

Poster Abstract 11



Title

Foster Care, Homelessness, and Victimization: Mental Health Outcomes of Aged Out Foster Youth

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Abstract

Aim: The purpose of this study was to estimate the prevalence of homelessness experienced by former foster youth after "aging out" of the system, and to determine the impact associated with such experiences on current mental health.

Method: Participants included 265 former foster youth, as well as a comparison group of 150 low-income late adolescents from the same neighborhoods. 49% of former foster youth experienced homelessness since leaving the system. These youth reported two times the rates of psychological stress compared to other former foster youth.

Results: Foster youth who remained housed exhibited similar rates of psychological distress as low-income adolescents. Mediation analyses suggest that the effects of homelessness on mental health are partly accounted for by experiences of personal victimization. Former foster youth who experience homelessness are more likely to be victimized, and this, in turn, leads to psychological distress.

Conclusion: Findings indicate the vulnerability of former foster youth, as well as the need for interventions aimed at foster youth transitioning out of the system.

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