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Youth Homelessness in Los Angeles County: A Critical Look at Funding Allocations

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Abstract

In LA County, service providers rely on government funding to assist youth experiencing homelessness. Existing literature acknowledges the unique problems that the youth subpopulation confronts. Moreover, research notes that the most effective services for youth are youth-focused, and the availability of services is directly correlated with the supply of funding. We question whether youth funding allocations in LA County meet the reality of the youth homeless crisis. To perform an analysis, this research pursues a community engaged analysis of funding allocations from three sources—HEAP, HHAP round 1, and Measure H funded contracts—to form a representative view of the LA funding ecosystem. Further analysis occurs at the LA City Council District, County Supervisorial District, and County Service Planning Area scales. We find trends that implicate inequitable funding allocations and a concerning lack of accessible and accurate data.

Keywords: Youth homelessness, Los Angeles County, funding, allocation, HEAP, HHAP, Measure H

Youth Homelessness in Los Angeles County: A Critical Look at Funding Allocations

The number of homeless youth, including unaccompanied minors, transition age youth (TAY) age 18-24, and children of families headed by TAY, in Los Angeles County continues to rise. In its 2020 point in time (PIT) homeless count, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) estimate for youth experiencing homelessness on a night in January in Los Angeles County increased by 19% from 2019 (LAHSA, 2020). These estimates are staggering and there is wide acceptance among service providers that current estimates of homeless youth are most likely an undercount (Esparza et al., 2009). The 2020 LAHSA count does not account for the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic that are likely to cause an equally, if not larger, jump in youth homelessness in the coming year¹.

Service providers working to alleviate homelessness receive funding from a variety of private and government sources. This research looks at funding received from the state of California and Los Angeles County. Much funding rightfully centers families and individual adults experiencing homelessness; however, the current allocation of funding for youth homelessness in Los Angeles proves insufficient. Adequate funding is necessary in order to enact informed policy and system provision that meets the distinct needs of homeless youth. We argue that addressing homelessness at the youth scale provides service providers with an opportunity to identify individual experiences with homelessness before it develops into a chronic or disabling condition, serving to take an upstream approach to service provision.

Our study's purpose is to analyze the current allocation of funding for the youth subpopulation of people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County. Forming a

¹ At the time this research project was undertaken, LAHSA cancelled the 2021 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count due to health and safety concerns for the thousands of volunteers recruited each year.

representative view of the funding ecosystem for homelessness in LA County serves as the basis for us to question how resource allocation can better prioritize homeless youth given their particular vulnerability and upstream position. A community-engaged quantitative analysis of data relating to the breakdown of funding for homelessness and the frequency of homelessness in LA County serves to accomplish this purpose. Analysis for this research project is undertaken at the Supervisorial District (SD), LA City Council District district (CD), and Los Angeles Service Planning Area (SPA) scales where possible.

In our representative sample of funding streams, we analyzed LA County funding received from California State's Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) block grant and Homeless Housing, Assistance and Provision (HHAP) round 1 block grant, and the county's Measure H FY 2019-20 revenues. Together, these funding sources make up three of the largest funding streams that combat homelessness in the county. Authorized in 2018, HEAP awarded \$181,963,889.68 to eligible cities and continuums of care in Los Angeles County. Following HEAP, the state authorized HHAP, awarding an additional \$256,172,837.04 to eligible cities and continuums of care in LA County, as well as to LA County as its own entity. Los Angeles city, Long Beach city, Los Angeles Continuum of Care, Long Beach Continuum of Care, Glendale Continuum of Care and the Pasadena Continuum of Care are the six HEAP and HHAP ward recipients in LA county. The state mandates that five percent of all HEAP funds and eight percent of all HHAP funds be set-aside for youth. Measure H, approved by voters in 2017, generates an ongoing revenue stream of about \$355 million per year through a 0.25% percent increase to Los Angeles County's sales tax (The Homeless Initiative). Revenue from Measure H supports 21 strategies created by the county' Homeless Initiative.

Literature Review

Measures of youth homelessness estimate that as much as 12% of the U.S. homeless population is between the ages of 16 - 24 (Esparza, 2009). However, many service providers and researchers view this estimate as an undercount. First, varied definitions of youth homelessness among federal agencies result in a wide range of youth counts (Esparza et al., 2009). Moreover, homeless youth are often not as visible as other subpopulations because they try to blend in and they often avoid services available to them, decreasing the reliability of shelter counts as an estimator (Esparza et al., 2009; Ha et al., 2015). Driving factors of youth service avoidance include personal barriers such as high senses of pride and self-reliance coupled with the stigma often attached to the word 'homeless' (Ha et al. 2015). Youth often call out the lack of youth-focused services, no access to reliable transportation, adverse shelter conditions, negative staff attitudes, and restrictive rules as additional barriers to service use (Ha et. al, 2015). General distrust for adults and rule bound programs exasperates these barriers (Esparza et al., 2009).

Our research takes a particular interest in the geographic distribution of funds for youth. Brooks et. al finds that over half the agencies in LA County that were providing services to homeless youth (62%) were located within an 8-mile radius of a children's hospital in Hollywood (2004). The limited travel options for youth due to service concentration makes many of these services inaccessible, establishing transportation as one of the main concerns of homeless youth in LA county.

In discussing service use among homeless youth, it is important to acknowledge existing literature that expands upon what challenges make youth a particularly vulnerable population. Toro et al. (2007) provides a comprehensive view of such literature. Most homeless youth are

age 13 or older, with a small number who are younger, and samples of homeless youth find that males are either as likely or more likely to be homeless than females depending on the sample source (shelter, street, etc...) (Toro et. al, 2007). Studies estimate the range of homeless youth who identify as LGBT in a range from 11 to 35 percent, and conclude that LGBT youth are more likely to leave home, and also to be victimized on the streets (Toro et al., 2007). Youth who were previously engaged in the child welfare system (i.e., foster care) or justice system are at greater risk of homelessness because they lack the resources to live independently (Toro et al., 2007). In terms of their background, studies reveal that homeless youth are more likely than their housed peers to come from low-income families, have histories of behavioral issues and learning disabilities, face child abuse and/or neglect, and be at increased risk of mental health problems (Toro et al., 2007). While unhoused, large numbers of youth are sexually active and at higher risk for STDs, sexual violence, and pregnancy (Toro et al., 2007). To survive, many youth state that they engage in illegal behaviors such as prostitution, stealing, and dealing drugs in order to survive, forcing them into environments where they are particularly vulnerable and experience high rates of physical and sexual victimization (Toro et al., 2007).

Most youth are actively seeking services (Carlson et al., 2005). It is essential that these youth are eventually matched with youth-specific, rather than one size fits all, programs. Due to the new nature of youth homeless enumerations, recognition of their unique needs, and reception of funds meant for youth, many service providers find themselves without youth program models to build off of (Semborski et al., 2020). Housing is a common intervention for homelessness, and service providers continue to improve on youth transitional living programs (TLP), permanent supportive housing (PSH) and rapid rehousing (RRH) program models. Service providers reiterate a common idea across all youth housing models: there is no 'one size fits all' approach

that works for youth, and different programs will meet different needs (Gamboa et al., 2020; Semborski et al., 2020). The most effective youth housing programs under all three models focused on directly engaging youth in the housing process by including them as accountable parties and valuing their perspective on their needs. Case management showed similar results, with youth benefiting greatly from intensive youth-informed case management that partnered with youth (Toro et al., 2007). Milburn et al. (2007) performed a two-year longitudinal study of homeless youth in Los Angeles that found most newly homeless adolescents returned home (70%), suggesting that family-based interventions are viable programs. Addiction treatment programs are often meant for adult clients who have been entrenched in drug use for longer than youth, making it difficult for youth to relate to others in these programs (Barker et al., 2015). Youth, who face the greatest difficulty in accessing services, are generally high-risk (Barker et al., 2015), further highlighting the need for youth-specific funding and services that can target youth preferences and needs.

Among 344 organizations and 982 programs that provide services for homeless youth in 26 major metropolitan areas, Esparza et al. finds that increased federal funds display a positive and significant relationship to increased prevalence of homeless youth services (2009). Total federal grants received are positively related to provision of all program types except emergency shelter. Reception of Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) funds specifically positively correlates with five out of eight program types identified in the study: street outreach, drop-in center, emergency shelter, educational and transitional shelter programs. Interestingly, the number of youth experiencing poverty in the metropolitan areas has no effect on the number of services (Esparza et al. 2009). Funding appears to be a major limiting factor to greater service provision. However, it is also important to recognize that some research has found that some

agencies choose not to accept public funding to be free from the constraints that often come with reception of public funds (Brooks et al., 2004).

How does funding relate to actual service use and impact? Lucas (2017) employs an ordinary least squares data analysis at the Continuum of Care (COC) scale to determine whether federal funding for homelessness impacts counts of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness. Lucas takes a novel approach to the analysis of funding by looking head-on at the impact of federal funding on the youth homeless subpopulation. An insignificant relationship is found between funding and the amount of sheltered or unsheltered youth and children (Lucas, 2017). However, Lucas (2017) acknowledges that 2013 was the first year that unaccompanied youth and children were specifically enumerated in the PIT counts, which suggests a lack of targeting to this subgroup until the past decade both in enumerations and in actual service provision (Lucas, 2017).

Research finds optimism for youth services in the expanding prevalence of youth-specific programming and more accurate PIT estimates (Semborski et al., 2020; Gamboa et al., 2020; Luca et al., 2017; toro et al., 2007). As noted by Esparza et al., youth services depend greatly on funding, opening the door for further research into the extent to which government and local entities are distributing funds to youth specific programs.

The number of youth experiencing homelessness in the U.S. continues to expand. The barriers to service provision access and social pressures that discourage service use among youth create a landscape in which it is difficult to enumerate, identify, and serve youth (Ha et al., 2015; Esparza et al., 2009). However, when service provision does reach youth, the benefits are definite across academic, mental health, housing, and substance abuse metrics (Barker et al., 2015). Because research has found that service provision has such a propensity to alleviate the problems

that face vulnerable youth, many researchers have strived to identify what factors affect the quantity and quality of service provision for youth (Esparza, et., al 2009; Toro et al., 2007; Lucas et al., 2017; Carlson et al., 2015; Milburn et al., 2007).

A gap exists in the literature on funding in relation to its impact on service provision for youth homelessness as few articles look specifically at one metropolitan area and discuss how the allocation of federal funds for youth homelessness compares to the overall landscape of homelessness funding. This research project seeks to fill these gaps by discussing the proportion of funding allocated for youth homelessness in Los Angeles County from HEAP, HHAP, and Measure H. The research gives quantitative context to the on-the-ground struggles that Los Angeles service providers confront as they endeavor to support the diverse and dynamic needs of one of the most vulnerable populations in the county. Additionally, this research contributes to a better understanding of how youth homelessness is prioritized, and discusses the implications of current allocations for policy and systems change.

Methods

This research pursued quantitative analysis of funding allocations in Los Angeles County using a community-engaged approach. We seek to create a representative view of the landscape of funding for homelessness in Los Angeles county by looking at the allocation of funds awarded to the county under the Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP), Homeless Housing and Assistance Program round 1 (HHAP), and generated by the county from the sales tax authorized under Measure H. LA County received HEAP and HHAP awards through seven separate entities: Los Angeles City, Long Beach City, Los Angeles Continuum of Care (CoC), Long Beach CoC, the Pasadena CoC, the Glendale CoC, and Los Angeles County (LA County is a recipient under HHAP only). Analyzing major sources of funds for homelessness in LA County

and the extent to which they are resulting in funding for youth homelessness helps us question whether funding distributions are matching the reality of needs on the ground. Where possible, our research lists the specific geographic regions (Service Planning Area, Council District, and Supervisorial District) that benefit from funding for youth homelessness. Comparative analysis matching point in time count (PIT) enumerations of the youth population experiencing homelessness, and the homeless population in general, against the proportion of funding that youth populations receive, occurs following initial enumeration. This quantitative research endeavors to contribute to the existing literature focused on youth homelessness by discussing the efficiency, appropriateness, and efficacy of current funding for youth homelessness in LA County in the context of the funding body for homelessness as a whole.

Background

First, I worked alongside the Hollywood Homeless Youth Partnership (HHYP). Officially founded in 1999, HHYP related partners and collaborators have been working to address youth homelessness in Los Angeles since 1982. HHYP notably has done research with agencies including the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Authority (SAMHSA) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). HHYP also pursues policy advocacy, and provides direct services to homeless youth. Specifically, I worked alongside HHYP's Systems Change group, a collaborative network of individuals with lived experience, service providers, and staff at national scale non-profits. Two members of HHYP's Systems Change Group contributed to this project from the Coalition for Responsible Community Development (CRCD), and the National Alliance to End Homelessness (the Alliance).

The Coalition for Responsible Community Development (CRCD) is a non-profit organization located in Vernon-Central in South Los Angeles. CRCD focuses on neighborhood-

based community development, centering youth and young adults. The services CRCD offers include housing and support services, workforce and economic development, and youth development. CRCD's focus on engagement with the youth population of Vernon-Central directly connects to the heart of this research.

Finally, the Alliance is a DC based organization that is a leading voice on federal homelessness policy. The Alliance also generates its own research through its Homelessness Research Institute, and helps service providers by providing capacity-building assistance.

Information gathered through conversations and many feedback and brainstorming sessions inform the various steps of this research project's creation from development to final conclusions. Their perspective as service providers, and individuals and groups who have worked tirelessly to combat homelessness at various levels are invaluable.

My community-engaged efforts with the systems change group were guided by principles defined and structured in the Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership tool developed by Rosa González of Facilitating Power (González, 2019). Working alongside the Systems Change group involved this research in a community engaged information effort best described by González as "ensuring access to information about issues, services, solutions, etc. in ways that are culturally rooted and relevant" through direct communication with the marginalized groups whose interests are at stake (2019, p. 6). This research project further functions as a piece of collaboration, or what González refers to as delegated power, within the Systems Change group; it incorporates many people involved in the fight against homelessness, and endeavors to reach those in power including local elected officials.

The research encompassed in this project fostered a reciprocal relationship between the researcher and community partners. Wallerstein, et al. (2017) provides a comprehensive structure

for reciprocal community based health research that naturally connected to and guided this project. This research followed Wallerstein et al. (2017) by empowering all parties to "participate in and share control, as desired over all phases of the research process" (p. 33). Ethical considerations following the advice of UCLA advisors and the models of previous community engaged work were followed. Finally, this research process emphasized community engaged research as a "co-learning process that facilitates the reciprocal transfer of knowledge, skills, and capacity" as all parties seek to build a bank of knowledge that can be used to pursue the ultimate goal of reducing youth homelessness (Wallerstein et al., 2017).

Positionality

While researching a topic that is innately about people, and the conditions or positions of their lives and the systems that are both attempting to help them and are holding them down, I would be remiss to omit discussion of my own position within these systems. I have never been homeless; I am a white, male, cisgender student privileged to be pursuing a bachelor's degree at a top research institution, and thus do not directly relate to the largely marginalized population that I am seeking to focus on. Because of this position, I keep in mind throughout the enactment of this research project the principles of community engaged learning, ensuring that the opinions and feedback from my community partners are prioritized. I believe community engaged learning should invoke personal interests, connection, skills, experience and mutual trust.

Although I have not directly interacted with homeless youth in the context of a program meant to provide services for them, I have engaged with youth aged 14-18 in Los Angeles over the course of the past four years. First, I have been a member of the Mentorship Program at UCLA, working to develop mentoring programming for youth living in subsidized housing in North Hollywood. In addition, I have worked with youth attempting to become first generation

students through the College Head Start program at the Central American Resource Center (CARECEN) in downtown Los Angeles. Prior to developing this proposal, I worked with CRCD on social media design and strategy, which provided me with a general comprehension of their organizational structure and purpose. I also participated as an observer in monthly meetings with the HHYP systems change group to gain a more holistic understanding of its members and significant focuses.

Due to my past experiences working with youth in LA county, connections I have built with CRCD through past volunteer and paid work, and connections I hope to foster with the systems change group at HHYP, I am well positioned to pursue this research through a community engaged lens. To ensure consistent collaboration and a community informed methodology and research purpose, I communicated with my research partners through email at each step of my research proposal. Due to Covid-19, the majority of communication with partners occurred through software including Microsoft Outlook and Teams.

Data Collection

This research project collected data from a variety of secondary sources, combining publicly available data, and data sourced from local and national organizations. First, a study information sheet was developed that includes information about the purpose of this research project, how ethics are being observed in the research procedures, and what participation as a partner in the project entails. Additionally, the study information sheet includes the work table for this research project².

Through collaboration with the HHYP Systems Change group, the Alliance, and CRCD, this research project collected data on how funds from HEAP, HHAP, and Measure H are

² See Table 1 in Appendix.

distributed throughout Los Angeles County. Data for HEAP and HHAP were collected from each of the six award entities mentioned previously, with HHAP funds also distributed through an additional venue, Los Angeles County, as a unique award entity.

Using city and county GIS services, we were able to determine the CD, SD, and SPA benefitting from specific contracts in situations where addresses were provided in the data or where the award entity inhabits specific geographic regions. For example, Long Beach City and CoC, the Glendale CoC and the Pasadena CoC, each are geographically placed in SPAs 8, 3, and 2, and SD's 4, 5, and 5, respectively. For larger award entities such as Los Angeles City that contain multiple CDs, SDs, and SPAs, city and county GIS services were used to determine benefitting geographic regions when addresses of program sites were available.

Collecting data from HEAP, HHAP, we consider funds to be committed to youth if they are organized under "youth set-aside" labels, active categories, and funding categories, or if their program descriptions are clearly targeting solely youth. support county strategies that include "youth" in their name. For our \$277 million in Measure H funded contracts data, we collect data on contracts that both explicitly support only youth and contracts that may support youth alongside other subpopulations. We gather these two sums in order to present the effect that our methodology decision has on the amount of funding one considers to be targeting youth.

For HEAP and HHAP, data was collected on funds awarded to and distributed throughout Los Angeles City by searching through the City Clerk's council file management system. Using Adobe Acrobat's export tool, we extracted many data tables from the City Administrative Officer's reports on HEAP and HHAP into excel spreadsheets for analysis³. These funds are managed by the Los Angeles City Council and given only to geographic areas that fall within the

³ Link: <https://cityclerk.lacity.org/lacityclerkconnect/>

City's 15 council districts. HEAP City fund commitments fall into five Active Categories (AC-1 through AC-5) titled Capital and Operating Support - A Bridge Home, Capital and Operating Support - Skid Row, Capital, Operating, Services - Citywide, Youth Set-Aside (5% minimum of funds must be set aside for youth per state statute), and Administrative Costs, respectively.

HHAP City fund commitments fall into seven Funding Categories (FC-1 through FC-7) titled A Bridge Home Capital, Skid Row, Prevention and Shelter Diversion to Permanent Housing, Rental Assistance and Rapid Rehousing, Administrative Costs, and Youth Experiencing Homelessness or At Risk of Homelessness (8% Set-Aside Required), respectively. We label LA City HEAP funds as committed to youth if found under AC-4 for HEAP, FC-7 for HHAP, or if in their program description it is clear that the funds are for only youth. LA HEAP and HHAP data reflects funding commitments through December 31, 2020.

As the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) is the lead organization for the LA CoC, data on the distribution of LA CoC HEAP and HHAP funds were derived from LAHSA. Measure H funds are also managed by LAHSA. Thanks to LAHSA for providing us with data on LAHSA's Youth Grant Portfolio for FY 2020-21. Data was received on April 30, 2021. We extracted three tables from this data set: LA CoC HEAP funded youth grant contracts, LA CoC HHAP funded grant contracts, and Measure H funded youth contracts. It is important to note that Measure H FY 2020-21 data from this spreadsheet is not reflected in Table 2 of results, but rather used in discussion. LAHSA data does not provide geographic information that would allow us to determine the CD, SD, or SPA benefitting from youth grants managed by LAHSA.

Long Beach City and Long Beach CoC HEAP and HHAP funds are both managed under the Health and Human services department of Long Beach City so we consider these two award recipients together as much reporting does not distinguish between the two award entities. By

collecting funding commitment data directly from the state's Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council (HCFC) website⁴, and the Long Beach City Council's contract search service⁵, we were able to construct a table displaying how Long Beach City and CoC funds HEAP and HHAP funds have been committed to youth. Long Beach City HEAP funds are considered to target youth if the programs they support mentioned "youth" or "TAY" in their project names. Long Beach CoC HEAP funds are considered to target youth if the programs they support are listed under "Homeless Youth" in reporting to the California Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council (HCFC) dated September 30, 2019. Long Beach City and CoC HHAP funds are considered to target youth if categorized under Calculated Total Youth Funds Budgeted in reporting to the HCFC. HHAP data is collected from annual reports dated September 30, 2020.

Data on Pasadena CoC HEAP and HHAP awards were found on the HCFC website and corroborated by the Pasadena⁶ and Glendale⁷ document search services. The total HEAP youth commitment for the Pasadena CoC is derived from the annual report dated September 30, 2019. Pasadena CoC HHAP funds committed to youth are found in HCFC reporting dated September 30, 2020. Similar to Pasadena, the Glendale CoC HEAP and HHAP awards are also relatively small and data on how they are committed to youth was found on the Glendale City document search service and the HCFC website. Both Glendale and Pasadena youth commitments were labeled as such if found under a youth reporting section.

Los Angeles County is an additional award entity of HHAP. Data on how this reward has been obligated to youth was found on the HCFC website and through Homeless Initiative and

⁴ <https://www.bcsb.ca.gov/hcfc/grants.html>

⁵ <https://citydocs.longbeach.gov/CityContracts/CustomSearch.aspx?SearchName=CityContracts>

⁶ <https://www.cityofpasadena.net/city-search/>

⁷ <https://www.glendaleca.gov/government/public-meeting-portal>

County Documents. We consider funds to be committed for youth if listed under the youth reporting section in the report dated September 30, 2020.

Measure H data for FY 2019-20 was derived from the Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative's website⁸. For this research project, we looked at \$277 million in Measure H funded contracts for local community and government organizations. We choose to look at Measure H funded contracts, rather than Measure H data as a whole, because this data categorizes each contract by the SPA that benefits from it, and we were not able to find any other data sets that provide a similar geographic breakdown. This data was directly extracted into an excel sheet using Adobe Acrobat's export to Excel workbook feature. We choose to collect contract data for FY 2019-20 as this is the most recent data set, and it aligns with the data sets for HEAP and HHAP that detail commitments through December and September of 2020. Measure H funding is used by the county in support of 21 Homeless Initiative Strategies, and we look specifically to collect data on how funding was spent on strategy E14, Enhanced Services for Transition Age Youth, as it is the sole strategy to explicitly target youth (Homeless Initiative, History). Two columns are created to detail Measure H funded contracts that either support E14 alongside other strategies, or Measure H funded contracts that uniquely support E14.

Because there is not one data set or source that includes all the data this research project was looking to analyze, we created our own Excel document. Data was pulled from sources as mentioned previously, and inputted into excel spreadsheets. The document includes a read-me page that contains sources and maps of the geographic regions that make up Los Angeles county.

In addition to funding data, this research also utilizes LAHSA's annual Greater Los Angeles point in time (PIT) count. LAHSA conducts this count on an annual basis, and publishes

⁸ <https://homeless.lacounty.gov/>

its results for public use⁹. LAHSA's PIT count estimates the number of individuals that are experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles during one night in January. Individuals counted are assigned indicators based on age, race, veteran status, sheltered vs. unsheltered, gender, health, and family status. LAHSA publishes the PIT estimates for various geographic subsections of Los Angeles including Service Planning Area (SPA), supervisorial district, and council districts that were used in analysis throughout this project. Splitting LA county into eight geographically distinct SPAs allows the county to develop different strategic plans for service provision in areas that have different needs, and a breakdown by supervisorial and council district can be useful in communication with local elected officials.

Data Analysis

The first step of analysis for this research project was to form a representative view of the homelessness funding ecosystem for youth in Los Angeles County by presenting the total funds committed to youth programs via the HEAP and HHAP round 1 block grants, and Measure H funded contracts for FY 2019-20. Service providers are interested in seeing the proportion of funding going to youth from three of the largest funding sources in the county. The second step in this data analysis was to compare the proportion of funding currently targeting youth to the proportion of the homeless population that is youth. In the pursuit of this goal, funding data was directly compared to data acquired from publicly available LAHSA Greater Los Angeles point in time counts that enumerate the homeless population in Los Angeles County. The goal of this comparison is to see from a base standpoint whether funding distribution follows the reality of the relative intensity of homelessness among the youth subpopulation.

⁹ For more information, see LAHSA's "2019 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count Results" (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority).

Following an overview of funding at the county level, this research project analyzed funding distribution in relation to homeless counts at three smaller scales: the council, supervisorial, and SPA levels. Each of these scales has its own unique implications. Supervisorial district data relates to the efforts and jurisdiction of the five LA County supervisors, council district level data relates to local elected officials within the city of Los Angeles, and service planning areas are the eight strategic geographic regions established for the effective provision of county services. Every service planning area, supervisorial district, and council district has its own unique demographics, needs and populations.

After preliminary data analysis, this research proceeded to the final phases of a community engaged research project, what Wallerstein, et al. (2017) refers to as, "interpretation of data; determination of action and policy implications" (p. 34). Community engaged research has at its core the goal of creating change. The HHYP Systems Change group involved in the development of this research project explicitly endeavors to achieve this goal in its name. The data will be interpreted by our research collaborative for the purpose of identifying where policy can be modified and how funding allocations can more effectively achieve their goal: alleviate homelessness.

Results

Between HEAP, HHAP round 1, and the FY 2019-20 Measure H funds, a total of \$715,558,972.78 in funds for homelessness in LA County are analyzed in this research project. The results that follow synthesize data from the 2020 Los Angeles Homeless Authority's (LAHSA) 2020 point in time (PIT) count. The PIT count enumerates the size and composition of the homeless population, providing information on the geographic location of the Greater Los Angeles Area's homeless population and includes demographic data. Many consider the youth

count to be a likely undercount because the youth subpopulation is very heterogeneous, and often difficult to identify (Narendorf, 2016)

Table 2 presents the main findings of this research. HEAP and HHAP round 1 awards received and distributed by LA County's eligible city and CoC award recipients pass a first test, together surpassing their minimum state required distribution expectations of five and eight percent respectively. LA County HEAP award distributions exceed their 5% statute by 0.81%; LA County HHAP awards exceed their 8% statute by 1.13%. The closeness of these percentages to their minimum limits immediately shows a trend of award recipients perceiving minimum amounts as standards to remain near to. In fact, the Pasadena and Glendale CoCs committed exactly 5% or 8% of their funding to youth programs for HEAP and HHAP, Long Beach City and CoC committed 8% from HHAP, and the Los Angeles CoC HHAP commitment currently equals 8%. Notable award recipient standouts that committed the most over their minimum requirements include the Long Beach City and CoC HEAP youth commitment coming to 9.8% of total award, and the Los Angeles County HHAP youth commitment of 12.44%.

Although Measure H does not have a youth set-aside mandate, we can still see the impact that Measure H revenue has on funding for youth contracts. The amount that we may conclude Measure H revenue was allocated to youth in FY 2019-20 depends greatly on how we consider a fund as contributing to youth programs or not. For HEAP and HHAP, we chose to only consider funds that explicitly were designated for youth programs in their project descriptions, and no other subpopulations, as being committed for youth.

However, to present an interesting dichotomy, we include two Measure H youth fund contract sums. First, "Measure H Funded Contracts (Including Strategy E14)", refers to contracts that support only E14 or support E14 alongside other strategies. The second Measure H youth

contract sum, "Measure H Funded Contracts (Only E14)", sums the contracts that were uniquely given to support E14. The former Measure H youth fund method presents 15.77% of Measure H funding as being contracted to community organizations supporting youth, whereas the latter shows the county allocating just 2.39% of Measure H funds to youth focused contracts.

Table 2. Total of Youth Commitments Between HEAP, HHAP, and Measure H

Grant Group	Youth Funds Committed	Total of Fund	Youth Fund Commitments as a % of Total Fund	% of the homeless population that is youth , following LAHSA's youth definitions and 2020 PIT count	Difference between youth funds as a % of total funds, and youth as a % of the total homeless population
HEAP	\$10,573,003.66	\$181,963,889.68	5.81%	7.48%	-1.67%
HHAP	\$23,397,716.23	\$256,172,837.04	9.13%	7.48%	1.65%
Measure H Funded Contracts (Including Strategy E14)*	\$43,742,394.00	\$277,421,534	15.77%	7.48%	8.29%
Measure H Funded Contracts (Only E14)*	\$6,629,966	\$277,421,534	2.39%	7.48%	-5.09%
Total (Including Measure H E14)	\$78,499,874.89	\$715,558,260.72	10.86%	7.48%	3.38%
Total (Only E14)	\$40,600,686	\$715,558,261	5.67%	7.48%	-1.80%

* "Including Strategy E14" means the contracts may support multiple strategy initiatives, with E14 being one of them. "Only E14" means the contracts uniquely support E14.

Overall, the difference between the percent of funds allocated to youth in LA County, and the percent of the homeless population in LA County that is youth (according to LAHSA 2020 PIT estimates), is -1.80% when considering Measure H contracts that support only E14 and 3.14% when considering Measure H contracts that are listed as supporting E14 in any respect. This same difference measure is -1.67% for HEAP, 1.65% for HHAP. Of the two state level funding sources, only HHAP had a larger percent of funding going toward youth than the percent of the homeless population that is youth in the county. Significantly, this figure exists for HHAP due to the large amount of funding that Los Angeles County, which was not an award entity for HEAP, committed to youth. The county allocated \$8,000,000 (12.4%) of its \$64,319,071 total

award to youth specific programs according to its 2020 HHAP report to the California Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council (HCFC) dated September 30, 2020.

Measure H's difference in percent of contracted funds that are for youth (only E14), and percent of the county homeless population that is homeless is quite large at -5.09%. Unlike HEAP and HHAP, Measure H does not have a youth set-aside mandate. Moreover, only one of 21 strategies funded by Measure H addresses youth needs directly, potentially contributing to this large difference. It suggests that funds that do not prioritize youth either through youth set-aside statutes, or greater representation in strategy formation, are less likely to result in youth-specific allocations. Later in our discussion, we look at the possibility that some programs or strategies that do not have youth listed explicitly in their name may still include youth specific funding set-asides.

Allocations by Los Angeles City Council District

Table 3. HEAP and HHAP Youth Commitments by CD [LA City, LA CoC, LA County (HHAP only)]

CD	Youth Commitment	% of city homeless youth
CD 1		3.46%
CD 2	\$1,311,268.60	7.90%
CD 3		0.36%
CD 4	\$2,457,755	7.90%
CD 5		1.73%
CD 6	\$1,311,268.60	6.90%
CD 7		9.70%
CD 8		9.76%
CD 9	\$1,311,269	13.70%
CD 10		4.70%
CD 11	\$2,964,496	9.00%
CD 12	\$1,311,268.60	3.80%
CD 13	\$1,061,742.23	15.30%
CD 14		4.47%
CD 15		1.20%
Multiple / N/A*	\$20,247,417	----

Total	\$31,976,484.23	100.00%
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*** Includes \$2,000,000 in allocations from LA City, and the entirety of youth allocations from the HEAP LA CoC, HHAP LA CoC, and HHAP LA County award entities. LA CoC (HEAP) = \$4,945,779; LA CoC (HHAP) = \$5,301,638; HHAP LA County = \$8,000,000.**

The Impact of HEAP and HHAP at the LA city council district scale is represented by the three relevant award entities for Los Angeles City: Los Angeles City itself (HEAP and HHAP), the Los Angeles CoC (HEAP and HHAP), and Los Angeles County (only HHAP). Of these three award entities, only Los Angeles City reporting by the City Administrative Officer (CAO) provides sufficient geographic information to determine the exact CD's that are receiving funding. Measure H is not included in the breakdown by CD due to the geographic ambiguity of Measure H contract data at the SD and CD scales.

. In total, seven out of 15 council districts received geographically verifiable commitments under HEAP and HHAP. Collectively, CDs 2, 4, 6, 9, 11, 12, and 13 account for 64.5% of the youth homeless population in Los Angeles City. The \$20 million in funds that are either allocated to multiple CDs or for which precise geographic information is not available likely benefit additional CDs beyond what is listed. Geographically unclear data accounts for 63.3% of total HEAP and HHAP funds eligible for distribution to LA's 15 council districts. This points to a challenge that this research faced in breaking down funding by smaller geographic scales, as reporting often did not prioritize precise geographic information. Further, it points to the difficulty that service providers and youth homeless advocates face when attempting to collect this data and use it to uphold accountability among administrators and elected officials. HHAP commitments are more recent than HEAP, making many of these commitments first frameworks with which to lay-out the potential future of a funding landscape. This may help

explain observed levels of lower geographic specificity in HHAP award distribution data for LA County and LA CoC.

Tables 4 and 5 provide the breakdown by CD for HEAP and HHAP Los Angeles City youth commitments. A Request for Proposals (RFP) published by LAHSA states that CDs 2, 6, 9, 11 and 12 will be the beneficiaries of a \$6,556,343 Master Leasing Program subgranted to LAHSA under LA city's HHAP award. The RFP also provides data showing that these five CDs have the five largest differences between percent of homeless TAY in LA city, and percent of TAY shelter beds in the city (LAHSA, 2021). Thus, the RFP details how much funding is likely allocated on the basis of need. We assume CD's 2, 6, 9, 11, and 12 receive equal portions of the Master Leasing Program's funding as LAHSA intends to fund 15 transitional housing beds in each of the five CDs (LAHSA, 2021). The LA: Rise youth employment program (\$2,000,000 contract) constitutes the singular LA City HEAP allocation that may provide funding for multiple CD's not listed in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4. Los Angeles City HEAP Youth Commitment by Council District

CD #	Funding Amount	% of city homeless youth
CD 4	\$2,457,755	7.9%
CD 11	\$1,653,227	9.0%
CD 13	\$213,085	15.3%
Total*	\$4,324,067	32.2%

***Includes \$3,624,068 under AC-4 and \$700,000 from AC-1.**

Table 5. Los Angeles City HHAP Youth Commitments by Council District

SPA	Youth Commitment	% of homeless youth
CD 2*	\$1,311,268.60	7.90%
CD 6*	\$1,311,268.60	6.90%
CD 9*	\$1,311,268.60	13.70%
CD 11*	\$1,311,268.60	9.00%
CD 12*	\$1,311,268.60	3.80%
CD 13*	\$848,657.23	15.30%

Multiple / N/A	\$2,000,000.00	--
Total	\$9,405,000.23	56.60%

*LAHSA's intention to distribute funds to CDs 2, 6, 9, 11, and 12 is detailed in their May 4, 2021 RFP draft.

HEAP and HHAP Funding Allocations by Supervisorial District

Table 6 details youth commitment allocations by supervisorial district from LA City and CoC, Long Beach City and CoC, Glendale and Pasadena CoCs, and Los Angeles County (an additional award recipient under HHAP).

Table 6. HEAP and HHAP Youth Commitments in Los Angeles County by Supervisorial District

Supervisorial District	Funding Amount	% of county homeless youth
SD 1	--	11.85%
SD 2	--	30.39%
SD 3	\$5,172,724	31.90%
SD 4	\$1,800,492	7.23%
SD 5	\$193,744	18.62%
Geographic Data N/A* / multiple SDs	\$26,803,760.00	--
Total	\$33,970,720	100.00%

*** Contains youth funding commitments from Los Angeles CoC, Los Angeles City, and Los Angeles County that are geographically ambiguous. LA City (HHAP): \$8,556,343; LA CoC (HHAP): \$5,301,638; LA CoC (HEAP): \$4,945,779; LA County (HHAP): \$8,000,000.**

Three out of five supervisorial districts received funding under HEAP and HHAP, with SD 3 receiving 100% of its funds from Los Angeles City, SD 4 receiving 100% of its funds from Long Beach City and CoC, and SD 5 receiving its funds from the Glendale and Pasadena CoCs. These three supervisorial districts account for 57.7% of LA County's youth homeless population. The centralization of funds by SD for Long Beach City and CoC, and the Glendale and Pasadena CoCs is explained by the fact that Long Beach is entirely located in SD 4, and Glendale and Pasadena are both entirely in SD 5. Table 7 gives an overview of these commitments.

Much of LA City's HHAP youth commitments are not able to be broken down further from CD to SD because the recipients of the \$6.5 million Master Leasing Program, which is to be funded by the city's HHAP award, has yet to be awarded to service providers, and the city's \$2

million LA: Rise commitment benefits multiple SDs. LAHSA has information on their portfolio of youth contracts (FY 2020-21) funded by HHAP, but due to the recency of HHAP, we opt to use the organization's report to California's Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council (HCFC) as a better representation of the current LA CoC HHAP youth commitment. According to this report, LAHSA had obligated \$5,301,683.28 (exactly 8% of their total award) to the youth set-aside through September 30, 2020. The \$8,000,000 geographically ambiguous commitment from LA County is similarly taken from its annual report to the HCFC through September 30, 2020.

As mentioned briefly under the results of Funding Allocations by CD, we acknowledge that HHAP data is more likely to be geographically ambiguous due to the relative recency of HHAP awards coupled with the onset of COVID-19 detracting from the capacity of many head agencies in the county throughout 2020. Measure H Contract data is again not included in our results for funding allocation by SD as this data is only provided by SPA.

HEAP, HHAP, and Measure H Funding Allocations by Service Planning Area (SPA)

Table 7 displays how youth funding from HEAP, HHAP and Measure H has been committed by SPA. In the results that follow, we first include Measure H funded contracts that uniquely support E14. All eight SPAs benefit from Measure H funded youth-unique (E14 only) contracts. Using geographic information from HEAP data sources, we conclude that SPAs 4, 5 and 8 are recipients of \$5,542,558.6 of youth committed HEAP funds; \$4,945,779 in HEAP funds are geographically ambiguous and may benefit other SPAs. For HHAP, we find that SPAs 2, 3, 4 and 8 are definite beneficiaries of \$1,539,735 in geographically specific funds, and nearly \$22 million in funds are left geographically ambiguous. The lack of geographically precise

HHAP fund data is likely related to the recency of HHAP and COVID-19 capacity complications.

Table 7. HEAP, HHAP, and Measure H Funded Contracts (E14 Only) Youth Funding Allocations by SPA

SPA #	Funding Total	% of youth homeless population
SPA 1	\$178,850	6.82%
SPA 2	\$1,304,956	24.35%
SPA 3	\$582,388	4.86%
SPA 4	\$5,982,061	21.44%
SPA 5	\$1,781,327	8.62%
SPA 6	\$69,877	23.41%
SPA 7	\$1,146,100	7.13%
SPA 8	\$1,846,617	3.36%
Multi-Spa / N/A*	\$27,708,510	--
Total	\$40,600,686	100%

* LA CoC (HEAP and HHAP), LA County (HHAP), LA City (HHAP), and Measure H represent the award distributions that are to some extent geographically unidentifiable. LA City (HHAP): \$8,556,343; LA CoC (HHAP): \$5,301,638; LA CoC (HEAP): \$4,945,779; LA County (HHAP): \$8,000,000; Measure H: \$904,750

SPAs 1, 6, and 7 received funding only from Measure H. SPA 4, the area which received the most geographically distinguishable funding at \$5,982,061, contains the third most youth experiencing in Los Angeles county, according to LAHSA's 2020 PIT count. Interestingly, SPA 6, with the second largest homeless youth population, receives by far the least funding from geographically distinguishable data under this Measure H sum. LA City (HEAP), Long Beach City and Long Beach CoC (HEAP and HHAP), Glendale CoC (HEAP and HHAP), Pasadena CoC (HEAP and HHAP), and Measure H FY 2019-20 are the eight geographically identifiable funding streams by SPA.

Finally, Table 8 outlines how youth funding is committed by SPA from the three funding sources when considering Measure H Funded Contracts that support E14 in tandem with other initiatives, or alone. The HEAP and HHAP data inputted to this table is identical to that of Table 7. SPA 4 again receives the largest amount of geographically verifiable data. However, it is now

the largest recipient of youth funds by a huge margin due to a \$12 million grant awarded to People Assisting the Homeless (PATH). This grant also supports A1, A5, B3, E6, E7, E8 and E14. E8 and E7 are the most commonly paired initiatives with E14. A5 and B3 additionally appear congruently and frequently next to E14.

Table 8. HEAP, HHAP, and Measure H Funded Contracts (Including E14) Youth Funding Allocations by SPA

SPA #	Funding Total	% of youth homeless population
SPA 1	\$9,164,969	6.82%
SPA 2	\$1,882,783	24.35%
SPA 3	\$2,747,474	4.86%
SPA 4	\$22,102,246	21.44%
SPA 5	\$2,907,367	8.62%
SPA 6	\$1,585,774	23.41%
SPA 7	\$1,633,718	7.13%
SPA 8	\$7,890,302	3.36%
Multi-Spa	\$27,708,510	
Total	\$77,623,143	100% %

* LA CoC (HEAP and HHAP), LA County (HHAP), LA City (HHAP), and Measure H represent the award distributions that are to some extent geographically unidentifiable. LA City (HHAP): \$8,556,343; LA CoC (HHAP): \$5,301,638; LA CoC (HEAP): \$4,945,779; LA County (HHAP): \$8,000,000; Measure H: \$904,750.

SPA 6 is again the SPA left with the smallest geographically verifiable funding allocation.

However, the difference is not as stark for this sum of Measure H funding. SPAs 2 and 7 have youth funding allocations very similar in quantity to SPA 6. SPA 2 is of particular interest because despite having the largest percent of the county's youth homeless population, the region is left with the third smallest verifiable allocation by SD.

Discussion

_____The following discussion analyzes discrepancies in funding reporting that were observed throughout the research process, the lack of a standard definition for what defines funding as

allocated toward youth, and inequitable funding allocation trends. Additionally, we provide our perspective on the question of whether observed funding levels are meeting on-the-need grounds of youth experiencing homelessness in LA County. Finally, we lay out limitations of this study and areas for future research.

Using LA City HEAP and Measure H data as examples, we found that funding reporting is often contradictory and unclear. In effect, we observe a seeming weakness in LA County's homeless services system that may affect efforts to hold officials accountable and pursue advocacy. Measure H also demonstrates the difference in opinion between county officials and community members on how funding allocations and services should be identified as targeting youth. How we determine whether funding is allocated for youth further impacts advocacy and service provision. Through our geographic analysis, we find concerning trends that suggest inequitable funding allocations in East and South LA, and we notice that there is often insufficient data to execute a thorough geographic analysis.

Discrepancies in Funding Reporting

Table 9. Status of HEAP Commitments and Expenditures through December 31, 2020¹⁰

Activity Category		Amount	Total Funds Committed	Uncommitted Funds Remaining	Expended	Unexpended
1	Capital and Operating Support - A Bridge Home	\$52,539,178.73	\$52,539,178.73	\$0.00	\$42,592,183.00	\$9,946,995.73
2	Capital and Operating Support - Skid Row	\$20,000,000.00	\$19,865,579.97	\$134,420.03	\$11,798,366.00	\$8,067,213.97
3	Capital, Operating, Services - Citywide	\$8,178,003.77	\$8,178,003.77	\$0.00	\$7,305,838.00	\$872,165.77
4	Youth Set-Aside	\$3,624,067.55	\$3,624,067.55	\$0.00	\$2,012,510.34	\$1,611,557.21
5	Administrative Costs	\$2,212,248.73	\$2,212,248.73	\$0.00	\$1,490,666.00	\$721,582.73
Total		*\$86,553,498.78	\$86,419,078.75	\$134,420.03	\$65,199,563.34	\$21,219,515.41

***Includes \$1,539,891.78 of interest earnings through September 30, 2020. The initial funding amount distributed to LA city was \$85,013,607.**

¹⁰ Data Received from: https://clkrep.lacity.org/online/docs/2018/18-0628_rpt_CAO_05-06-2019.pdf

Table 9 details how LA city had committed its HEAP award through December 31, 2020—the report was taken from the CAO’s eighth quarterly report (2021). In the CAO’s first quarterly expenditure report on the city's HEAP grant award (dated April 23, 2019), the youth set-aside commitment (AC-4) was set to the minimum required expenditure. However, the AC-4 set-aside eventually dwindled to \$3,624,067.55 by the eighth quarterly report (Table 2), reducing AC-4 below the state statute. The city exceeds its mandate when considering funding allocations targeting youth that are categorized under additional active categories i.e. AC-1 which contains a \$700,000 commitment to Aviva Family and Children's Services described as, "Capital to rehabilitate a building to provide 42 Children's Services for female TAY" (2021, p. 11). Assuming the Aviva commitment contributes to the state statute, we may conclude that LA City allocated a total of \$4,324,067.50 to emergency assistance for homeless youth, exceeding its initial mandate, but falling \$3,607.4 short of five percent of the total award amount (\$4,327,674.90) when accounting for interest earned on the city's HEAP award. Los Angeles City contributes to an observed theme among the funding ecosystem in LA: reporting on taxpayer funded grant awards is often disorganized, potentially impacting service providers’ ability to advocate for specific use of grants and accountability.

We observed similar challenges with analyzing reporting of how Los Angeles County has allocated funds from HHAP for youth. We consider the youth commitment from LA County's HHAP award to be \$8,000,000, a figure taken from the County's 2020 report to the Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council (HCFC). However, had we recorded the figure mentioned in the Measure H and HHAP funding recommendations document for FY 2020-21 from the county's Chief Executive Officer, the youth commitment would be \$9,400,000. We choose to record the youth commitment as \$8,000,000 because the HCFC report is dated more recent at

September 30, 2020, whereas the CEO's report is dated September 15, 2020. The \$1,400,000 discrepancy between these two youth commitment reports is another example of disorganization in the funding reporting system of Los Angeles County. Better standards for reporting on how tax-funded revenue streams and block grants are committed and expended would make accountability and research a clearer process, and data more accessible for public use.

For Youth, or Not?

Existing literature expresses clearly that youth benefit most from programs meant for youth—not programs that try to fit this subpopulation into programs intended for adults or those involved in childcare programs (Ha et al., 2015; Esparza et al., 2009; Toro et al., 2007; Semborski et al., 2020; Gamboa et al., 2020; Barker et al., 2015). In effect, the ability to generate an accurate and accessible sum for the amount of funding that youth programs are receiving in LA county is a valuable asset to promote equitable distributions and general accountability efforts. We found in our research process that funds were not often clearly labeled as for youth, and whether we considered a fund targeting multiple subpopulations to be targeting youth or not would drastically change our data.

In relation to measure H, although only the funding strategy “E14” contains the word “youth” in its name, many county-level documents list other strategies as benefiting youth. The LA County Auditor-Controller, in her LAHSA Performance Data Validation and Limited Internal Controls Review, describes strategy A5 as “Assists single adults and *youth* at-risk of becoming homeless to preserve their current housing situation” and E7 as “Enhances the regional coordination of the entire coordinated entry system for single adults, families, and *youth* to strengthen the overall system” (2020, p. 11). Moreover, in the audit of Measure H FY19-20 revenues, the county Auditor-Controller states that under C7, agencies “provided Transitional

Employment Services to ... those who are homeless, former offenders and/or disconnected youth" (2020, p. 15). The Homeless Initiative additionally publishes key points and data which label youth as beneficiaries of B7, a strategy focused on "interim and bridge housing," and E8 which aims to "Enhance the Emergency Shelter System" (Homeless Initiative, 2019, p. 13).

Our results display a \$30 million difference in the amount of funding for youth in Los Angeles County depending on whether we considered Measure H FY 2019-20 contracts that support only E14, or that support E14 alongside other strategies. In reality, the amount of Measure H funds benefiting youth experiencing homelessness in LA county lies between these two extremes. Using data provided by LAHSA, the agency which manages Measure H funded contracts, we observe the total amount of funds committed for youth from Measure H for FY 2020-21, the year following the year for which the preceding measure H data was collected, to be \$20,231,579. Notably, this data is not readily accessible for use by the public through document services on LAHSA's website or on the Homeless Initiative Website. Moreover, LAHSA Measure H youth grant portfolio data does not provide any geographic information--only organization name is given. Thus, to indicate to what extent SPAs are benefitting from the \$20,231,579, one must parse the addresses of the areas either by cross referencing with the data set from the Homeless Initiative or directory guides such as OCLA's 2019 Directory of Services for Homeless Youth, Families and Adults in LA County¹¹. This is an imprecise science to say the least. Many large grant awards are given to organizations that provide services in multiple SPAs and receive Measure H Contract Funding in multiple SPAs. Measure H funded contract reporting demonstrates persistent problems in the reporting process: relevant and important data is not

¹¹ <https://oclawin.org/community-center/directory/>

readily accessible, and efforts to promote accountability are hindered by the decentralized nature of funding reporting.

To our knowledge, the county and state do not have standards for how funding reporting must be accomplished in relation to breakdown by geographic scale and specific subpopulation—the two indicators of importance to this research. Lacking a common understanding of what constitutes youth funding may prove frustrating for both city and county officials, and service providers. Moreover, unavailable or lacking data may hold implications for evaluation of county initiatives and thus the process of effective research and creation of new programs that effectively meet youth needs.

The county should begin conversations with service providers and people with lived experience to determine how best to ensure strategies are crafted using language that explicitly centers youth, and to determine how best to standardize data for best use among the entire network of homeless advocates. Funding correlates with youth service provision (Esparza et al., 2009), and service provision results in positive outcomes for youth (Barker et al., 2015; Toro et al., 2007; Esparza et al., 2009). Partnerships between service providers and the government, as they work to raise an appropriate amount of funds for this particularly vulnerable subpopulation, would be aided by standardized forms of data reporting and discussions on perspectives of youth service provision. Additionally, local government agencies should continue efforts to involve youth with lived experience in the administrative process to ensure their perspectives are directly incorporated into the reporting and accountability process.

Geographic Analysis

When looking at reports, our results also ran into issues due to a frequent lack of precise geographic data for funding commitments. Measure H contract reporting includes the address of

the contact listed under each contract and the SPA that is benefitting. However, the contact address does not necessarily refer to the location benefiting from the funding. For example, the contact information listed for Volunteers of America (VOA) is in CD 10, but Volunteers of America provides services across multiple additional CDs, including CD 8 and CD 2. Knowing the address of the contact does not allow us to determine the CD and SD benefitting from the contract. Los Angeles CoC reporting from LAHSA posed similar problems with identifying precise geographic location as LAHSA youth contract portfolio data only displays the name of the service provider receiving funding, not where they are providing services. At the Council District scale, 63.3% of relevant HEAP and HHAP funding was geographically imprecise; At the Supervisorial District Scale, this statistic was 78.9%. Incorporating Measure H into geographic analysis at the SPA scale, 68.2% of county wide HEAP, HHAP, and Measure H youth commitments were geographically inconsistent by CD and SD, or benefitting multiple SPAs.

LAHSA considers Council Districts, Service Planning Areas, and Supervisorial Districts to be valuable enough scales to ensure that each of these receives its own PIT count enumeration. However, funding allocations do not receive this same treatment for HEAP, HHAP and Measure H from LAHSA and other local organizations. The massive amount of funds derived from these three sources that are not publicly broken down into these necessary scales of Los Angeles geography is particularly salient for youth services given Los Angeles County's history of inequitable funding centralization (Brooks et al., 2004). To prevent this centralization of funds from being perpetuated, advocates and local government officials can use geographic data to use in the policy creation and funding allocation processes. In effect, the county would benefit from greater specificity by the lead homeless organization in the region (LAHSA) on how funding allocations are geographically distributed. Moreover, easier modes of access to this data for

stakeholders such as service providers and youth homeless advocates, may help accountability efforts.

Although Measure H FY 2019-20 funded contract commitments were just used for analysis at the SPA level, the Homeless Initiative provided an extremely comprehensive categorization by SPA and serves as a model of organized data reporting if extended to SD and CD breakdowns, and containing subpopulation specific data. Homeless Initiative data is also easy to find, linked under an "Accountability" tab on their website and presented in an easily consumable manner. Consistent Los Angeles City reporting on HEAP commitments and expenditures is also a good example of organized data reporting. In contrast to Measure H funded contract data, however, the hidden nature of LA city funding allocations in the annals of the city clerk's non-user friendly document service, at the bottom of documents that are more than a dozen pages long, is not accessible for the general public.

Service providers, government officials, and advocates must be concerned with the geographic distribution of funds, especially in a county as large as Los Angeles. A youth experiencing homelessness in the county noted of a far-away service center in a wealthy neighborhood, 'It's a more well-to-do area, and so I didn't [go]—there wasn't really much access to things like clinics, and I couldn't get to where I needed to go, and transportation was a huge issue' (Ha et al., 2015, p. 29).

Despite the limitation of much data not being geographically precise, we see some concerning inequitable fund distribution trends from each geographic breakdown (CD, SD, and SPA). Beginning with the data we collected from LA City HEAP and HHAP allocations at the Council District Scale, we see eight of 15 council districts receiving no youth-funding from nearly \$12 million in CD verifiable data. Containing the third and fourth highest population

concentrations, we are particularly interested in CDs seven and eight which received no funding but each contain 9.7% of the youth homeless population. The cluster of CDs including CD 1, 8, 9, 10, 14 show a potential area of funding isolation. Out of these five CDs in east and south Los Angeles, only CDs 2 and 9 received funding. CD 8 is particularly vulnerable, containing a relatively large % of the youth homeless population and bordered by 5 council districts, but only one of which received LA city HEAP youth committed funds (CD 9). See Appendix for a map of LA City Council Districts.

Funding by SD shows two of five SDs receiving \$0 in geographically verifiable data from HEAP and HHAP, with these two SDs accounting for 42.24% of the youth homeless subpopulation in the county. Supervisorial Districts 1 and 2 span much of East LA through downtown and south LA. Looking at the geographic information collected from LA City HEAP reporting, we see that the \$4.3 million in LA city HEAP youth committed funds were distributed to only SD 3, and dodged the two SDs that span much of the historically disadvantaged areas of Los Angeles. It is likely that SDs 1 and 2 will be beneficiaries, to some extent, of the close to \$27 million in unidentifiable funds from LA City HHAP, COC, and Los Angeles County. See Appendix for a map of the supervisorial districts.

Finally, our look at funding allocations by SPA necessitates discussion of both Measure H funded contracts (E14 only) and Measure H funded contracts (Including E14). HEAP, HHAP and Measure H funded contracts (E14 only) place SPA 4, which contains the second largest percent of the youth homeless population (21.4%), as the recipient of around half of the \$12 million in geographically identifiable funds. On the other hand, SPA 6, with the largest percent of this subpopulation (24.3%), received only \$69,000 in verifiable funds—by far the least of any SPA. Summing youth allocations of HEAP, HHAP, and Measure H funded contracts (including

E14) produces similar outcomes. SPA 4 receives 44% of geographically verifiable funds while SPA 6 again is at the bottom of the funding pole, though now slightly less isolated. The Homeless Initiative states that its FY 2019-20 allocations of Measure H funds were determined by the 2018 and 2019 LAHSA PIT counts, and while our research data utilizes 2020 counts, SPA 6 in 2018 and 2019 was still in the top 2 of youth counts by SPA. See appendix for a map of the eight Service Planning Areas

The inequitably isolated area containing CDs 1, 8, 9, 10 and 14, the lack of identifiable funding for SDs 1 and 2, and the surprisingly funding bereft SPA 6 all inhabit the central and South Los Angeles areas. This trend relies on scarcely available geographic data, and thus is not conclusive. Nonetheless, these results are concerning and represent a possible funding drought in a large section of Los Angeles. Because Supervisorial Districts 1 and 2 contain the five CDs of concern and the vast majority of SPA 6, we can represent this area by providing a map of the Supervisorial Districts, with SDs 1 and 2 Highlighted (See Appendix).

As a final note on geographic funding data, among the \$6,629,996 distributed to youth unique contracts from Measure H FY 2019-20 revenues, just \$904,750 are labeled as benefiting multiple service planning areas. Thus, the structure of Measure H funded contract reporting suggests that other allocations from large funding streams such as HEAP and HHAP can similarly indicate geographic specificity if discrete variable reporting is prioritized in LA County for various geographic scales, including the relevant scales covered in this research paper.

Are current youth funding allocations enough?

An impassioned public comment on LAHSA's CoC level funding state from a person with lived experience states, "Add more money for YOUTH specific services. THEY MATTER TOO!!!" (LAHSA, 2018, p. 5). We concluded in our results that HEAP and HHAP each exceed

their minimum youth expenditures across LA County. However, considering our three funding streams together, we see that the percent of funds committed to youth out of the \$715 million in HEAP, HHAP round 1 and Measure H funds analyzed is 1.80% less than the total youth homeless population in Los Angeles county, according to LAHSA's 2020 PIT estimate. This difference may in reality be larger due to the commonly held sentiment among government officials and youth service providers that youth enumerations are likely an undercount (Esparza et al., 2009; Narendorf et al., 2016). Thus, from a base stand-point, the funds that are committed uniquely for youth from Measure H funded contracts, HHAP round 1, and HEAP appear to not be equitably distributed. Our conclusions would likely change if we were to consider contracts that support multiple subpopulations.

We must also consider how youth services may represent an upstream approach to chronic homelessness service provision, thus furthering the argument for greater youth funding allocations. For example, our literature review outlines studies which found that youth experiencing homelessness are more likely to engage in risky behaviors, and experience trauma. Toro et al. discusses how these traumas in turn increase the likelihood of substance abuse, mental health problems and general psychological distress (2007). Research indicates that certain populations, specifically youth exiting foster-care and justice system involved youth, are more likely to become homeless (Toro et al., 2007). Research also indicates that youth specific services can help these populations find supportive and permanent housing solutions, jobs, and education opportunities (Toro et al., 2007; Barker et al., 2015; Carlson et al., 2015; Milburn et al., 2007). Prevention programs targeting subpopulations we know are at high-risk of homelessness and that can equally prevent currently housing precarious youth from becoming homeless, and interventions for youth experiencing homelessness can help prevent traumas, and

resulting psychological distress that increase the chances of chronic homelessness from occurring (Toro et al., 2007). Importantly, youth homeless services depend on government funding (Esparza et al., 2009). Youth are not only particularly vulnerable, but also distinctly assistable because of their resilience and young age. We believe that due to the unique combination of vulnerability and assistability that frequently characterizes the youth subpopulation, funds should not only be increased to the extent that they are equitable (increase of 1.8%), but also further to meet the reality of the undercount and the potential of youth services to serve an upstream role in homeless service provision.

Limitations

As mentioned throughout the preceding discussion sections, the largest limiter of this study was the lack of geographic data. With more than 50% of youth commitments being geographically ambiguous, this research cannot make any distinct conclusions about the geographic distribution of funds in the county. We can only indicate concerning trends from the precise data that we were able to collect.

Second, it is important to acknowledge that not all service providers want to take on public funding such as HEAP, HHAP and Measure H due to the constraints that are attached to these funds (Brooks et al., 2004). In effect, some organizations across Los Angeles County that provide youth services were likely not represented in this data.

Because this research is not a longitudinal study looking at youth funding allocations from previous years, we do not know if some of the youth commitment discrepancies may be due to previous large funding rewards being allocated to youth in the past, impacting the award allocations chosen by the county's lead agencies.

Limitations must also include a discussion of the COVID-19 pandemic's influence on the funding network of Los Angeles County. Many organizations became overwhelmed and lacked the capacity to prioritize reporting on these three funds. While this paper takes a critical look at funding work, the efforts of those in LA who have continued dedicating time to those experiencing homelessness have not gone unnoticed and the struggles they have overcome are not unseen.

Finally, the research is limited due to the representative nature of it. Including only three government grant groups out of innumerable public, and private funds, provides just a snapshot of the funding ecosystem of the county.

Future Research

Future research should look at how the convoluted nature of the funding ecosystem in Los Angeles affects how service providers are able to leverage funds, and investigate frustrations with the federalist structuring of funding. Additionally, future research should return to HHAP funds. Many funding commitments from HHAP are likely to change as many of their departments have been preoccupied with the onset of COVID-19. Comparing how the funding allocations changed over-time from their initial estimations to their actual implementation may be a fruitful longitudinal study for future analysis.

Much of the literature on homeless youth service provision and barriers to service access come from the early 2000s; however, the landscape of services has moved quickly and updated research on this topic may help the advocacy work of service providers.

Summary

This research finds concerning trends in accessibility, potential accountability, and equity. First, data is frequently inaccessible in relation to its publishing location. Additionally, the lack of consistent data in terms of time of reporting and precision of geographic location is concerning from an accountability perspective. Using the geographic data that was available to us throughout this research, we did see potential funding inequities that should be further investigated. There is much optimism in the increasing prevalence of accurate and necessary data.

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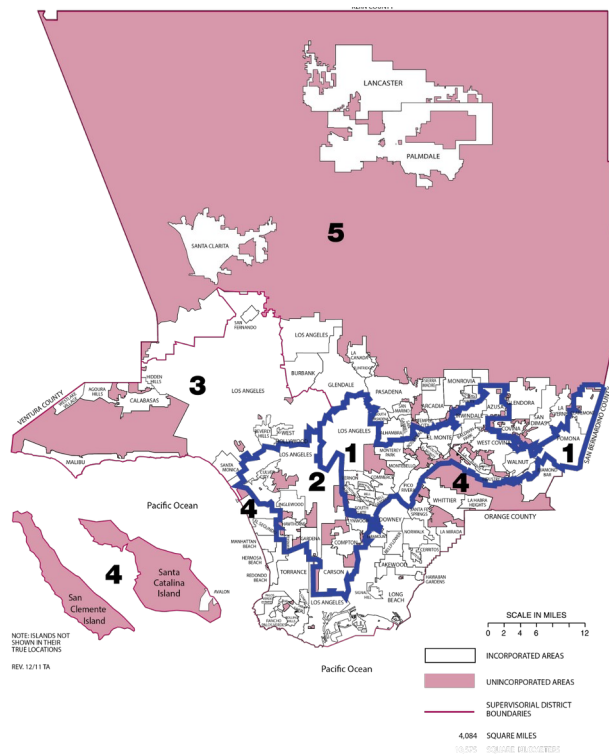
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Appendix

Table 1.

Week	Goal	Week	Goal	Week	Goal
Feb 15 - 21	Receive feedback from HHYP & CRCD on draft Problem statement, and draft methodology for research project proposal.	March 29 - April 4		May 8 - May 15	Share additional Findings
Feb 22 - 28	Finish 2nd draft of proposal.	April 5 - 11	Check in with CRCD & NAEH Share any revisions made to problem statement / literature review / methodology	May 15 - May 22	Share Discussion
March 1-7	Obtain the data and begin categorizing/analysis	April 12 - 18	Share preliminary findings.	May 22 - May 28	Present at Undergraduate Research Week
March 8-14	Share updated proposal	April 19 - 25	Follow up discussion	May 28 - June 4	Send draft
March 15-21 (Finals Week)		April 26 - May 2	Follow up discussion	June 4 - June 8	Finalize project
Spring break		May 2 - May 8	Present to HHYP Systems Change Group		

Map of LA Supervisorial Districts (SDs 1 and 2 outlined in Blue).



Map of LA Service Planning Areas

