

Race, Gender, and Homelessness

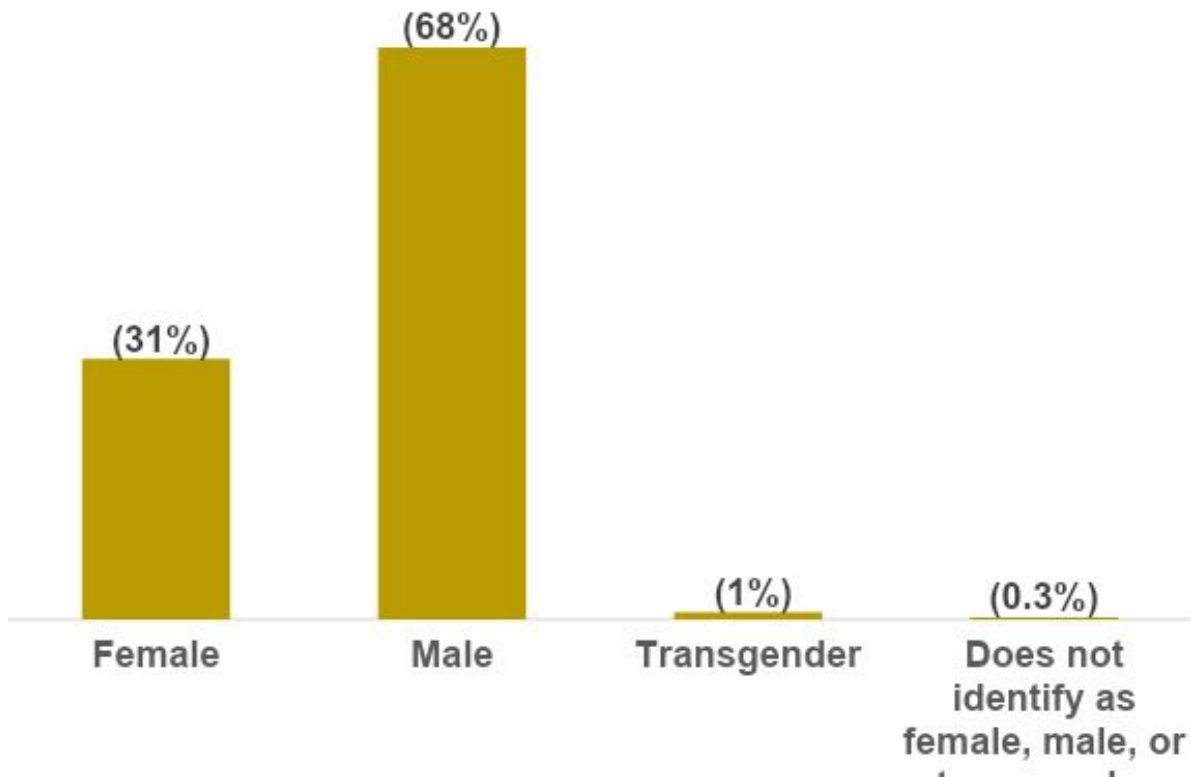
Overview of the Work and Recommendations of LAHSA's Ad Hoc Committees on Black People Experiencing Homelessness and Women & Homelessness

Domestic Violence Homeless Services Coalition Summit
August 8, 2019



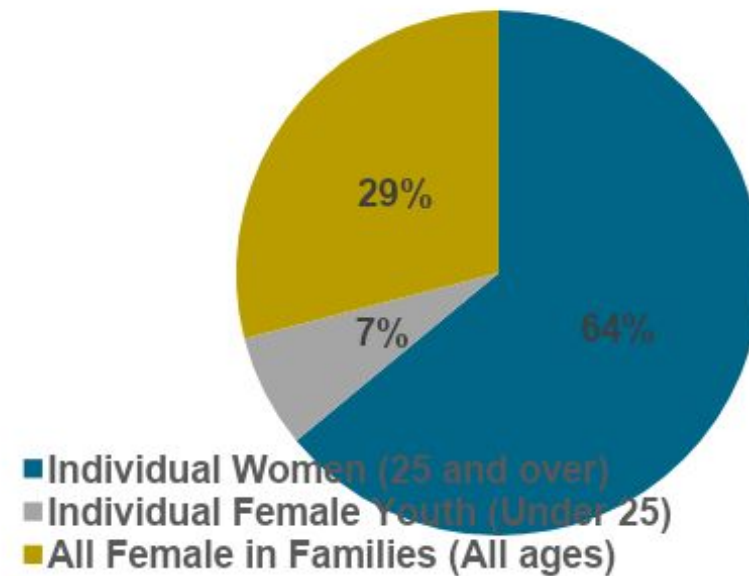
Prevalence of Women Experiencing Homelessness (2017)

Homeless Population, by Gender
Los Angeles County, 2017



Source: Homeless population data represent estimates from the 2017 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count for Los Angeles County.

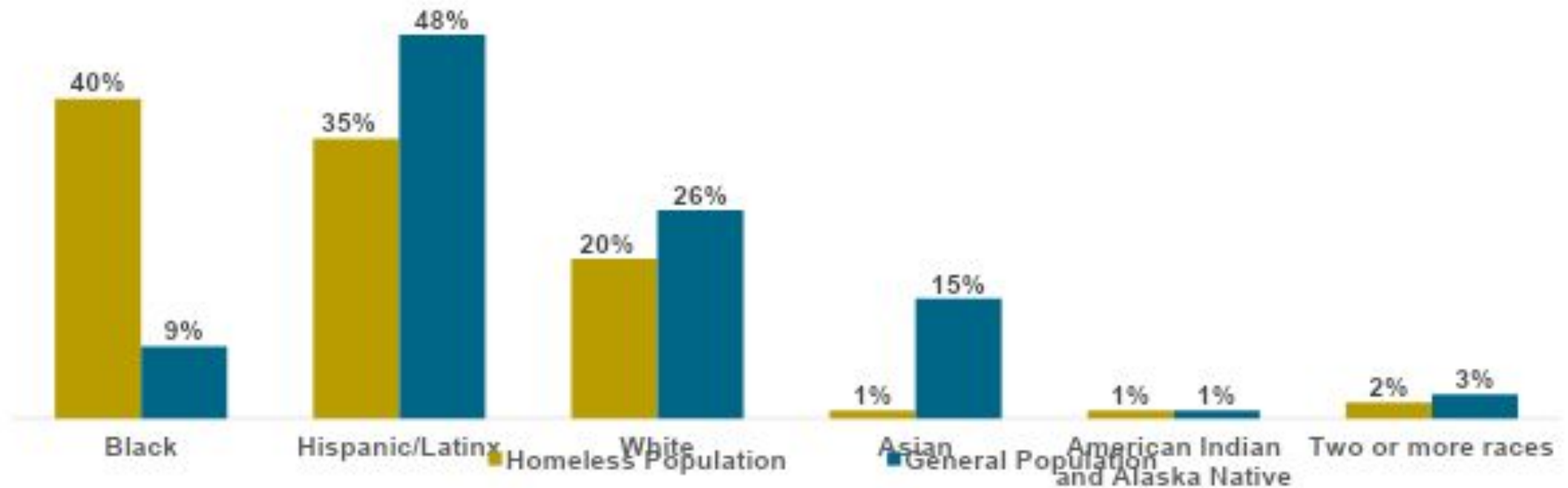
Total Female Population Experiencing Homelessness by Household Type,
Los Angeles Continuum of Care, 2017



Source: Homeless population data represent estimates from the 2017 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count for Los Angeles Continuum of Care (LA CoC) and excludes the Glendale and Pasadena Continuums of Care. Female individual includes females aged 25 and above and female youth under 25 experiencing homelessness who are not part of family units.

Prevalence of Black People Experiencing Homelessness (2017)

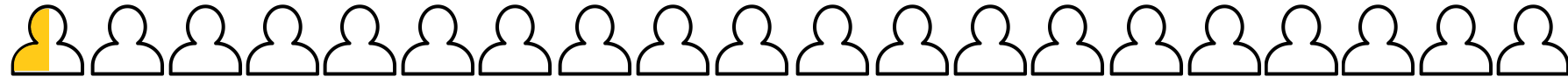
Homeless Population vs. General Population, by Race & Ethnicity, Los Angeles Continuum of Care, 2017



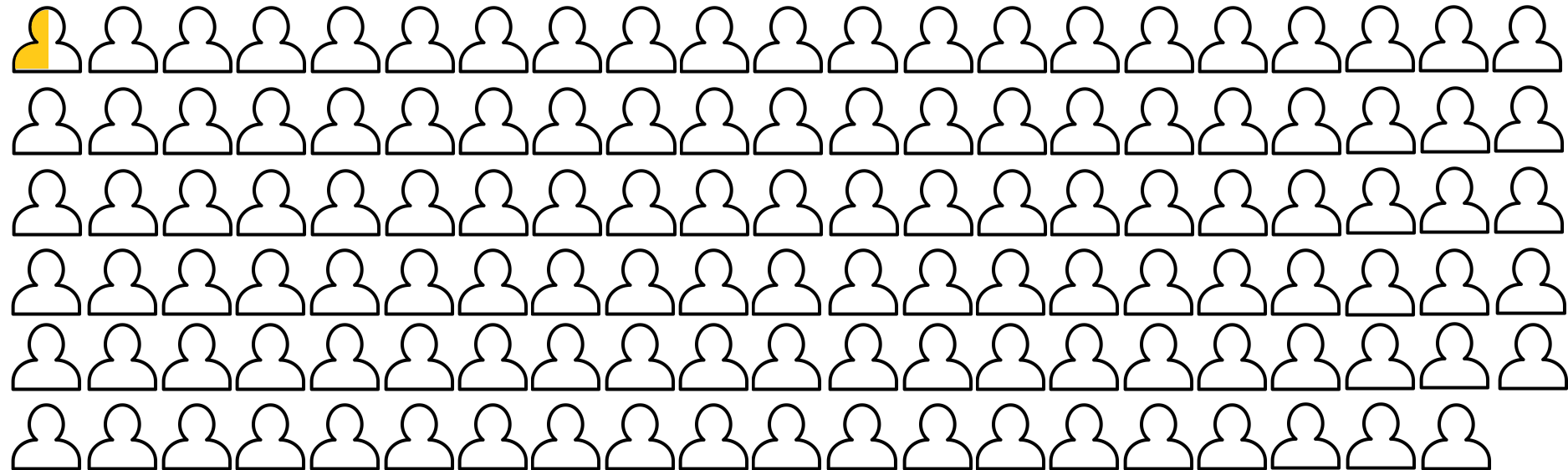
Sources: Homeless population data represent estimates from the 2017 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count for the Los Angeles Continuum of Care (LA CoC) and excludes the Glendale and Pasadena Continuums of Care. General population data taken from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2017 5-Year Estimates for Los Angeles County.

Prevalence of Black People Experiencing Homelessness (2017)

In the Los Angeles Continuum of Care, approximately **1 in 40** Black people experience homelessness.



For White people, approximately **1 in 250** experience homelessness.



Formation of Committees

Ad Hoc Committee on Women & Homelessness:

- Formed in response to increase in the number of women experiencing homelessness, as demonstrated by 2016 Homeless Count.
- Established by LAHSA Commission in **November 2016**.
- Monthly meetings December 2016 – July 2017

Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness:

- Formed in response to persistent overrepresentation of Black people in the homeless population.
- Established by LAHSA Commission in **December 2017**.
- Monthly meetings April 2018 – October 2018

Ad Hoc Committee on Women & Homelessness Members

LAHSA Commission Committee Members

Wendy Greuel, Chair

Sarah Dusseault

Committee Members

Chancela Al-Mansour

Housing Rights Center

Becky Dennison

Venice Community Housing

Elizabeth Eastlund

Rainbow Services

City of Los Angeles Domestic Violence Task Force

Maria Funk

Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health

Silvia Hernandez

Community Action Network

Drian Juarez

Los Angeles LGBT Center

Veronica Lewis

SSG HOPICS

Shamāiah Manriquez

Author and Advocate

Christine Margiotta

Social Venture Partners Los Angeles

Anne Miskey

Downtown Women's Center

Alisa Orduna

City of Los Angeles

Jessica Postigo

Commission on the Status of Women, City of Los Angeles, Housing and Community Investment Department

Molly Rysman

Office of Supervisor Sheila Kuehl

Amanda Sadra

Office of U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein

Amiyoko Shabazz

Downtown Women's Center

Cheri Todoroff

Los Angeles County Department of Health Services

Dhakshike Wickrema

Office of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas

Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness Members

LAHSA Commission Committee Members

Jacqueline Waggoner, Chair

Kelli Bernard, Vice-Chair

Committee Members

Dr. Va Lecia Adams Kellum

St. Joseph's Center

Chancela Al-Mansour

Housing Rights Center

Reverend Eddie Anderson

McCarty Memorial Christian Church

Dr. Jack Barbour

Southern California Health & Rehabilitation Program

Wendell Blassingame

Skid Row Resident/Veteran

Rachel Brashier

LA City Councilmember, Marqueece Harris-Dawson, Council District 8

Reverend Oliver Buie

Holman United Methodist Church

Chela Demuir-Cartier

Unique Woman's Coalition

Robin Hughes

Abode Communities

Janet Kelly

Sanctuary of Hope

Monique King-Viehland

Community Development Commission of the County of Los Angeles

Veronica Lewis

SSG HOPICS

Juataun Mark

Los Angeles County Department of Health Services

Nova Mirari

Homeless Youth Forum of Los Angeles

Anita Nelson

SRO Housing Corporation

Alisa Orduna

City of Santa Monica

Molly Rysman

Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, Third District

Suzette Shaw

Skid Row Resident/Human Services Advocate with Homeless Lived Experience

Brenda Shockley

Office of Mayor Eric Garcetti

Lola Smallwood Cuevas

Los Angeles Black Worker Center

Sean Spear

City of Los Angeles Housing + Community Investment Department

Reba Stevens

Advocate with Homeless Lived Experience

Pete White

Los Angeles Community Action Network

Dhakshike Wickrema

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, Second District 7

Purpose of Ad Hoc Committee on Women & Homelessness

The Committee's primary goal was to **understand, consider, and address the needs of women** within the homeless crisis response system.

Purpose of Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness

- 1) Examine the factors contributing to the overrepresentation of Black people among the population experiencing homelessness,
- 2) Identify opportunities to increase racial equity within the homeless service delivery system, and
- 3) Develop recommendations to more effectively meet the needs of Black people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Overview of the Process

- Committees engaged in monthly discussions around **the impacts that contribute to the prevalence of women and Black people experiencing homelessness.**
- Ad Hoc Committee on Women received **robust public comment** at Committee meetings; Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness held **community listening sessions** throughout LA County.
- Recommendations by Committees were **informed by quantitative data analysis and feedback from experts in the field**, and aim to address the burdens the Committee identified, in areas of:
 - ✓ *Cross-System Coordination*
 - ✓ *Data & Research*
 - ✓ *Funding*
 - ✓ *Programs & Services*
 - ✓ *Policy & Advocacy*
 - ✓ *Training & Capacity Building*

The Racial Equity Toolkit

To guide its work, the Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness adopted the use of a Racial Equity Toolkit, a process and set of questions designed to guide, inform, and assess how policies, programs, and budgetary decisions burden and/or benefit Black people experiencing homelessness.

STEP 1. Set Outcomes

STEP 2. Involve Stakeholders and Analyze Data

STEP 3. Determine Benefit and/or Burden

STEP 4. Advance Opportunity or Minimize Harm

STEP 5. Evaluate, Raise Awareness, and Be Accountable

STEP 6. Report Back

Emergent Themes

- LAHSA and its partners are mindful of the **many key themes in alignment** across the recommendations of both committees.
- **Examples of key themes** that emerged from the work of both Committees include:
 - ✓ *Trauma-informed care in service delivery*
 - ✓ *Involvement of individuals with lived experience*
 - ✓ *System alignment*
 - ✓ *Family reunification*
 - ✓ *Lack of housing resources*

Key Insights & Recommendations:

Ad Hoc Committee on Women & Homelessness

Characteristics Prevalent Among Women Experiencing Homelessness

Several notable characteristics of women experiencing homelessness identified through the Committee's work include:

1. High rates of experience with violence, including domestic and intimate partner violence;
2. High rates of human trafficking, including both labor and sex trafficking;
3. High financial vulnerability, especially among older women who have lower incomes and are more likely to live in poverty than their male counterparts; and
4. Increasing rates of poor physical and mental health.

Gender and Trauma-Informed Service Delivery

Effective service delivery requires awareness of the challenges and barriers that women uniquely face and must account for the full continuum of violence and trauma that is represented among women experiencing homelessness.

Recommendations

- ❑ Consider the needs of women in all funding decisions by prioritizing subpopulations in which women are overrepresented, and address vulnerabilities specific to women.
- ❑ Enhance shelter standards to be inclusive of gender diversity.
- ❑ Ensure that the health needs of women are considered and addressed, and that services are delivered through a gendered lens, with sensitivity to health, mental health, and substance use-related needs.

Involvement of Individuals with Lived Experience of Homelessness

Women with lived experience of homelessness need to be involved at all levels of service delivery, from program design to implementation to policymaking.

Recommendations

- Include people with lived experience as part of trainings.
- Provide technical assistance to expand providers' capacity to meaningfully incorporate individuals with lived experience into planning and decision-making.

Improvements to Data Collection and Tracking

Better data is needed to more fully understand the specific needs and challenges facing women experiencing homelessness, and ongoing evaluation is essential to measure the effectiveness of tools and services and identify what is and is not working.

Recommendations

- Revise the Homeless Count demographic survey questions to include a question on human trafficking, expanded transgender categories, additional age breakouts, and questions that capture a broader continuum of violence/trauma that women experience.
- Track housing placement data by gender and funding type.

Enhanced Training & Technical Assistance

Enhanced, ongoing training and technical assistance is needed to equip service providers to effectively understand and address the unique challenges impacting women.

Recommendations

- Ensure service providers have appropriate policies and practices to protect the confidentiality and safety of participants.
- Integrate topics of trauma-informed care, safety planning, human trafficking, domestic violence, gender and sexual diversity, and foster care/child welfare system navigation into regular, ongoing training opportunities for providers.

Lack of Housing Resources

The lack of housing resources across LA County – both within the homeless crisis response system and within the affordable housing market more broadly – significantly impacts women.

Recommendations

- ❑ Create longer-term shallow rental subsidies.
- ❑ Rigorously fund rapid re-housing.
- ❑ Support streamlined and expanded production of affordable housing through direct funding, land use tools, and other means.
- ❑ Support policies that strengthen or expand rent stabilization, and adopt “just cause” ordinances for eviction prevention.

Key Insights & Recommendations:

Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness

Structural and Institutional Racism

Institutional barriers across agencies and systems must be dismantled to eliminate the racial disparities and systemic racism impacting Black people experiencing homelessness.

Recommendations

- Enact a civil and human rights ordinance for the development of civil rights policies and enforcement against discriminatory practices.
- Enhance and require ongoing trainings in areas such as implicit bias, cultural competency, trauma-informed care, and the impacts of discrimination against Black people.

“Structural racism is the issue here. Los Angeles doesn’t acknowledge this. How can we have the conversation if we don’t acknowledge we live in a racist Los Angeles?”

-Participant, San Pedro Listening Session

Cost of Living and Lack of Employment Opportunities

Low and stagnant wages exacerbates homelessness and particularly impacts Black people. Employment discrimination based on race contributes to high unemployment for Black people.

Recommendations

- Continue to enhance existing fair hiring practices to reduce barriers to employment, including legislation to restrict the use of criminal history records.
- Ensure that living-wage employment training programs align with major growth sectors in the LA region, are adequately funded, and accessible to Black people experiencing homelessness.

“I am a paycheck away from being homeless myself.”

*-Black Woman,
Listening Session
Participant*

Criminal Justice System Involvement and Re-entry

The interconnectedness of incarceration and homelessness creates a revolving door that only serves to make the plight of homelessness more challenging and complex.

Recommendation

- Fund and build capacity for programs that support people who are formerly incarcerated and who are or are at risk of experiencing homelessness by:
 - Hiring Black people who are formerly incarcerated and/or have lived experience of homelessness,
 - Utilizing effective wrap-around service models, and
 - Employing trauma-informed care training and practices.

“It is nearly impossible to house Black people with criminal histories.”

-Black Woman, San Pedro Listening Session Participant

Foster Care and Child Welfare System Involvement

Rates of child welfare system involvement are disproportionately high among Black people experiencing homelessness.

Recommendations

- Coordinate and work with DCFS, homeless service providers, parent advocates, and other relevant partners to leverage resources and maximize services, expertise, and outcomes.
- Enhance DCFS supports with an increased focus on providing services to families at the outset of child welfare involvement to address the traumas of system involvement.

“There is no conversation as to what the youth need; the programs are prescriptive. If I am competent and succeeding, don’t take away resources because of it. Ask what we need rather than assume what we need.”

-Black Youth, Homeless Youth Forum of Los Angeles Focus Group Participant

Coordinated Entry System Access and Assessment

Including Black people with lived experience in program and policy design, implementation, evaluation, and service delivery, is critical to ensuring services meet the needs of Black people experiencing homelessness.

Sufficient research has not been done to understand whether CES Triage Tools adequately measure vulnerability and acuity of Black people experiencing homelessness.

Recommendations

- Provide training to decision-making bodies and ensure that, in all phases of decision-making, these bodies consider racial equity and the impacts of broad decisions on vulnerable populations.
- Involve people with lived experience, Black people, and service providers in planning and conducting research. Engage people who have been unsuccessful in accessing housing and services to understand barriers; participants who have had successful outcomes to determine success factors; and participants who have returned to homelessness to understand causes.

“They wanted to put 400 people that all had histories of trauma into one place.... Until homeless services really integrates trauma-informed care and deals with it from the perspective that looks at the whole piece—that looks at the racism—we are going to continue to repeat and spend money in ways that is not going to change the system.”

*-Black Woman, Service Provider,
South Los Angeles Listening Session
Participant*

Permanent Housing and Retention

Rates of return to homelessness are higher for Black people than other race groups, despite being housed in CES permanent housing at comparable rates.

Racial discrimination prevents Black people from securing rentals of their choice. Broader tenant protections and enforcement mechanisms are needed across LA County.

Recommendations

- Increase the quality of housing retention services in permanent supportive housing (PSH) and rapid re-housing (RRH) through training, data collection, and evaluation.
- Expand tenant protections at the local level, and advocate for changes at the state and federal level, to ensure more robust protections within the private market as well as within public housing and voucher programs.
- Continue to advocate for policies and funding to support further affordable housing development, to address the deficit in supply of affordable housing.

“The Shelter-Plus Care program is good, but where is the care? The permanent care facilities only have staff working from 9am-4pm. A lot of the staff have credentials, but they have no idea how to help individuals experiencing homelessness.

-Black Woman, South Los Angeles Listening Session Participant

Action Plan & Next Steps

