Bringing evidence to action to end youth homelessness

DC ICH meeting
September 11, 2018
Matthew Morton, Ph.D.

A public-private partnership

Voices of Youth Count is an national, mixed-methods research and policy initiative linking evidence to action to end youth homelessness.

Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America

National Estimates

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Missed Opportunities: LGBTQ Youth Homelessness in America

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JOURNAL OF ADOLESCENT HEALTH

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Original article

Prevalence and Correlates of Youth Homelessness in the United States

CrossMark

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IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTION

Missed Opportunities: Pregnant and Parenting Youth Experiencing Homelessness in America

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Conducting a Youth Count: A Toolkit

Empowering and Engaging Youth and Communities For a Better Count

October 2016

Missed Opportunities: Counting Youth Experiencing Homelessness in America

July 2018

The fourth in a series of Research-to-Impact briefs by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago on understanding and addressing youth homelessness.

Missed Opportunities: Counting Youth Experiencing Homelessness in America summarizes key lessons learned from conducting point-in-time counts of youth experiencing homelessness in 22 diverse counties across the United States. Youth counts can provide communities with valuable information about the number and characteristics of youth experiencing homelessness, including information about over-represented groups for whom specialized services might be needed. Additionally, by conducting annual or biennial youth counts, communities can identify changes over time in the local population of youth experiencing homelessness. This brief offers recommendations for conducting successful youth counts based on our experiences conducting counts and insights shared by our partner counties. We hope these recommendations will help more communities conduct youth counts that yield valuable data and drive positive change.

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VOICES OF YOUTH COUNT

Getting to Smarter Coordinated Entry for Youth

Analysis of risk assessments (TAY-VI-SPDAT: Next Step Tool for homeless youth) and homelessness systems (HMIS) data for 11,000 youth across 16 communities in 10 states.
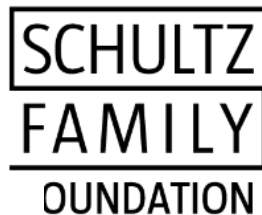
How is *youth* homelessness different?

Developmental Period
Critical and unique window for both skills development and vulnerability to social risks.

Hiddenness
Homelessness especially fluid, transient, and hidden. High sensitivity to social stigma and heavy reliance on couch-surfing.

Pathway into Adult Homelessness
Research shows youth homelessness is the largest pathway into adult homelessness, and the longer youth experience homeless, the harder and more expensive it is to exit.

Policy & Program Levers
Requires engaging different systems for prevention (child welfare, juvenile justice, schools) and different service delivery models for response (youth-centric shelter and housing, positive connections, family intervention, youth development).

Scale, scope, and characteristics of youth homelessness in the U.S.
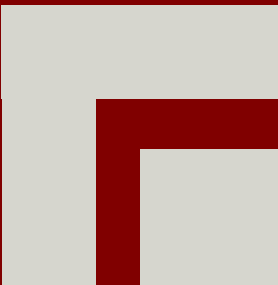
A broad & hidden challenge

1 in 10

young adults ages 18 to 25 endures some form of homelessness in a year. Half of the prevalence involves couch surfing only.

1 in 30

adolescent minors ages 13 to 17 endures some form of homelessness in a year. A quarter of the prevalence involves couch surfing only.

Rates of youth experiencing homelessness were similar in rural and nonrural areas.

Youth 13-17	Young Adults 18-25
4.2%	**9.6%**
Household prevalence in urban counties.	Population prevalence in urban counties.
4.4%	**9.2%**
Household prevalence in rural counties.	Population prevalence in rural counties.

(Source: VoYC National Survey)
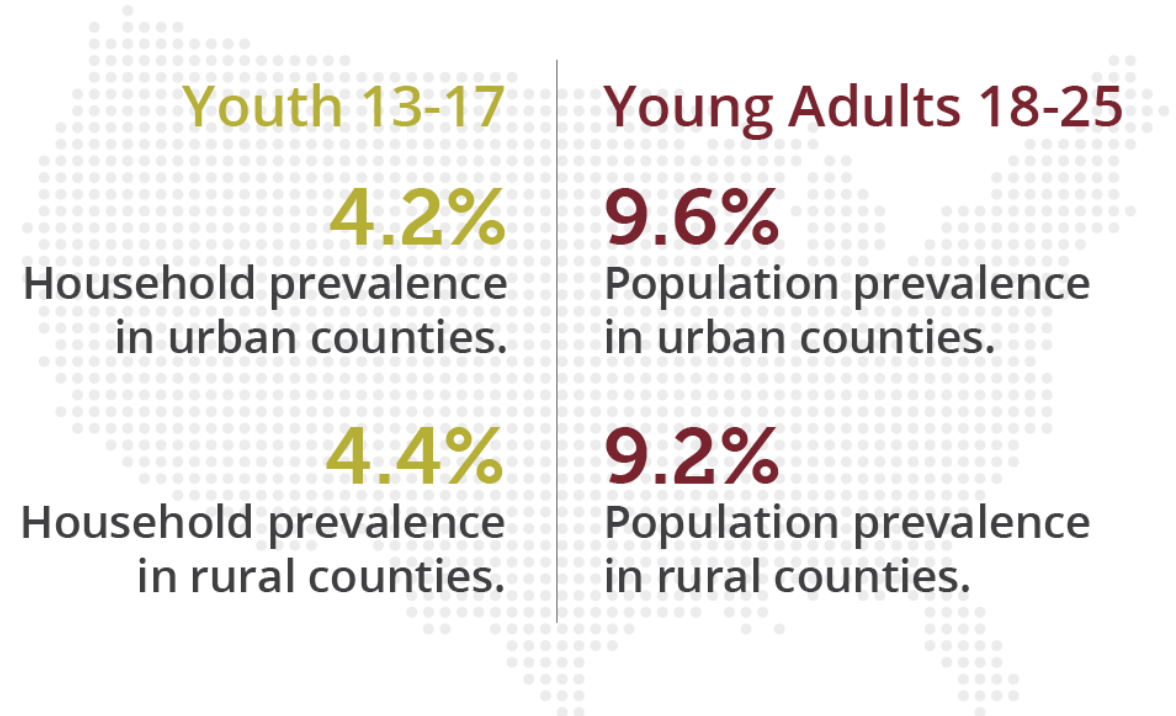
Subpopulations with higher risk for homelessness

346%
Youth with less than a high school diploma or GED had a 346% higher risk

120%
LGBT youth had a 120% higher risk

162%
Youth reporting annual household income of less than $24,000 had a 162% higher risk

33%
Hispanic, non-White youth had a 33% higher risk

83%
Black or African American youth had an 83% higher risk

200%
Unmarried parenting youth had a 200% higher risk

(Source: VoYC National Survey)

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Education and homelessness

Explicit homelessness prevalence by level of education, ages 18-25

Level of education	Percentage
College graduate	2%
Some college	4%
Technical/vocational school	3%
high school diploma	6%
< high school diploma	19%
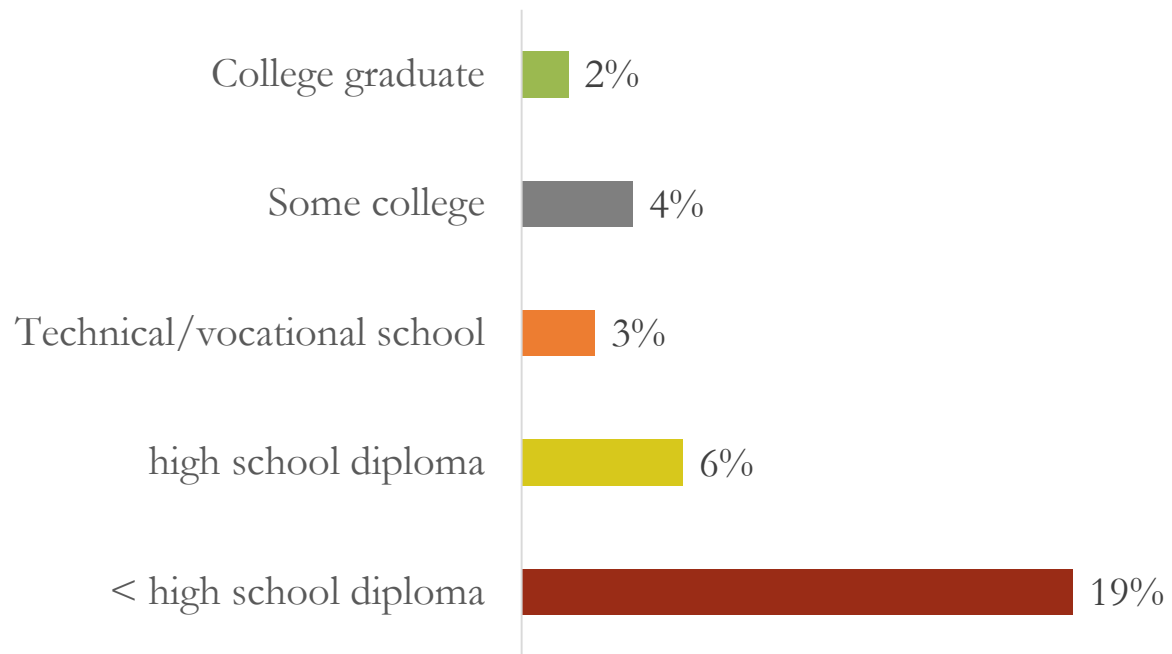
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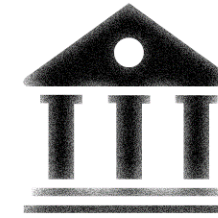
Still, about **one in four** 18-22-year-olds reporting explicit homelessness were enrolled in college or university

(Source: VoYC National Survey)

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Intersectionality

Explicit homelessness over the last 12 months, self-reported by young adults, ages 18-25.
These estimates do not include reports of couch surfing only.

4%	7%	8%	16%
White + Non-LGBTQ	Black + Non-LGBTQ	White + LGBTQ	Black + LGBTQ

(Source: VoYC National Survey)
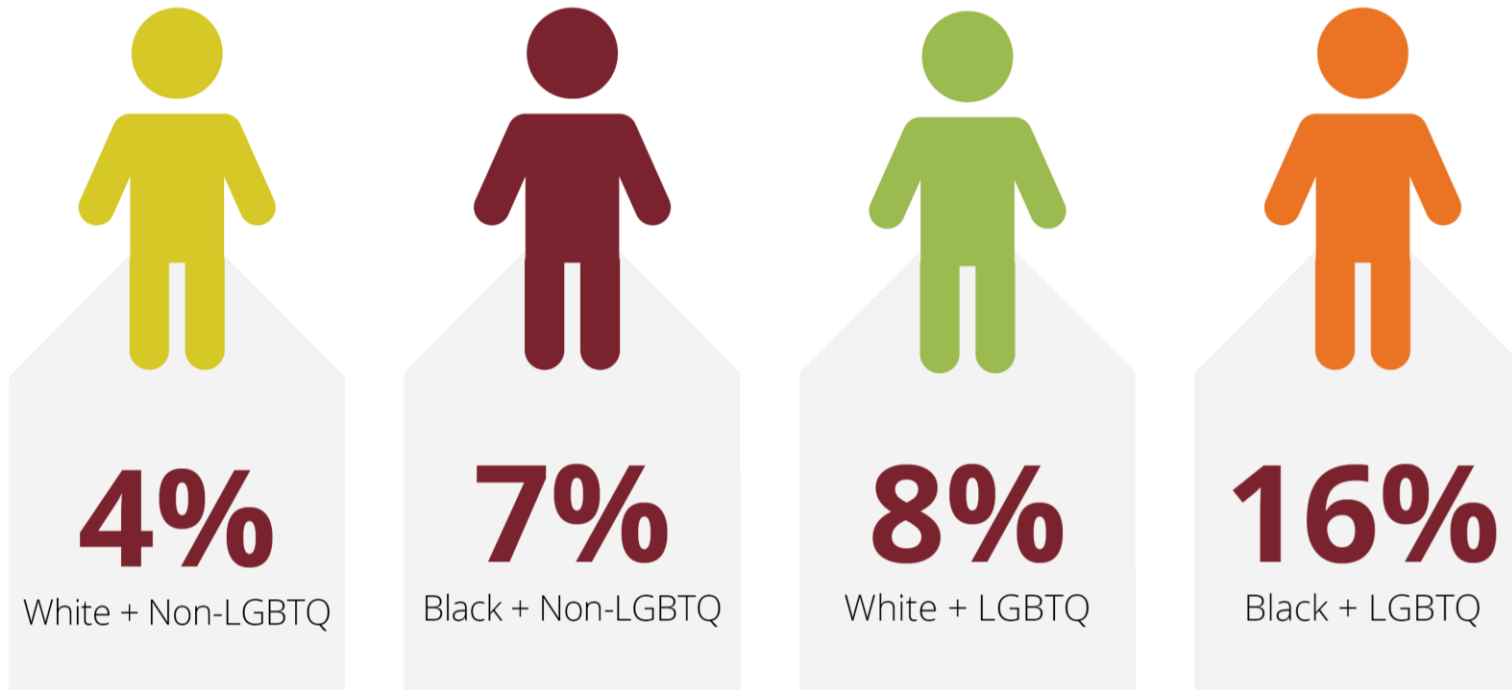
Among youth experiencing homelessness, LGBTQ had especially high exposure to many adversities

Forced to have sex — 38%

Exchanged sex for basic needs — 27% / 9%

15%

62% Physically harmed by others — 47%

Exposed to discrimination or stigma outside of the family — 37%

60%

LGBTQ

NON-LGBTQ

Harmed self — 15% / 25%

Exposed to discrimination or stigma within the family — 37%

64%

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(Source: VoYC In-depth Interviews)
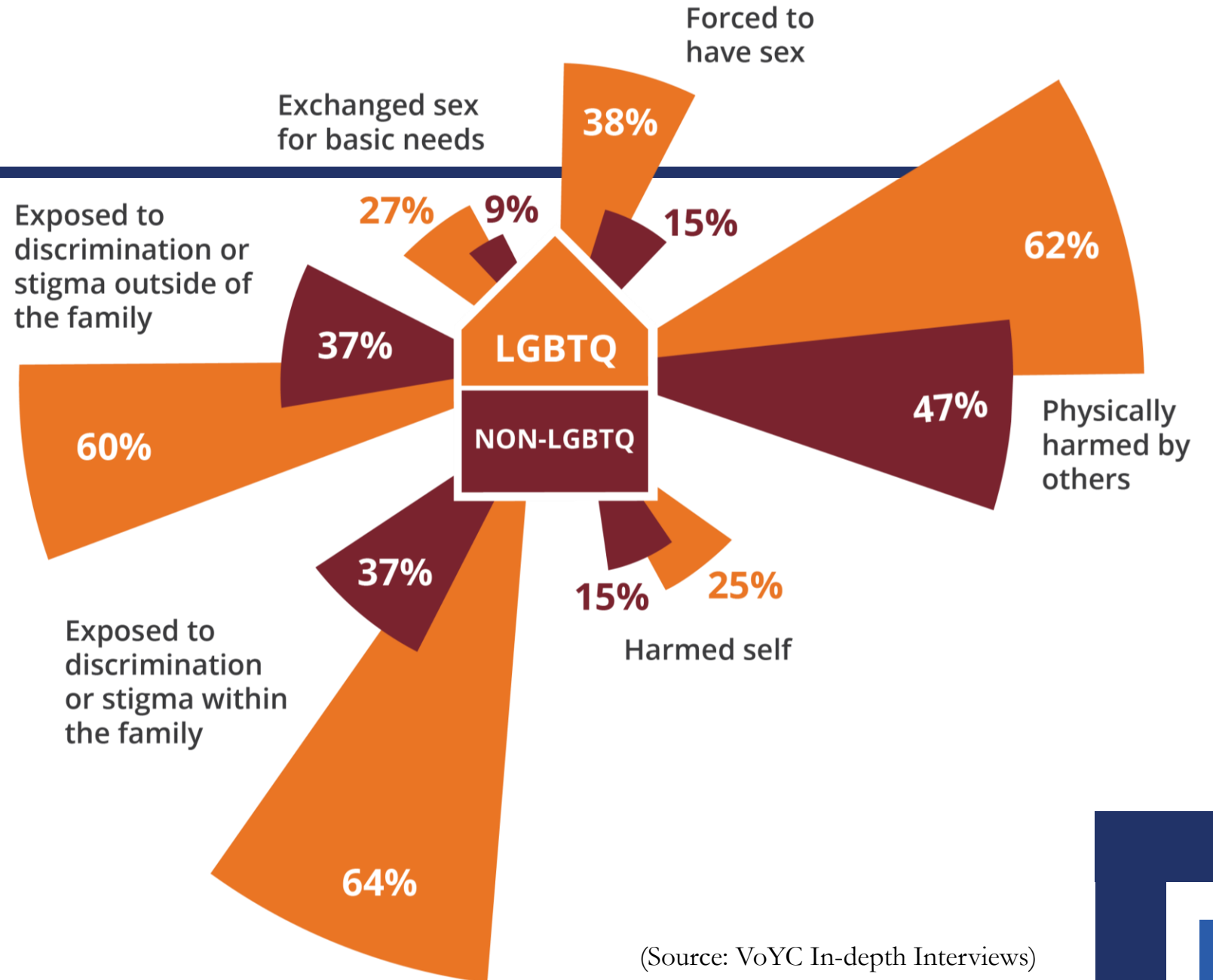
Blurry lines: youth & family homelessness

44%

10%

18%

3%

| 13-17 | 18-25 | 13-17 | 18-25 |
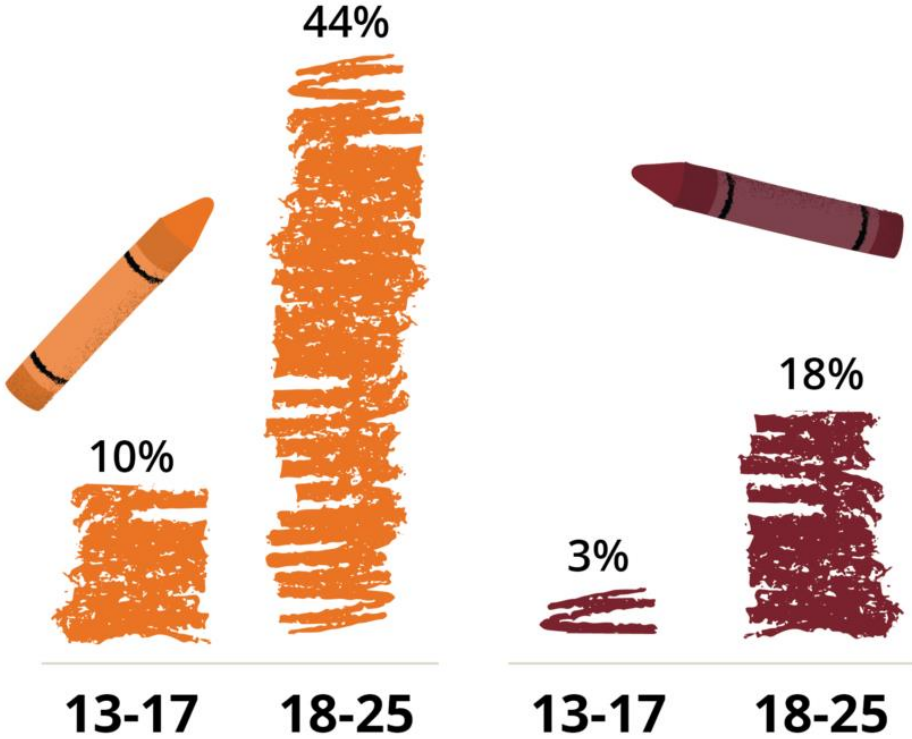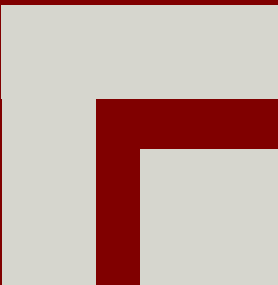
FEMALES
are pregnant or
a parent

MALES
have a pregnant partner
or are a parent

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(Source: VoYC Brief Youth Surveys)

Improving coordinated entry & crisis response

Youth face long and harmful waits for housing

Only **39%** of youth who were assessed by 16 communities' coordinated entry systems were placed into housing programs
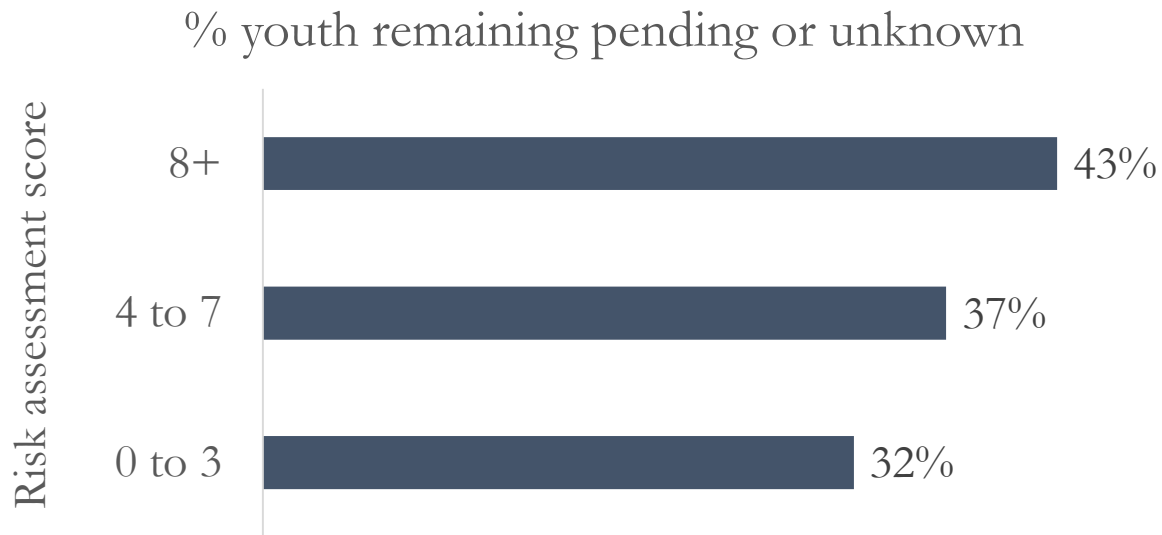
The average wait was about **4 months**

Every additional day of waiting increased young people's odds of returning to the homelessness system after exiting into a housing program by **2%**
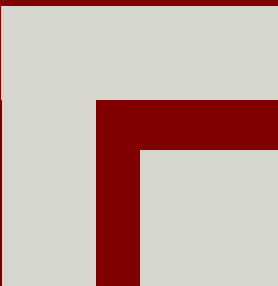
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(Source: Chapin Hall & USC analysis of OrgCode data – Morton, Rice, et al.)

Strategies for many youth who don't get placed & don't self-resolve are needed

1 in 3 youth with even *low* risk scores remained awaiting placement or status became unknown to the system

Try & evaluate creative strategies including non-housing interventions for youth who don't get into housing programs

% youth remaining pending or unknown

Risk assessment score

8+	43%
4 to 7	37%
0 to 3	32%

(Source: Chapin Hall & USC analysis of OrgCode data – Morton, Rice, et al.)

behavioral-health-treatment
host/brokered-homes
social-assistance
education
legal-support
diversion-assistance
referrals
empowerment-opportunities
case-management
training
cash-transfers
mentoring
apprenticeships
career-development
family-intervention

Going upstream & across systems

Better crisis-response is *necessary but insufficient* to ending youth homelessness
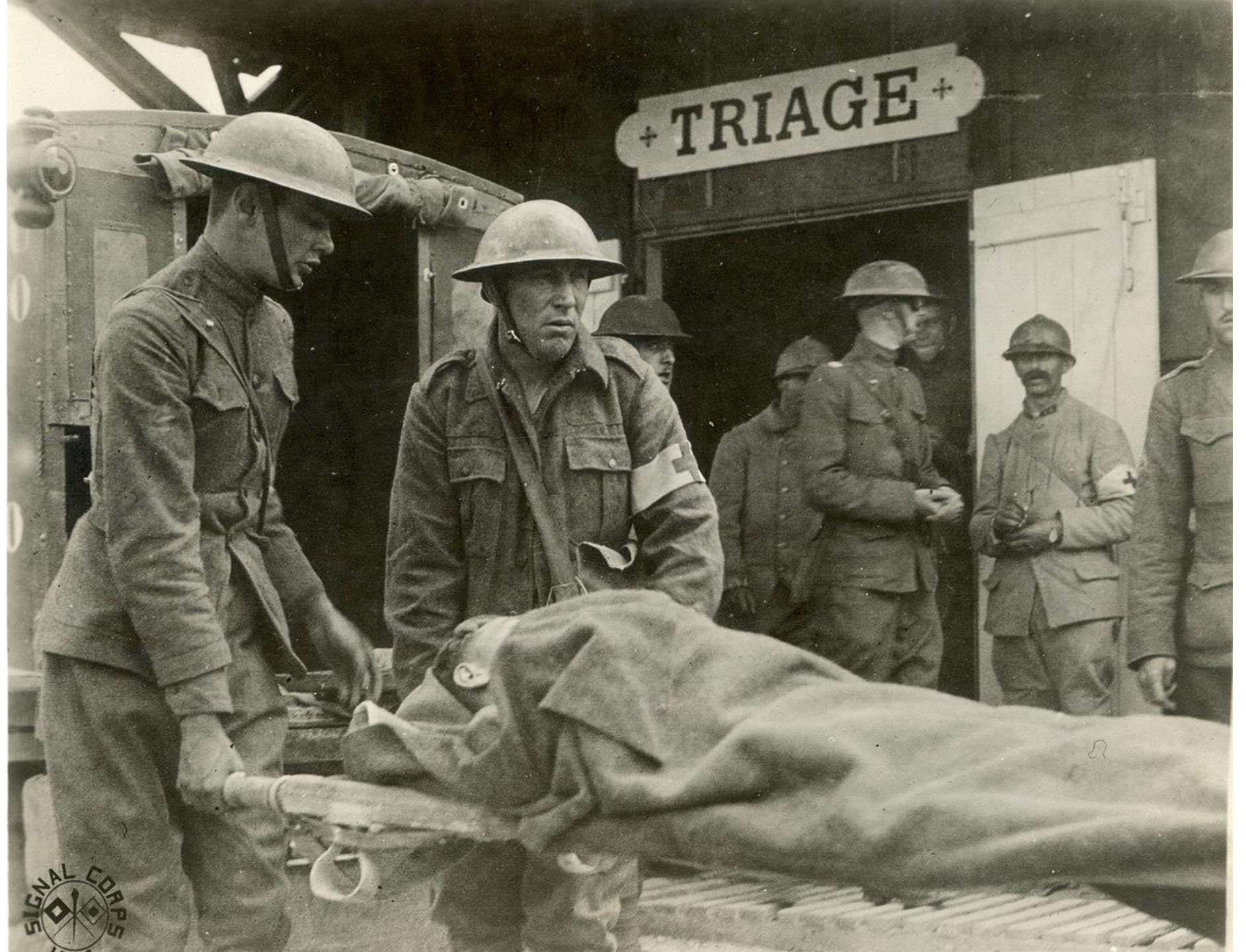
Age of first homelessness among 19-25-year-olds

1 in 4 youth interviewed in 5 communities had prior experiences of **family homelessness** or housing instability

(Source: VoYC In-depth Interviews)

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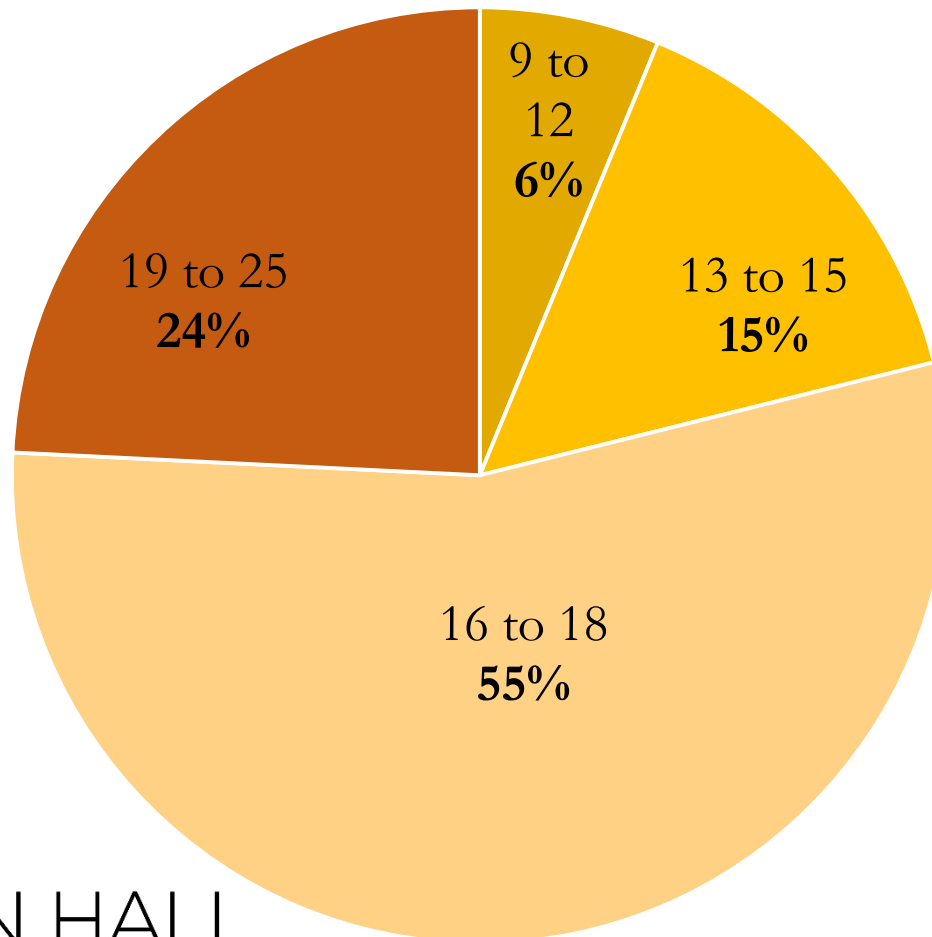AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

"Baylee" from San Diego

"I don't really remember [all my moves] because it's all I knew"

- Unstably housed with mom and sisters across four states; cycles between relatives' homes, shelters, hotels and rented spaces
- Mom commits suicide, Baylee enters foster care

"I don't want to say [my dad] didn't want me, but he just sent me away"

- Moves in with dad she barely knows; frequently argues with step-mom
- Begins kick-out return pattern between dad, grandma, foster care and aunt
- Returns to live with dad and step-mom

"I didn't have anywhere to go"

- Stays in a hotel with homeless friend, leaves because of instability of situation
- Briefly moves in with boyfriend's family; does not want to depend on him, leaves
- Moves into grandma's senior living studio; leaves because of crowding
- Tries to access youth emergency shelter but dad won't give guardian approval
- "Does stuff to make money" to stay in hotels

Age 2-11 · Age 11-13 · Age 13-14 · Age 14-17 · Age 17 · Age 17

Legend
- 🟢 Structural
- 🟠 Peer/Familial
- 🔴 Individual

"[CPS] contacted [my dad] the day my mom passed away… They are slow, they don't care how long it takes"

- Enters foster care in AZ; sisters placed in AK
- Cycles through two abusive foster homes and group home, begins to have suicidal thoughts
- CPS takes over 2 years to approve placement w/father in San Diego

"If you leave then don't come back"

- Baylee attempts suicide for the first time, struggles with mental health and repeat hospitalizations
- When dad occasionally kicks her out, Baylee couch surfs
- Dad unsupportive of mental health needs; she decides to leave after latest suicide attempt and dad tells her not to come back

"I'm a minor and it's so frustrating…[I] can't [access shelters] by myself, but you're by yourself"

- After multiple attempts to get dad's approval, gets permission to stay in youth emergency shelter
- Approaching 21 day stay time limit at shelter-hoping for a 2 week extension
- Trying to get into Job Corps, unsure what to do if she doesn't get in

Working across systems

29%
Ever in Foster Care
vs. 2% of general youth population

46%
Ever in Detention or Incarceration
vs. 15% of general (older) youth population

34%
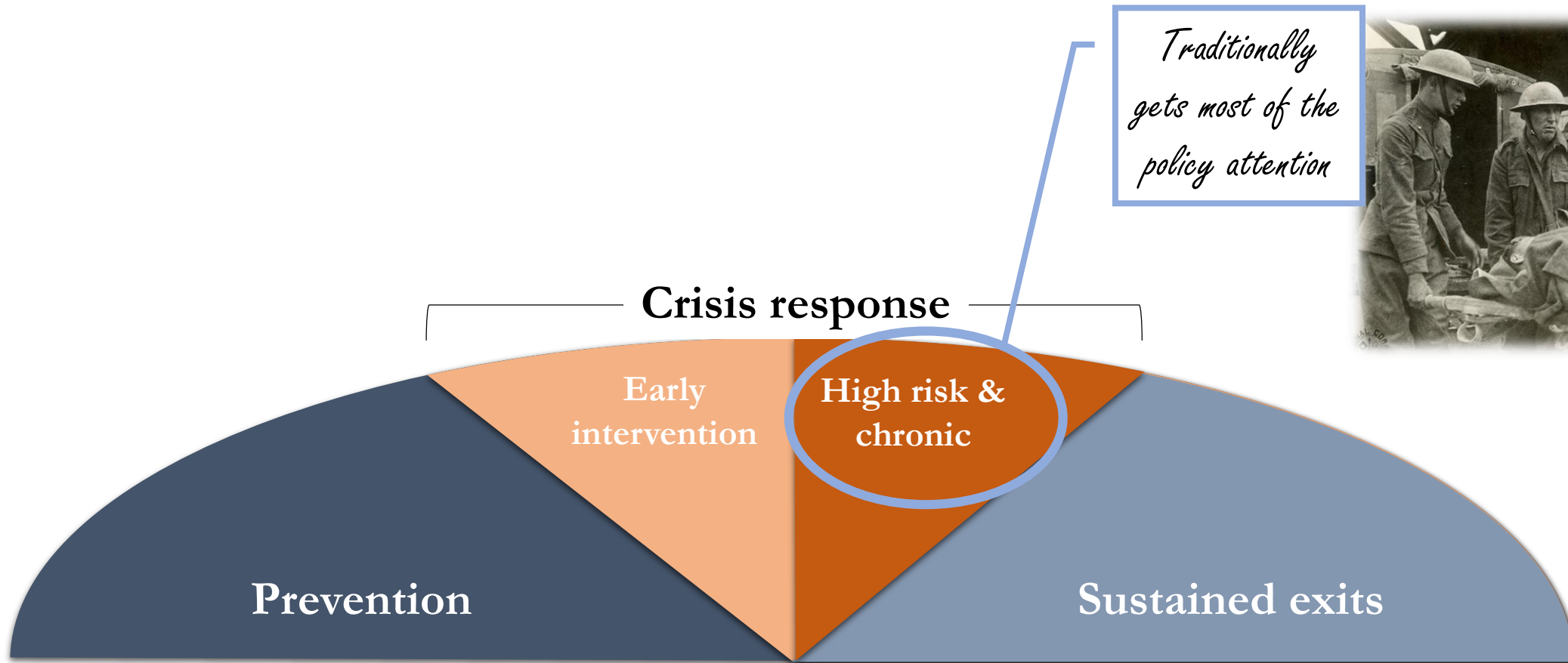Had < high school diploma/GED (ages 18-25)
vs. 11% of general youth population

(Source: VoYC Youth Count Surveys)

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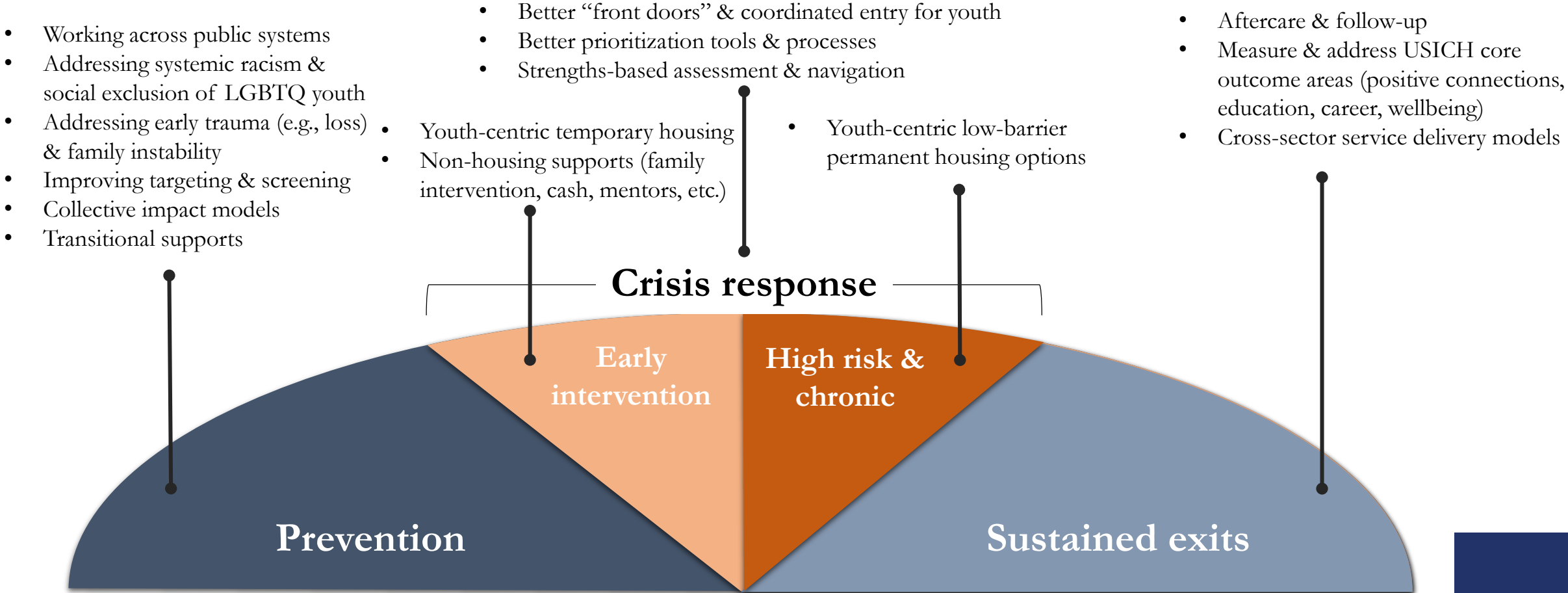AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Going forward:
taking a public health perspective

A public health perspective

Traditionally gets most of the policy attention

Crisis response

Early intervention

High risk & chronic

Prevention

Sustained exits

Opportunities across the continuum for research & action

- Working across public systems
- Addressing systemic racism & social exclusion of LGBTQ youth
- Addressing early trauma (e.g., loss) & family instability
- Improving targeting & screening
- Collective impact models
- Transitional supports

- Better "front doors" & coordinated entry for youth
- Better prioritization tools & processes
- Strengths-based assessment & navigation

- Youth-centric temporary housing
- Non-housing supports (family intervention, cash, mentors, etc.)

- Youth-centric low-barrier permanent housing options

- Aftercare & follow-up
- Measure & address USICH core outcome areas (positive connections, education, career, wellbeing)
- Cross-sector service delivery models

Crisis response

Prevention

Early intervention

High risk & chronic

Sustained exits

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The Upstream Project

1. IDENTIFY & ASSESS

Identify students at-risk of homelessness, using a proven screening method (*Student Needs Survey*)

2. CONNECT TO SERVICES

Provide wrap-around services to identified students and their families

3. MEASURE & REPLICATE

- Comprehensive program evaluation
- The Upstream Project will be replicated in communities across Canada

Evidence-Based

The Upstream Project adapts the innovative, evidence-based successes of Australia's *The Geelong Project (TGP)*

The Geelong model of youth homelessness intervention has been **extensively evaluated** over the past five years

100% of supported youth have safe, sustainable accomodation (TGP)

INCREASE school engagement, graduation rates & access to safe, secure housing

REDUCE the risk of family breakdown, dropping out of school and involvement in crime.

Ending youth homelessness is going to take all of us.

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