



NATIONAL COALITION *for* HOMELESS VETERANS

“Employment Experience of Homeless Young Adults: Are they different for youth with a history of foster care?”

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Quick Takeaways:

- Homeless young adults and those aging out of foster care may benefit from a network that offers crisis care, shelter, education services, and employment training to compensate for the lack of family support.
- Employment training programs that include mental health resources and permanent housing may increase long-term stability for homeless young adults by providing the necessary tools to transition from childhood into adulthood.

Study:

This study examined the experiences and effects of employment training programs on young homeless adults. The three-week long Job Readiness Class (JRC) used in this study was part of a comprehensive program for homeless young adults that included education and employment services, medical care, and housing. The researchers attempted to answer two questions: 1) are there baseline demographic and life experience differences between homeless youth with a foster care history and those without that history and, 2) are there differences in the post-employment training outcomes for these two groups of young people?

Findings:

Researchers identified a number of baseline differences between the Foster Care (FC) and Non-Foster Care (NFC) youth. FC youth were younger, more likely to be African American, and more likely to have mental health and substance use issues than NFC youth.

After controlling for these initial differences researchers found that, regardless of foster care history, mental health issues had a significant effect on a homeless young person's ability to secure employment even after completion of structured training. Participants in both the FC and NFC groups who had mental health issues had significantly lower rates of employment than those who reported no mental health issues. Hourly wages were also significantly lower for FC and NFC participants with substance use and mental health issues.

Overall, almost 60% of participants found employment within three months of completing the training. However, researchers found no significant difference in employment status or hourly wage between the FC and NFC youth.

Conclusion:

Homeless young adults often lack family support to help them transition to adulthood successfully. Comprehensive programs that address employment, housing, and health needs have shown promise in breaking the cycle of homelessness. The lessons learned from this study may have implications for providers working with homeless veterans of a similar age or with veterans with young children who are experiencing homelessness. In addition to providing employment training, addressing individual mental health or substance use issues may be an essential component of helping these veterans and veteran family members transition into the competitive, civilian workforce.