Homelessness- a key factor associated with bio/psycho/social problem severity among clients entering Casa Esperanza

Analysis of the CasaCare data set

October 10, 2019

Project Director:Emily Stewart
Casa Esperanza,
302 Eustis Street
Roxbury, MA 02119
estewart@casaesperanza.org

Project Evaluators: Lena Lundgren, PhD
Butler Institute for Families
Graduate School of Social Work
University of Denver
2148 S. High Street
Denver, CO 80208
303-871-4066
Lena.Lundgren@du.edu

Mary Jo Larson, PhD
Institute for Behavioral Health
Heller School of Social Policy and Management
Waltham, MA
781-736-3834
Larson@brandeis.edu

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

CONTEXT

A four-year SAMHSA/CMHS grant funded the Primary and Behavioral Health Care Integration (PBHCI), *Comprehensive Integrated Treatment Approach* (CITA) (SM060845-0) project at Casa Esperanza. The project was highly successful in engaging its target population of homeless or transient Latinx individuals living with co-occurring addiction, serious mental illness and trauma-related disorders. The target population was clients who had a constellation of service needs resulting from mental health problems, substance use disorders, homelessness, and unemployment. During the grant period, staff conducted 315 intakes upon that form the basis of this analysis. The first section of this report describes the overall participant population, and the majority of the report focuses on comparing the similarities and differences in needs and experiences of clients who considered themselves homeless versus all other clients.

OVERVIEW OF CLIENT INTAKE DATA

This section briefly describes characteristics from intake interviews with all participants in Casa Esperanza's *Comprehensive Integrated Treatment Approach (CITA).* The participants were between 19 and 73 years of age, with a mean age of 40.09 years (SD = 9.85). The majority (92.1%) of participants identified as Hispanic or Latinx, of whom the majority identified as Puerto Rican (72.8%). In the 30 days prior to intake, most (70.3%) participants considered themselves homeless, with 46.1% housed in residential treatment at intake. Over half (54.9%) of the participants reported having less than a high school diploma, while just under one-third (28.7%) reported having a high school diploma or equivalent, and one-tenth (9.8%) reported having attended some college/university or vocational program. The majority (87.7%) of participants were unemployed at intake; of those, participants 35.9% were looking for work.

All participants screened positive for co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders. Just under three-fourths (71%) of the participants were prescribed medication for psychological or emotional problems in their lifetime and 69.2% of those participants were prescribed medication within the past year. Forty percent of participants were taking prescribed medication for physical problems and reported a chronic medical problem. Just over half (65.7%) of participants reported that they had a primary care physician (PCP) at intake and 22.4% had an emergency department visit.

At intake, about 17.7% of participants reported illicit drug use in the past 30 days. Over

half (66.1%) of clients reported being sexually active in the month prior to intake. Of sexually active clients, 24.8% reported that they had unprotected sex. Twenty-two percent (21.9%) of participants reported that, during their lifetimes, they had given sex to get drugs, and a quarter (26.2%) reported that they gave sex to get money. The majority (89.5%) of clients has been tested for Hepatitis C (HCV) at intake and just a little under half (44.2%) screened positive, with close to a third (32.2%) reporting they had received treatment and 67.7% reporting curative treatment outcomes. Similarly, most clients (84.1%) reported they had been tested for Hepatitis B (HBV) at baseline with 8.5% reporting positive HBV results. Almost all (98.0%) of clients reported they had been tested for HIV and 9.5% reported they were HIV positive; of those who were HIV positive 89.7% were taking medication.

SIGNS OF UNSTABLE HOUSING

Among the Casa Esperanza participants, 70.3% considered themselves homeless at the time of the intake interview. Notably, among the participants who did not report homelessness, 26.3% were housed the past 30 days in residential treatment and 19.7% were staying with friends or family, and may also be vulnerable to housing instability. Among participants who considered themselves homeless, 45.6% were housed the past 30 days in residential treatment, 17.6% in emergency shelter, and 14.0% with family or friends.

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS BY HOMELESS STATUS (TABLE 1)

The group that was homeless differed from the group that was not homeless significantly on several demographic and social characteristics. They were more likely to be male and self-identify as white, and less likely to be employed full or part-time at Intake interview. They were more likely to have criminal justice involvement, including more likely to ever have been in jail, and in the past 30 days to have been or parole or probation and to be awaiting trial or sentencing.

HEALTH STATUS AND NEEDS BY HOMELESS STATUS (TABLE 2)

The group of participants who were homeless were similar to other clients on many health status characteristics (Table 2). In both groups over one-quarter of participants rated their health status as only fair or poor. In both groups the most serious health limitations were failure to get exercise, and being bothered by emotional problems. Over-one third of both groups were

bothered by moderate or greater bodily pain. A higher proportion of clients who were homeless (68%) were regular smokers than the other clients (58%). More than one-third of both groups reported having at least one chronic health condition, with the most frequent conditions being asthma, hypertension, chronic back pain, and diabetes.

MENTAL HEALTH STATUS AND NEEDS BY HOMELESS STATUS (TABLE 3)

There were many mental health differences between those clients who were homeless and other clients (Table 3). Three times the percentage of clients who were homeless compared to other clients (33% vs 10%, p <.01) endorsed a statement (several days or more past month) that they would be better off dead or had thoughts of harming self. The majority of clients in both groups had lifetime experiences of depression, anxiety, and time when concentrating and remembering things was difficult. Using standardized screening measures for depression and anxiety. the group that was homeless had a significantly greater percentage who screened positive for moderate or greater depression (p <.01) or to some degree anxiety (p = .05). The group that was homeless was significantly more likely to report a lifetime experience of a traumatic event, and among those with trauma, mean score on a standardized measure of trauma symptoms was higher among those who were homeless.

ADDICTION STATUS BY HOMELESS STATUS (TABLE 4)

The group that was homeless reported higher lifetime prevalence of several categories of illicit drug use, especially street opioids and prescribed opioids, hallucinogens and stimulants as well as injection drug use (Table 4). The drug of choice at time of treatment did not look substantially different. We did not investigate differences in age of first use or years of use, although these questions were asked. In the future we will also investigate differences in ASI alcohol composite and ASI drug composite scores.

SELF-EFFICACY (TABLE 5)

A number of questions asked the participant about their ability to manage day to day stressors, or utilize life skills (Table 5). While on many items the responses were similar between the two groups, not surprisingly, the group that was homeless was much less likely to endorse

that their housing was satisfactory, and also less likely to endorse that their symptoms were NOT bothering them.

TREATMENT UTILIZATION (TABLE 6)

Regarding treatment utilization in the past 30 days, the groups were very similar on many of the measures (Table 6). However, the group that was homeless was more likely to have days in the hospital in the past month for a physical health or mental health problems than other participants. The difference in the percent that reported they had a primary care provider and for measures of medication adherence did not differ significantly between groups.

Tables

Table 1. Distribution of Demographic and Social Characteristics of Homeless and Not-Homeless CasaCare Participants at Intake (N=315)

Characteristic at Intake	Homeless		Not Homeless	
	Frequency	Valid %	Frequency	Valid %
Distribution by group, n	221	70.1	94	29.9
Age, mean (SD)	39.8 (9.7)		40.6 (10.1)	
Gender				
Male	156	70.6	56	59.6
Female	65	29.4	37	39.4
Different identity	0	0.0	1	1.1
Ethnicity*				
Identifies as Hispanic or Latino	197	89.1	93	98.9
Puerto Rican	157	75.8	60	65.2
Dominican	21	10.1	18	19.6
South American	11	5.3	5	5.4
Central American	9	4.3	9	9.8
Cuban	2	1.0	2	2.2
Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano/a	3	1.5	0	0.0
Other	11	5.3	4	4.4
Race*				
White	52	35.6	11	18.6
Black, or African American	16	10.5	4	6.8
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2	1.3	0	0.0
American Indian	5	3.3	1	1.7
Other	77	50.7	43	72.9%
Culture				
Speak Spanish at home, yes (p=.06)	196	89.1	90	95.7
Ever served on Active Duty, with Reserve or National Guard (p < 0.05)	2	0.9	4	4.3
Employment Status				
Employed (part-time or full-time)	19	8.6	18	19.1
Disabled, unemployed	64	29.0	19	30.9
Other, unemployed	138	62.4	47	50.0
Education Status				
Less than high school	125	56.8	47	50.0
High school graduate or equivalent	61	27.7	30	31.9
Some college or voc training	34	15.5	18	18.1
Marital Status				
Never Married	134	60.6	58	61.7
Married	17	7.7	9	9.6
Other (separate, divorced, widowed)	70	31.7	27	28.7
Children				

Has Children	177	80.1	77	81.9
Criminal Justice involvement				
Currently awaiting charges, trial, sentencing	63	28.6	13	14.0
Currently on probation or parole	87	39.5	23	25.0
Ever been in jail, yes	**180**	**81.4**	**63**	**67.0**
Selling drugs	91	50.6	29	46.0
Drug possession	107	59.4	31	49.2
Weapons	48	26.7	14	22.2
Assault	60	33.3	28	44.4
Burglary, larceny, breaking & entry	61	33.9	13	20.6
Homicide	9	5.0	2	3.2
Prostitution	8	4.4	1	1.6

Notes: * does not match sample total because of missing data

Table 2. Distribution of Health Characteristics of Homeless and Not-Homeless CasaCare Participants at Intake (N=315)

Characteristic at Intake	Homeless		Not Homeless	
	Frequency	Valid %	Frequency	Valid %
Health status				
Excellent / Very good	62	28.3	30	32.3
Good	93	42.5	35	37.6
Fair / Poor	64	29.2	28	30.1
Health limitations past 4 weeks, mean score on 1 (not at all) to 5 (most impairment) (SD)				
Limited physical activities	1.98 (1.3)		1.87 (1.3)	
Difficulty doing daily work	1.79 (1.1)		1.69 (1.2)	
How much energy (reverse coding)	2.75 (1.3)		2.65 (1.3)	
How often exercise	2.80 (1.4)		3.05 (1.5)	
Health or emotions limit social activities	2.15 (1.3)		2.10 (1.3)	
Bothered by emotional problems	2.72 (1.5)		2.72 (1.5)	
Health or emotions keep you from doing usual activities	1.94 (1.3)		1.94 (1.3)	
How much bodily pain past 4 weeks				
None	81	36.7	34	36.2
Very Mild	34	15.4	14	14.9
Mild	29	13.1	11	11.7
Moderate	40	18.1	13	13.8
Severe	24	10.9	14	14.9
Very Severe	13	5.9	8	8.5
Smoke sometimes, quite a lot, very freq	**71**	**68.6**	**55**	**58.5**
Physical Health Problems				
Taking prescribed medication for physical problem, past 30 days (p=0.56)	**86**	**39.3**	**39**	**42.9**
Missed medication days, past 7 days	17	19.3	11	28.2
Reports having a chronic medical problem (p= 0.19)	**92**	**42.0**	**32**	**34.0**
Arthritis	4	4.0	2	8.3
Asthma	11	14.7	7	29.2
Cancer	2	2.7	0	0.0

Chronic back pain or problem	7	9.3	5	20.8
Depression	3	4.0	1	4.2
Diabetes	8	10.7	5	20.8
Hepatitis C	3	4.0	1	4.2
HIV/AIDS	8	7.2	1	4.2
Hypertension	9	8.1	5	20.8
Seizures	5	6.7	0	0.0
Spinal discs and/or issues	3	2.7	2	8.3
Other	23	30.7	7	29.2

Table 3. Distribution of Mental Health Characteristics of Homeless and Not-Homeless CasaCare Participants at Intake (N=315)

	Homeless		Not Homeless	
Characteristic at Intake	**Frequency**	**Valid %**	**Frequency**	**Valid %**
Prescribed medication for psychological/emotional problem **				
Past 12 months, yes	126	72.4	47	74.2
Past 6 months, yes	112	78.3	47	85.5
Past 30 days, yes	96	74.4	40	72.7
Missed days in past 30 days	26	24.5	13	28.9
Lifetime Mental Health Experiences (ASI)				
Serious Depression	171	77.7	65	69.9
Serious Anxiety or Tension	175	79.2	68	73.1
Hallucinations	82	37.3	33	35.5
Trouble understanding, concentrating or remembering	154	70.0	54	58.1
Trouble controlling violent behavior	112	50.9	37	40.2
Endorsed "thoughts of better off dead, or hurting self, several days or more past month	**50**	**33.0**	**10**	**10.9**
Patient Health Questionnaire 9-item (PHQ9) Scale for Depression (0-27)				
Total PHQ9 Score, mean (SD) (p < .01)	10.48 (7.2)		7.92 (6.2)	
Clinical Group (Chi-square, p < .01)				
PHQ9 < 15	149	69.3	75	84.3
PHQ9 15 or higher	66	30.7	14	15.7
Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7-item (GAD7) Scale (0-21)				
Total GAD7 Score, mean (SD) (p < .05)	9.35 (6.7)		7.58 (6.2)	
Clinical Group (chi-square, p = 0.10)				
GAD7 < 15	165	75.0	76	83.5
GAD7 15 or higher	55	25.0	15	16.5

Trauma: Experienced event(s) that resulted in feeling physically/ emotionally harmed or threatened	168	76.0	56	59.6
Natural or man-made disaster	5	3.0	2	3.6
Community or school violence	46	27.4	16	28.6
Interpersonal violence	147	87.5	51	91.1
Military trauma	1	0.6	1	1.8
Other	14	6.6	3	5.4
Endorsed at least one PTSD symptom	**164**	**74.2**	**56**	**59.6**
Trauma symptom checklist score (range 0 – 92), mean (SD) (p < .01)	**28.08 (19.5)**		**20.43 (14.3)**	

Table 4. Drug Use and Addiction Characteristics of Homeless and Not Homeless CasaCare Participants at Intake and Lifetime

Characteristic	Homeless		Not Homeless	
	Frequency	Valid %	Frequency	Valid %
Drug of Choice (ASI item)				
Alcohol and Cocaine (n.s.)	13	5.9	2	2.2
Alcohol and Heroin (n.s.)	3	1.4	2	2.2
Alcohol & other drug (not Cocaine, heroin)	37	16.9	21	23.6
Cocaine & Heroin (speedball) (n.s.)	24	11.0	7	7.9
Heroin & other opiates (or comb.) (n.s.)	94	42.9	31	34.8
Cocaine (or cocaine & other drug not heroin) (n.s.)	28	12.8	13	14.6
No drug history or use reported (p=.01)	4	1.8	7	7.9
Other drug (n.s.)	19	8.7	6	6.7
Ever drink alcohol to intoxication, lifetime	**163**	**89.1**	**64**	**80.0**
Other Illicit Drug Use - Lifetime	**208**	**94.5**	**76**	**83.5**
Marijuana	185	84.5	63	70.0
Cocaine/crack	180	82.6	57	62.0
Street opioids (heroin)	164	74.9	48	52.7
Prescription opioids	75	34.4	25	27.5
Tranquilizers (sedatives, sleeping pills)	59	27.1	15	16.3
Hallucinogens	56	25.6	10	10.9
Prescription stimulants	264	11.0	2	2.2
Methamphetamine/other amphetamines	19	8.6	2	2.2
Inhalants	15	6.9	1	1.1
Injected Drugs *	91	48.5	25	32.5
Live with someone				
With an alcohol problem (p<.01)	40	18.9	6	6.5
With a drug problem (p =.01)	30	14.3	4	4.3

Note: *skip pattern, percentage based on selected drug users

Table 5. Distribution of Self Efficacy on Life Skills (N=315)				
	Homeless		**Not Homeless**	
Characteristic at Intake	**Frequency**	**Valid %**	**Frequency**	**Valid %**
Agree or strongly agree with statement				
I do well at work	117	60.0	56	70.0
I am getting along with my family members	161	73.2	78	83.9
I deal effectively with daily problems	143	64.7	74	79.6
I am able to control my life	135	61.5	69	75.0
I am able to deal with crisis	139	83.3	61	65.6
I do well in social situations	166	75.5	74	81.3
My housing is satisfactory	43	19.5	70	75.3
My symptoms are not bothering me	76	34.4	45	49.5

Table 6. Distribution of Treatment Utilization of Homeless and Not-Homeless CasaCare Participants at Intake (N=315)

Characteristic at Intake	Homeless		Not Homeless	
	Frequency	Valid %	Frequency	Valid %
Medical Treatment				
Has a primary care physician (p=0.18)	**139**	**63.5**	**67**	**71.3**
Times seen PCP, past 12 months, mean	**2.34 (1.5)**		**2.69 (1.5)**	
0 times	20	12.7	9	9.6
1 time	38	24.1	11	14.9
2 times	26	16.5	8	10.8
3 times	16	10.1	12	16.2
4 or more times	58	36.7	34	45.9
Spent at least one night in hospital in past 30 days for:				
Physical complaint	41	18.6	5	5.4
Mental health care	31	14.0	3	3.3
Detox/inpatient or residential substance abuse	40	18.1	19	20.7
Visited the ER at least once in the past 30 days for:				
Physical complaint	36	16.3	51	16.1
Psychiatric or emotional problem	13	5.9	17	5.4
Alcohol or substance use	10	4.5	11	3.5
Received outpatient care at least once in the past 30 days for:				
Physical complaint	58	18.4	17	18.3
Mental or emotional difficulties	39	12.3	8	8.6
Alcohol or substance use	45	14.2	5	5.4
Medication Adherence				
Forget to take your medicine				
None of the time	156	71.2	71	77.2
Some of the time	42	19.2	17	18.5
Most or all of the time	21	9.6	4	4.4
Decide not to take your medicine				

None of the time	154	70.3	72	79.1
Some of the time	55	25.1	14	15.4
Most or all of the time	10	4.6	5	5.5

Note **influenced by outliers in homeless group