

## Background

- Homeless youth leave school for a variety of reasons, such as lack of family support, frequent moves between homes and schools, and significant life stress. Without a basic education, youth are at risk of limited employment opportunities and poverty during their adult lives. While multiple studies have cross-sectionally examined school engagement patterns of homeless and unstably housed youth, few studies have established a temporal relationship between timing of homelessness and school disengagement.
- Objective:** To identify a temporal relationship and assess differences in educational disengagement between homeless youth and similarly situated youth who did not experience homelessness or unstable housing.
- Research Questions:**
  - What are the characteristics of youth who experience homelessness or unstable housing?
  - What are the educational disengagement patterns (defined as <90% attendance and dropping out of high school) for youth who experience homelessness/unstable housing as compared to students who are not homeless/unstably housed?

## Data & Methods

- Data:** we matched education records from the Minnesota Department of Education (AY 2001-2016) with shelter records from Hennepin County, services data from YouthLink, data from the Homelessness Information Management System (HMIS), and Child Protective Services (CPS), Out-of-Home Placement (OHP), and Children's Mental Health (CMH) case management records from the Minnesota Department of Human Services.
- Sample:** cohort included youth (aged 16 to 24 years) who were known to have experienced homelessness or were unstably housed prior to their last year of enrollment in school by their involvement with YouthLink in 2011 (n=764).
- Comparison group:** did not experience homelessness or were unstably housed and matched on age, gender, race/ethnicity, free/reduced lunch (FRL), receipt of CMH services, CPS involvement, and OHP using propensity score matching (n=764).

## Sample Characteristics

Table 1. Characteristics of Homeless and Unstably Housed Youth and Their Peers\*

	Homeless and Unstably Housed Youth (n=764)		Matched Comparison Group (n=764)	
		%		%
Female		63.6%		57.7%
Mean Age (stdev)		18 (1.7)		18.1 (1.9)
Native American		5.5%		8.9%
Black		82.3%		77.6%
Hispanic		2.7%		2.4%
Asian		0.5%		2.5%
White		8.9%		9.2%
CPS ever		56.4%		54.8%
CMH ever		14.4%		13.5%
OHP ever		49.6%		50.4%
Special Education		40.7%		44.8%
Free/reduced lunch		95.4%		95.0%
Total		50%		50%

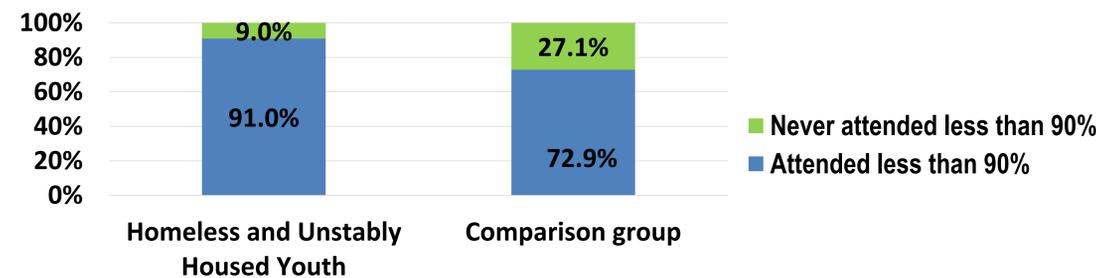
\*Chi-square (proportions) and t-test (means) p-values > 0.05, no significant difference between homeless youth and comparison group across characteristics

## Attendance and Graduation Rates

Our outcome measures for educational disengagement were:

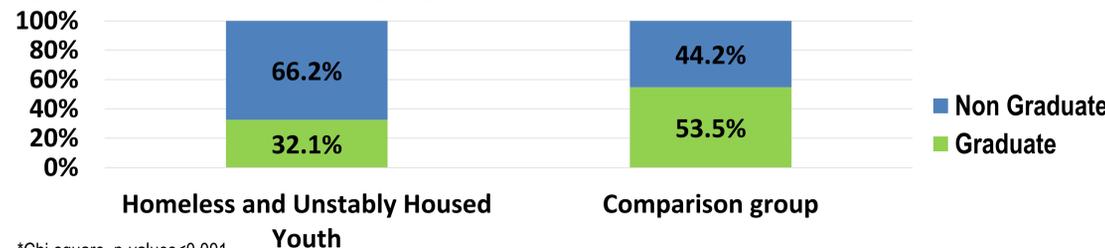
- low attendance** (< 90% attendance during a full-time enrollment record).
- non-graduate** (did not graduate for any reason).

Figure 1. Proportion with Low Attendance (Attending School Less than 90% of the Time)\*



\*Chi-square p-values < 0.001

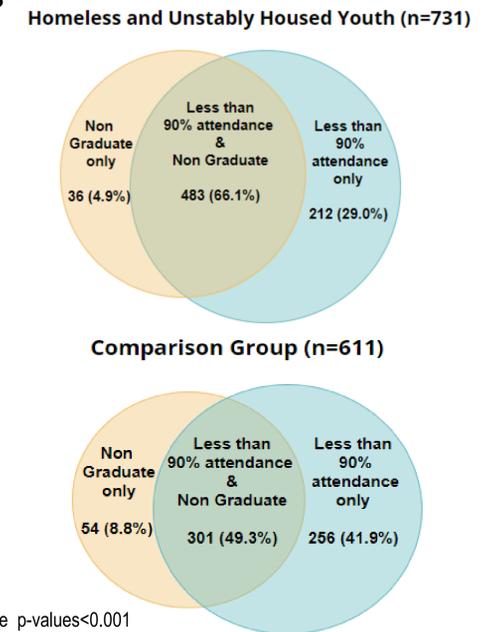
Figure 2. Proportion Graduating High School\*



\*Chi-square p-values < 0.001

## Educational Disengagement

Figure 3. Educational Disengagement of Homeless and Unstably Housed Youth and Their Peers\*



\*Chi-square p-values < 0.001

## Conclusions

- Compared to their non homelessness and/or unstably housed peers, **youth who experienced homelessness and/or housing instability were more likely to accrue school absences, less likely to graduate high school**, and more likely to experience both outcomes of educational disengagement.
- Prior literature has also found that **students who experience homelessness have higher rates of difficulty in the school setting than non-homeless children** (Cutuli et al., 2011; Garcia, et al., 2018; Obradovic, et al., 2009)\*.

### Implications for public policy:

- Need collaboration between housing providers and school systems to implement strategies to improve school attendance and serve as an early warning to educators when a student's absences are associated with homelessness.
- Advocate for legislation that can provide academic support, counseling, and other interventions to support children's academic stability as well as overall housing stability and supports to children's families.

\*references are available upon request