

# **Categorizing Risk and Resilience for Homeless Youth: A Typology to Inform Service Delivery**

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# Background

- Growing attention to service needs of the approximately one million young people under age 25 who experience homelessness annually in the US<sup>1</sup>
- But, homeless youth are a heterogeneous group with different service needs
- Prior work has defined typologies
  - Reason for homelessness (runaway, throwaway, system, street)
  - Risk characteristics (i.e. substance use, mental health, arrest)
  - Risk & protective factors (i.e. education, employment, support)

# Current Study

- Address limitations in prior work:
  - Inclusion of broad range of risk and protective factors
  - Translate into meaningful categories to inform service delivery in the community
- Current study
  - Inclusion of community partners in planning
  - Extensive list of risk and protective factors
  - Data driven typology using Latent Class Analysis

# YouthCount 2.0!

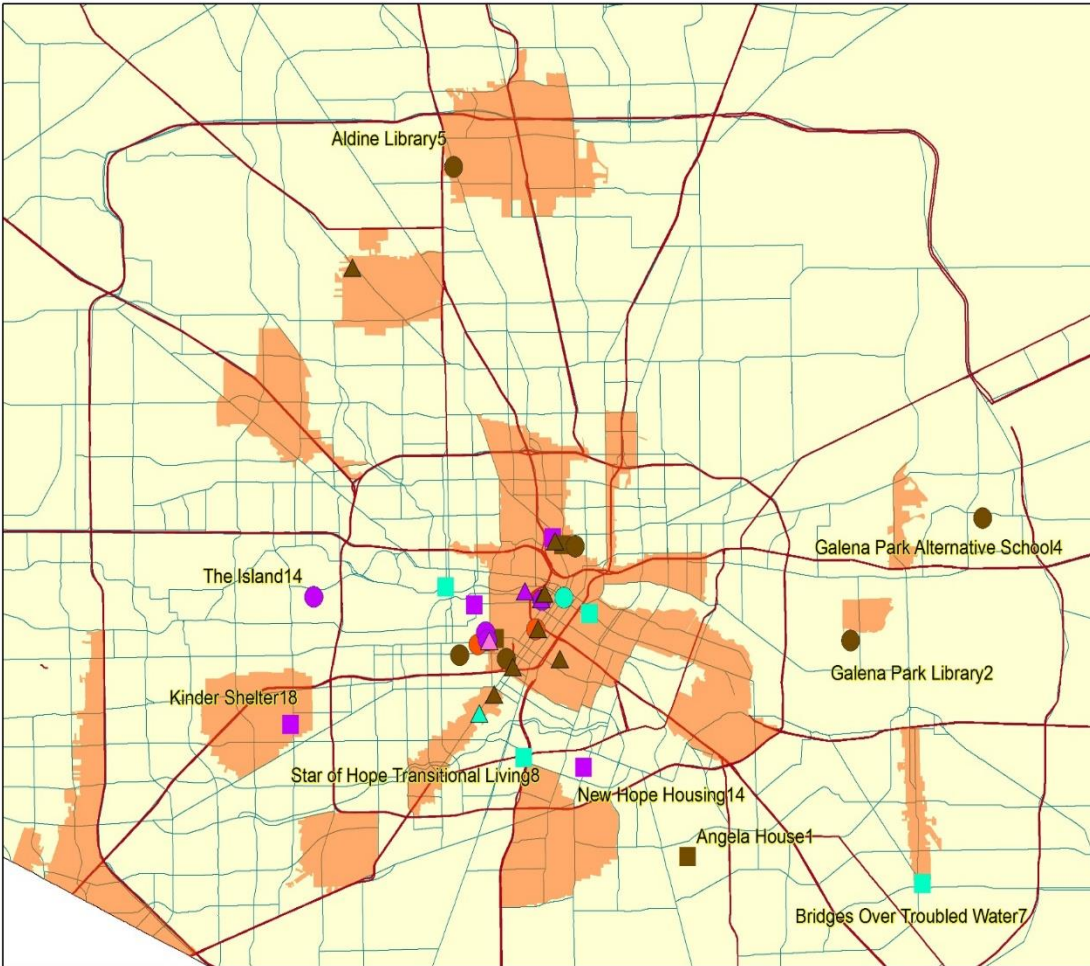
Data collected for 4 weeks  
97 events at 47 different  
locations:

- Magnet 22
- Shelters 26
- Outreach 47

Respondent driven sampling

Eligibility: Spent last night in  
shelter, on streets, or in  
unstable housing where they  
did not know where they  
would stay in 30 days

Limited to age 18-24 for this  
analysis (n=374)



# Measures – Historical Risk Indicators

- Trauma – ACE score of 0/1 vs. 2-10
- Juvenile Justice Involvement
- Foster Care Involvement
- Self-reported Prior MH Diagnosis
  - ADHD
  - Bipolar, Depression or Psychosis/Schizophrenia

# Measures - Current Risk Indicators

- Spent Prior Night on Street
- Psychological Distress (past 30 days)
- Substance Use (past month)
  - Marijuana
  - Kush
  - Other Drugs (Combined 13 other substances)
- Trade Sex (lifetime)
- Suicide Attempt (past year)
- Arrest (past year)
- Pregnant or Parent (currently)

# Measures – Protective Resources

- Health Status – Good/Very Good/Excellent vs. Fair/Poor
- Currently Employed
- Graduated High School or got GED
- Supportive Adults: Is there at least one adult in your life...
  - Who you could go to for emotional support?
  - Who you could go to for job or school advice?

# Measures – Demographic/Service Use

- Demographic
  - Age, Gender, Race, Sexual Orientation
- Homeless-related
  - Reasons for homelessness, last home in Houston
- Lifetime service use
  - Shelter, Transitional Housing, Drop-in Center, Free Meal, Job Training, Educational Services, Health Care Services, Mental Health Services
- Perceived service need
  - Health/Mental Health Service, Educational Opportunities, Job Training, Housing



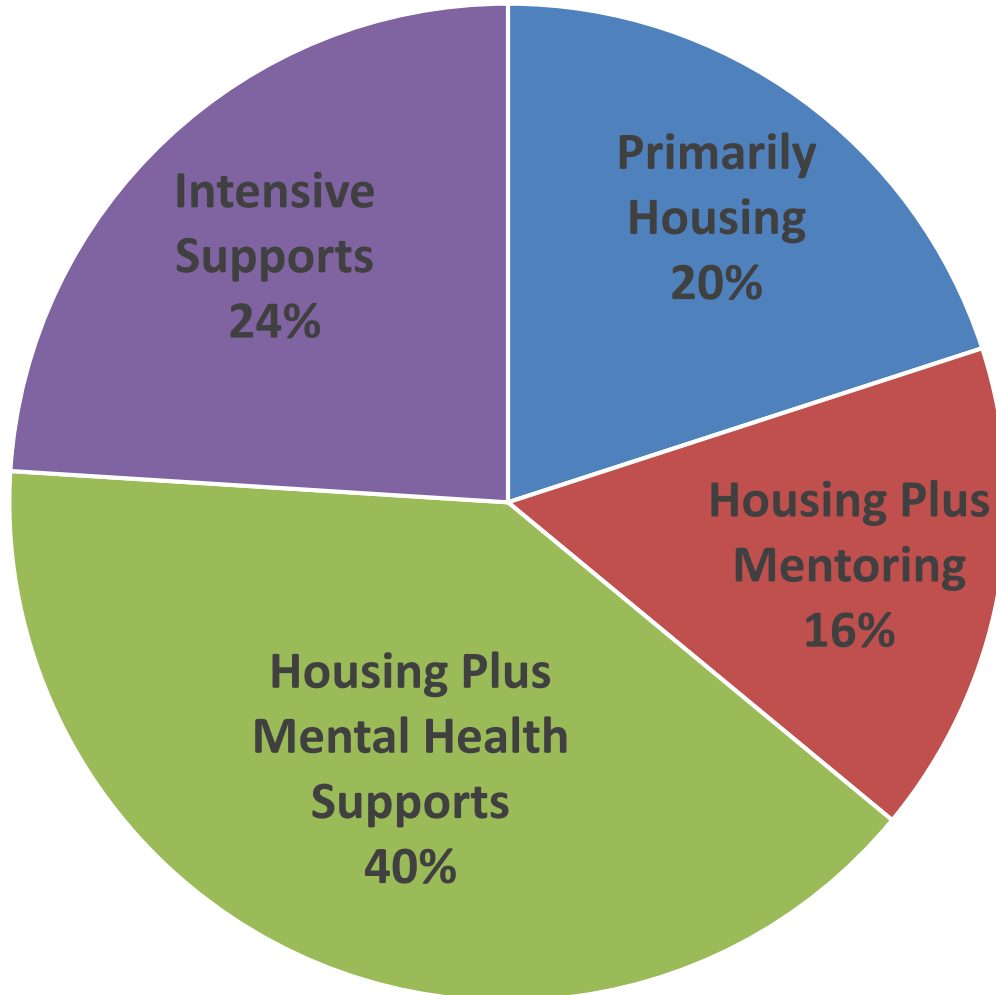
# Analyses

- Latent Class Analyses
  - Fit using historical risk, current risk, and protective resource indicators (all dichotomous)
  - Best fitting model examining fit indicators (i.e. SBIC, Entropy) and Vuong Lo Mendell Rubin Likelihood Ratio Test
- Post hoc examination of classes by demographic characteristics and service use

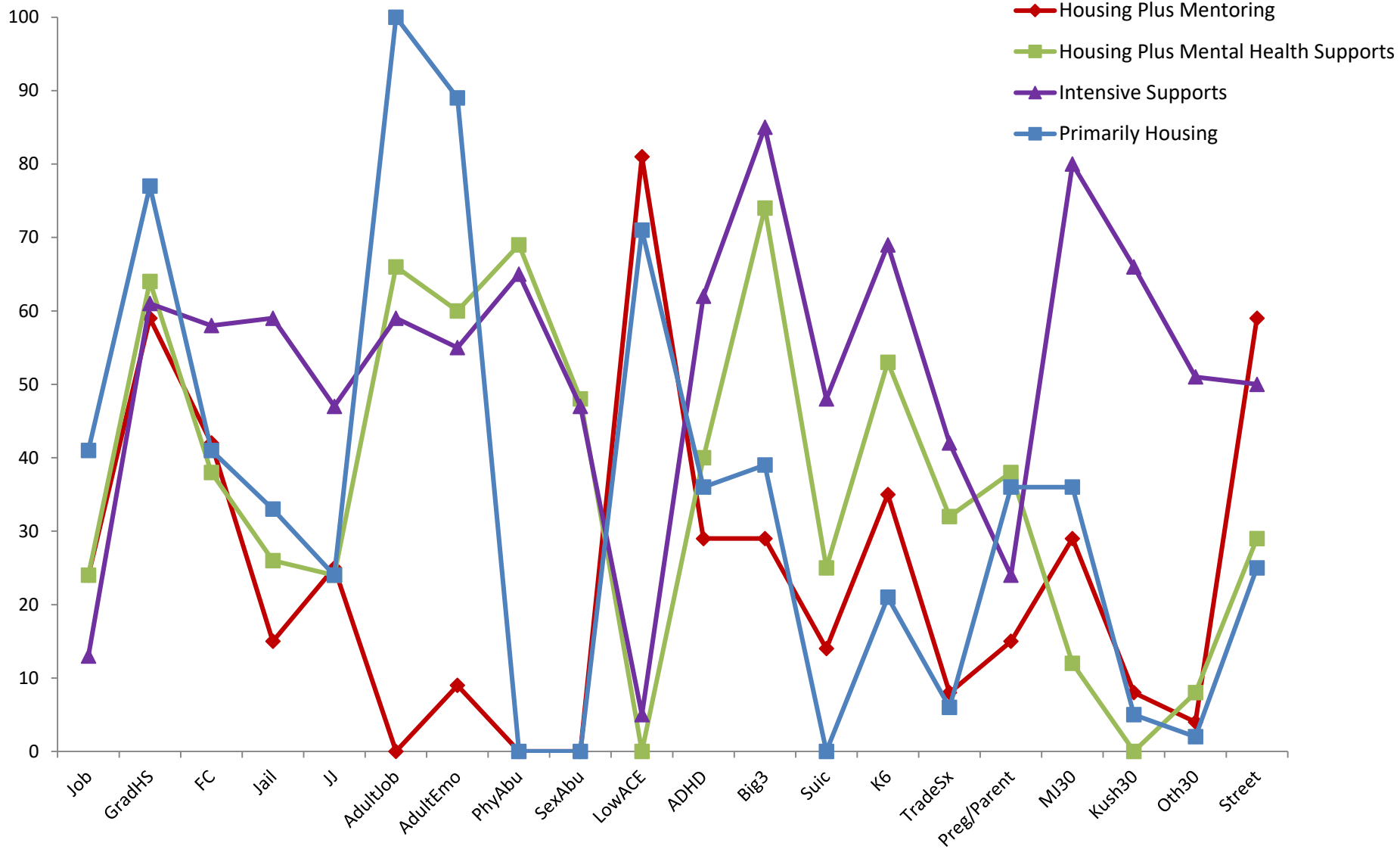
# Sample (n=374)

- Mean Age = 20.7 (sd=2.1)
- Male (54.0%), Female (41.2%), Trans(4.8%)
- African American (57.8%), White (12.3%), Hispanic (8.0%), Multiracial (16.0%), Other (5.9%)
- LGBTQ (24.8%)
- Spent Prior Night on Streets (35.6%)

# Results: 4 Subgroups



# 4 Groups



# Primarily Housing (n=73)

62% Male, 67%  
African American,  
17% LGBTQ

More adult support

Higher rates of  
employment

More educated

Highest rates of  
lifetime shelter use  
and transitional  
housing

More likely to be  
currently sheltered

More likely to be  
pregnant/  
parenting

Lower rates of MH  
and substance  
problem

Less trauma

# Housing Plus Mentoring (n=60)

65% Male, 70%  
African American,  
0% White,  
17% LGBTQ

Low trauma

Low adult support

Lowest rates of all  
types service use  
and service needs

More likely to be  
living on the streets

Lower rates of MH  
diagnoses

Lower rates of  
pregnant/parenting

Lower rates of  
arrest

Less likely to have  
been kicked out of  
house

# Housing Plus Mental Health Supports (n=151)

44% Male, 56%  
African American,  
27% LGBTQ

High trauma (2+  
ACEs)

High rates of  
physical and  
sexual abuse

Higher rates of  
MH diagnoses

High  
psychological  
distress

Higher rates of  
suicide attempts

High rates of MH  
service use and  
current need

Low substance  
use

Higher rates of  
sex trade

# Intensive Supports (n=90)

34% female,  
8% transgender/  
other, 33% LGBTQ

46% African  
American,  
21% White

High rates of  
trauma and abuse

Most likely to have  
been kicked out

Highest rates of  
sex trade and  
arrest

Highest need for  
services,  
education, housing

Highest MH  
diagnoses, distress,  
suicide attempts

Highest rates of  
substance use

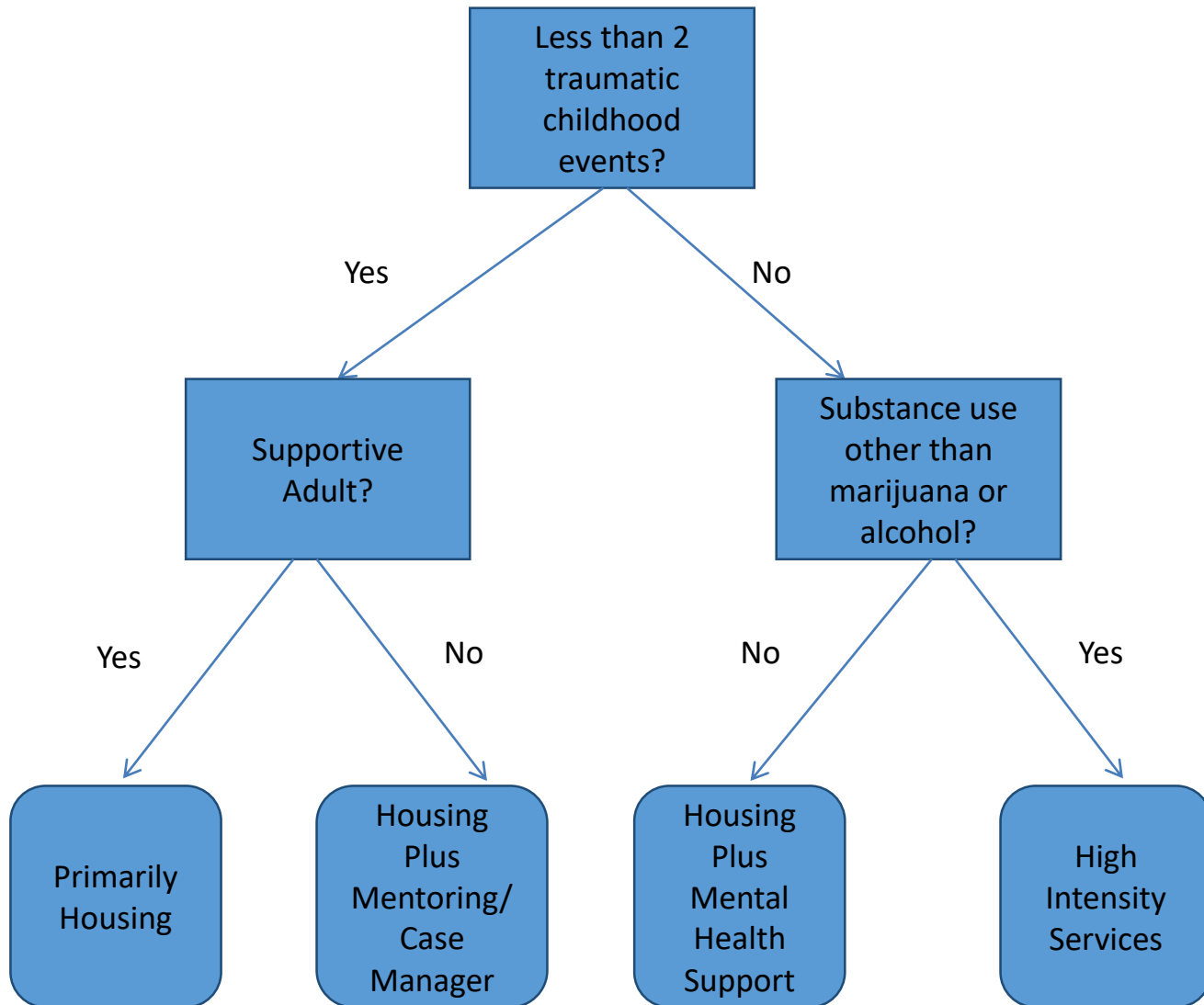
High foster care  
and juvenile  
probation  
involvement



# Discussion

- Four groups were identified with clearly different profiles indicating different service needs
- Two thirds were in higher intensity groups, highlighting need for trauma-informed services and mental health supports
- Flexible and immediate housing responses need to be paired with tailored supports to ensure success

# Implications – Assessment Tools



# Conclusion

- Cross-sectional, don't know specifically how identification of these subgroups relates to long term outcomes
- Important to consider heterogeneity among homeless youth population, meaningful subgroups can be identified fairly quickly
- Assess and balance caseloads for service intensity, ongoing reassessment

# THANK YOU

- Greater Houston Community Foundation, Fund to End Homelessness
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- Homeless Youth Network
- Community Advisory Group Members