/o/x	3,087	44.4
Attended a District 75 HS	798	11.5
Repeated 9th Grade	2,434	35
Transferred High Schools Mid-Year	1,762	25.3
Were Assessed as SWD During HS	3,179	45.7
Identified as Asian/Alaskan Native/American Indian/Other	198	2.9
Resided in DHS Shelter During HS	2,076	29.9
Experienced ACS Foster Care During HS	1,332	19.2

NYCPS Students who received ACS Prevention Services During HS N: 6,952		YAEH who received ACS Prevention Services During HS N: 1,601		YAEH/Study Cohort Ratio who received ACS Prevention Services During HS %: 23	Association with Young Adult Homelessness
N	%	N	%	%	Odds Ratio
3,764	54.1	1,059	66.1	28.1	1.9 -
5,340	76.8	1,363	85.1	25.5	1.7 -
6,300	90.6	1,495	93.4	23.7	1.6 -
1,409	20.3	412	25.7	29.2	1.5 -
3,323	47.8	784	49	23.6	1.4* -
3,087	44.4	717	44.8	23.2	1.4* -
798	11.5	224	14	28.1	1.4 -
2,434	35	644	40.2	26.5	1.3 -
1,762	25.3	472	29.5	27.8	1.3 -
3,179	45.7	764	47.7	24.0	1.1 -
198	2.9	38	2.4	19.2	1.1* -
2,076	29.9	473	29.5	22.8	1.0 -
1,332	19.2	271	19.9	20.3	0.8

* Compared to White students.

** Sex/gender is reported as a binary male/female in NYCPS records.

Factors are listed in order based on the strength of the association between the factor and young adult homelessness, as conveyed by the odds ratio.

The values that are considered not statistically significant are grayed out.

□ Included in the Highlights Section

How to read this table for "Identified as Female":

Full Cohort:

54.1 percent (3,764) of NYCPS students who received ACS Prevention Services during high school were identified as Female.

YAEH:

66.1 percent (1,059) of YAEH who received ACS Prevention Services during high school were identified as Female.

YAEH/Full Cohort Ratio:

28.1 percent of female NYCPS students who received ACS Prevention Services during high school experienced young adult homelessness, i.e. were identified as YAEH.

Association with Young Adult Homelessness:

Female NYCPS students who received ACS Prevention Services during high school were 1.9 times more likely to experience young adult homelessness compared to male students who received ACS Prevention Services.

2.3

Students Residing in DHS Shelter during High School

Table Highlights

ACS Foster Care, ACS Prevention Services and DHS Shelter Experience

- Students in DHS shelters during high school were at increased risk of young adult homelessness. The risk more than **doubled** if the student also experienced ACS foster care during high school.
- Similarly, students in DHS shelters during high school were **1.8 times as likely** to experience homelessness as young adults if they received ACS prevention services during high school.
- **5.2 percent** of NYCPS students resided in a DHS shelter during high school had also experienced foster care, but **10.1 percent** of YAEH who resided in a DHS shelter during high school had experienced foster care.

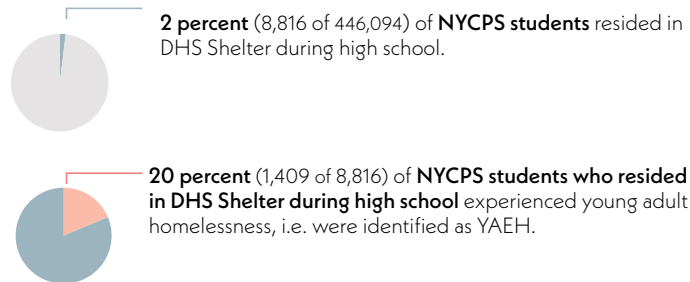
Demographic Factors

- Female students in DHS shelters during high school were **1.8 times as likely** to experience homelessness as young adults compared to their male counterparts.
- Students who resided in DHS shelter during high school predominantly identified as Black (**52.9 percent**) or Hispanic/Latina/o/x (**41.1 percent**). Among these students, race/ethnicity did not affect the risk of experiencing young adult homelessness.

Educational Factors

- Educational factors such as attending a District 79 high school (Odds ratio: **2.5**), not graduating high school within four years (Odds ratio: **2.3**), and chronic absenteeism (Odds ratio: **2.0**) also increased the likelihood that a student who resided in a DHS shelter during high school would experience homelessness as a young adult.
- **83.4 percent** of students who resided in a DHS homeless shelter during high school were chronically absent during high school. Among these students, those that were chronically absent during high school were **twice as likely** to experience homelessness as a young adult compared to those that were not chronically absent.

TABLE 2.3 CHARACTERISTICS AND EXPERIENCES ASSOCIATED WITH YOUNG ADULT HOMELESSNESS AMONG STUDENTS RESIDING IN DHS SHELTER DURING HIGH SCHOOL



FACTORS

Experienced ACS Foster Care during HS
Attended a District 79 HS
Did Not Graduate HS in 4 Years
Were Chronically Absent During HS
Received ACS Prevention Services During HS
Repeated 9th Grade
Identified as Female**
Attended a District 75 HS
Were Assessed as SWD During HS
Transferred High Schools Mid-Year
Identified as Black
Identified as Hispanic/Latina/o/x
Identified as Asian/Alaskan Native/American Indian/Other

NYCPS Students who resided in DHS Shelter During HS N: 6,952		YAEH who resided in DHS Shelter During HS N: 1,601		YAEH/Study Cohort Ratio who resided in DHS Shelter During HS %: 23	Association with Young Adult Homelessness
N	%	N	%	%	Odds Ratio
459	5.2	143	10.1	31.2	2.5 –
1,075	12.2	316	22.4	29.4	2.5 –
5,625	63.8	1,146	81.3	20.4	2.3 –
7,351	83.4	1,272	90.3	17.3	2.0 –
2,076	23.6	473	33.6	22.8	1.8 –
2,119	24.0	481	34.1	22.7	1.8 –
4,537	51.5	898	63.7	19.8	1.8 –
524	5.9	121	8.6	23.1	1.6 –
2,881	32.7	567	40.2	19.7	1.5 –
1,858	21.1	376	20.2	20.2	1.5 –
4,662	52.9	723	51.3	15.5	1.2* –
3,619	41.1	603	42.8	16.7	1.1* –
182	2.1	25	1.8	13.7	0.9*

* Compared to White students.

** Sex/gender is reported as a binary male/female in NYCPS records.

Factors are listed in order based on the strength of the association between the factor and young adult homelessness, as conveyed by the odds ratio.

The values that are considered not statistically significant are grayed out.

☐ Included in the Highlights Section

How to read this table for “Experienced ACS Foster Care during HS”:

- Full Cohort:**
5.2 percent (459) of NYCPS students who resided in DHS Shelter during high school also experienced ACS Foster Care during high school.
- YAEH:**
10.1 (143) of YAEH who resided in DHS Shelter during high school also experienced ACS Foster Care during high school.
- YAEH/Full Cohort Ratio:**
31.2 percent of NYCPS students who both resided in DHS Shelter during high school and experienced ACS Foster Care during high school experienced young adult homelessness, i.e. were identified as YAEH.
- Association with Young Adult Homelessness:**
NYCPS students who resided in DHS Shelter during high school and experienced ACS Foster Care during high school were 2.5 times more likely to experience young adult homelessness compared to students who only resided in DHS shelter during high school.

CHAPTER 05

CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Findings

This study enhances the understanding of the association between student experiences and young adult homelessness. The study's approach allows for the identification of factors associated with experiencing young adult homelessness and groups most at risk. It also points to the importance of timing for potentially impactful interventions.

The study's first component consisted of descriptive analyses of characteristics of all NYCPS students compared to students who experienced young adult homelessness, as well as a univariate analysis to identify factors associated with an increased likelihood of experiencing young adult homelessness. The study's second component conducted similar analyses for three specific populations identified as having an increased likelihood of young adult homelessness: students in ACS foster care during high school, students receiving ACS family prevention services during high school, and students residing in DHS shelters during high school.

The first component of the study found that students involved with child welfare services had an increased likelihood of experiencing young adult homelessness compared to the overall student population. Students receiving ACS prevention services were 23 times more likely to experience young adult homelessness while students in ACS foster care were 13.7 times more likely. Additionally, previous DHS shelter use during high school correlated with young adult homelessness. Female and Black students were overrepresented among young adults experiencing homelessness.

Factors Associated with Increased Risk of Young Adult Homelessness

1

For **All NYCPS students**

- Experienced ACS Foster Care During HS
- Received ACS Prevention Services During HS
- Resided in DHS Shelter During HS
- Attended a District 75 HS
- Attended a District 79 HS
- Did Not Graduate HS in 4 years
- Transferred High Schools Mid-year
- Were Chronically Absent During HS
- Repeated 9th grade
- Were assessed as SWD during HS
- Identified as Black or Hispanic/Latina/o/x
- Identified as Female

2

For **Students with ACS and/or DHS Experience during HS**

- Attended a District 79 HS
- Did Not Graduate HS in 4 years
- Transferred High Schools Mid-year
- Were Chronically Absent During HS
- Repeated 9th grade

Some factors were associated with young adult homelessness for all three populations: (1) Students experiencing ACS foster care, (2) Students receiving ACS prevention services, and (3) Students residing in DHS shelters.

Other factors were only connected to a specific population:

- Students involved with ACS, either via prevention or foster care, were more likely to experience homelessness as a young adult if they had also attended a District 75 high school compared to a high school in any other district.
- Female students who received ACS prevention services or were in DHS shelters during high school were at increased risk of young adult homelessness.
- Among students who received ACS prevention services during high school, being Black or Hispanic/Latina/o/x was also associated with young adult homelessness.

Discussion

This study's findings are consistent with and build on the previous 2023 CIDI study about predictors of student homelessness. This current study finds that ACS and/or DHS experiences, during high school, were most strongly associated with young adult homelessness. Additionally, factors such race, attending a District 79 high school, and not graduating from high school within four years increased students' likelihood of experiencing young adult homelessness.

The complexity and intersection of these circumstances illustrate **the need for a system-wide, multiagency approach for families with high school-age students in the child welfare and/or homeless shelter systems.** A broad but focused approach can effectively lead to targeted efforts to prevent high school-age students from experiencing homelessness in the future.

Families involved with child welfare and homeless services often have distinct and complex experiences. The intersectionality of multifaceted issues compounds the effects of poverty, racism, and neighborhood loss; family stressors and parent/child conflicts; and housing and economic insecurity. Many of these issues are amplified by intergenerational family trauma, including family discord and violence. Other studies have found these variables to be significant contributors to young adult homelessness (Heerde et al., 2021; van den Bree, 2009; Thrane et al., 2006). As such, this study's findings suggest the need for specific measures to meet these life challenges, which continue to affect youth as they transition into young adulthood. ACS and DHS involvement do not themselves determine young adult homelessness; rather, their association emphasizes the life difficulties youth experience prior to their involvement with these systems.

Policy Implications and Impact

The study's findings indicate a need for continued collaborative efforts among New York City's school, child welfare, youth, and homeless services agencies to support students most at risk of experiencing young adult homelessness. Students in ACS foster care, receiving ACS prevention services, or in DHS shelters require assistance to improve attendance and academic achievement. They also need emotional, social, and economic supports to reduce the risk of homelessness and ensure a smoother transition to young adulthood.

The City of New York already has a solid foundation of interagency programs to improve youth success. For example, Fair Futures provides one-on-one tutoring and mentoring to help students in ACS foster care meet their educational and personal goals. DYCD Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) connects New York City youth between the ages of 14–24 with career exploration opportunities and paid work experience each summer. Every Child and Family is Known (ECFIK) is a collaboration between NYCPS and DHS that pairs each homeless student in Bronx schools with a caring adult to improve educational outcomes. DYCD provides a vast array of youth development and youth-informed community and after-school services.

As helpful as these programs can be for youth, there is a need for stronger collaborative efforts. Youth require both programs designed to prevent homelessness at key early intervention points and ones that support them when they are in crisis. These may include family interventions and respite, and presumptive eligibility or priority status for a variety of employment, educational, housing, and youth services opportunities the City offers to other vulnerable populations. Youth at risk of homelessness may have a wide variety of needs, yet immediate and easy access to assistance is challenging when navigating multiple systems and service providers.

Monitoring systems and cross-agency case conferencing and reviews have the potential to better facilitate delivery of comprehensive services with appropriate timing. Conferencing and reviews can ensure that these youth are prioritized for a comprehensive suite of programs that provide a wide range of holistic supports to match their needs at key moments on their journey to young adulthood. Cross-agency case reviews can help City agencies to be better aware of the need for adjustments to policies and practices to ensure stability and success for all New York City youth.

“Just-in-time” assistance for students and their families may also be a useful tool. Rather than providing a prevention program to all students in a high-risk group, many of whom will never actually need such a program, just-in-time interventions involve training those who have relationships with high-risk groups to check in regularly to identify when a more proactive approach is needed. A low-touch intervention based on connection and relationship building allows staff to identify red flags for high-risk students so situations can be addressed before they result in shelter entries.

The participation of youth themselves is vital for successful program planning and implementation. In prior convenings to design solutions to end youth homelessness, New York City youth embraced the phrase “nothing about us, without us.” Their voices are critical to ensure the success of supportive programs.

Limitations and Future Research

This study relies on administrative data, which does not capture the entirety of a student’s experience. For example, while a student may transfer schools or be chronically absent for various reasons, the administrative data cannot differentiate between the various causes of these events. Young adult homelessness is often not caused by a single event or condition but rather results from a combination of circumstances that are difficult to capture in administrative data alone. While the study identifies characteristics and experiences that increase a student’s risk of experiencing young adult homelessness, a mixed-methods study is needed to more deeply understand the experiences of YAEH.

Due to the limitations of the data, the study could not explore outcomes or risk factors for students who identify as LGBTQIA+. However, research suggests that these youth experience homelessness at greater rates and face unique challenges (Cochran et al., 2002). NYCPS began collecting information on student gender identity in the fall of 2022 (NYCPS, 2022). To understand the experiences of LGBTQIA+ youth, all New York City agencies need a uniform method for collecting data on gender identity and sexual orientation, as appropriate.

GLOSSARY, APPENDIX & REFERENCES

GLOSSARY

Administration for Children's Services (ACS) Terminology

Foster care experience. Student was in any of the following three foster care placements while attending a NYCPS middle school or high school: residential care, family foster care, kinship foster care. These categories are not mutually exclusive.

Prevention services. Student participated in any of the following types of ACS prevention services while attending a New York City middle school or high school:

- **Family therapies.** Various types of therapy to address the needs of children and families.
- **Family treatment and rehabilitation.** Programs that support families whose children are at risk of foster care placement as a result of addressing safety and well-being challenges that arise from mental health and/or substance abuse by children and/or caregivers.
- **Generalized prevention services.** Programs with both supportive and concrete services in communities.
- **Juvenile justice programs.** Family programs designed to prevent youth from becoming involved in the juvenile justice system.

Department of Homeless Services (DHS) Terminology

Shelter utilization during middle school or high school. Student resided in DHS shelter while attending a NYCPS middle school or high school; includes Family with Children (FWC) shelter.

DHS and Department of Youth & Community Development (DYCD) Terminology

Young Adult Homelessness. Young adult utilizes one or more of the following shelter types between the ages of 18–21:

- DHS Single Adult Shelter
- DHS Adult Family or Family with Children Shelter, unaccompanied by a parent or guardian
- DYCD Transition to Independent Living or Runaway Homeless Youth Crisis Shelter

New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) Terminology

Chronic absenteeism. Student missed 10 percent or more of school days in the academic year. (Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, attendance during the 2019–2020 school year was captured through March 13, 2020—the last full day of in-person schooling that year. Students returned to a mix of in-person, hybrid, and remote schooling in the 2020–2021 school year.)

Did not graduate high school in four years. Student did not graduate within four years of entering 9th grade.

District 75 schools. Schools utilized for special education.

District 79 schools. Alternative schools utilized for over-age/under-credit students.

Grade repetition. Student did not advance to the next grade level in September of the following school year.

Mid-year transfer. Student transferred to another school during the academic year.

Sex. Reported as gender binary male/female in NYCPS records.

Student with disability (SWD). Student had a learning disability listed in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP): a written statement describing efforts to address a disability that may interfere with the individual's learning.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1. YAEH Characteristics across Shelter Types

	All YAEH (%)	DHS FWC (%)	DHS AF (%)	DHS SA (%)	DYCD RHS and TIL (%)
N	7,119 (1.6)	3,418 (0.8)	545 (0.1)	2,223 (0.5)	2,299 (0.5)
Age in Shelter					
18		625 (18.3)	118 (21.7)	322 (14.5)	1,143 (49.7)
19		1,158 (33.9)	201 (36.9)	521 (23.4)	1,108 (48.2)
20		1,755 (51.3)	237 (43.5)	878 (39.5)	716 (31.1)
21		2,056 (60.2)	262 (48.1)	1,271 (57.2)	43 (1.9)
Birth Cohort Year					
1999	2,066 (29.0)	978 (28.6)	184 (33.8)	626 (28.2)	774 (33.8)
2000	1,894 (26.6)	858 (25.1)	130 (23.9)	583 (26.2)	729 (31.7)
2001	1,766 (24.8)	869 (25.4)	124 (22.8)	547 (24.6)	529 (23.0)
2002	1,393 (19.6)	713 (20.9)	107 (19.6)	467 (21.0)	267 (11.6)
Female	4,523 (63.5)	2,860 (78.4)	395 (72.5)	929 (41.8)	1,308 (56.9)
Race/Ethnicity					
Asian/American Indian/ Alaskan Native/Other	171 (2.4)	54 (1.6)	14 (2.6)	63 (2.8)	70 (3.0)
Hispanic/Latina/o/x	2,923 (41.1)	1,576 (46.1)	237 (43.5)	770 (34.6)	868 (37.8)
Black	3,718 (52.2)	1,679 (49.1)	269 (49.4)	1,278 (57.5)	1,229 (53.5)
White	248 (3.5)	81 (2.4)	18 (3.3)	94 (4.2)	114 (5.0)

Appendix 2. Demographics of All Students and Students in ACS Foster Care, ACS Prevention, and DHS Shelter during High School

	All Students	ACS Foster Care during High School	ACS Prevention during High School	DHS Shelter during High School
N	446,094	3,551	6,952	8,816
Race and Ethnicity				
Asian/American Indian/Alaskan Native/ Other	73,021 (16.4%)	157 (4.4%)	198 (2.9%)	182 (2.1%)
Hispanic/Latina/o/x	172,937 (38.8%)	1,243 (35%)	2,087 (44.4%)	3,619 (41.1%)
Black	123,671 (27.9%)	1,869 (52.6%)	3,323 (47.8%)	4,662 (52.9%)
White	69,687 (15.6%)	248 (7.0%)	299 (4.3%)	283 (3.2%)
Gender				
Female	215,630 (48.3%)	2,050 (57.7%)	3,764 (54.1%)	4,537 (51.5%)

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