



Institute for Children,  
Poverty & Homelessness

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# Mental Health Among Homeless High School Students

Amanda Ragnauth, Senior Policy Analyst

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# ICPH: Bringing Family Homelessness into Focus

- The Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness (ICPH) is a New York City-based policy research organization focused on family homelessness in New York City and throughout the United States
- All materials we produce are available for free at [www.ICPHusa.org](http://www.ICPHusa.org)

# Reports

ICPH researches the causes of family homelessness, the demographics of this growing population, the conditions that make it difficult for homeless families to become self-sufficient, and the programs that are most effective in helping them transition out of poverty. ICPH works with programs and partners across the U.S. to conduct and disseminate this research in order to improve services and influence public policy.



Community

September 11, 2018

**One-Third of Georgia's Homeless Students Live in Rural Areas**



Education

September 6, 2018

**Learning English While Homeless: Fast Fluency Drives Academic Success—Part Two**



Education

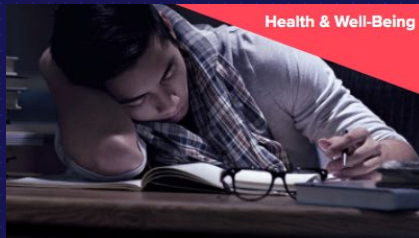
August 22, 2018

**On The Map: The Atlas of Student Homelessness in New York City 2018 —Section 1**



# Interactive Data

ICPH produces interactive tools and data for users to further explore the effects of homelessness on children and their families. These tools allow people from different fields to tailor and engage with ICPH data in a way that is meaningful to them and the unique needs of their organization.



Health & Well-Being

May 10, 2018

**The Health and Well-Being of  
Homeless High School Students**



Education

April 11, 2018

**Suspension Hubs Interactive Map**



Education

April 10, 2018

**The United States of Homelessness**



## We Will Discuss:

- The data: *Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)*
- Mental health risks and outcomes for homeless high school students:
  - Depression,
  - Self injury,
  - Suicide
- Lesbian, gay, and bisexual homeless teens
- Mental health care received
- Policy considerations





# Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

- Self-reported data on health and well-being among high school students
- Published by the CDC
- Housing question asked in 8 states plus NYC in 2014–15

Alaska

Connecticut

Delaware

Illinois

Maryland

Massachusetts

New Mexico

North Carolina

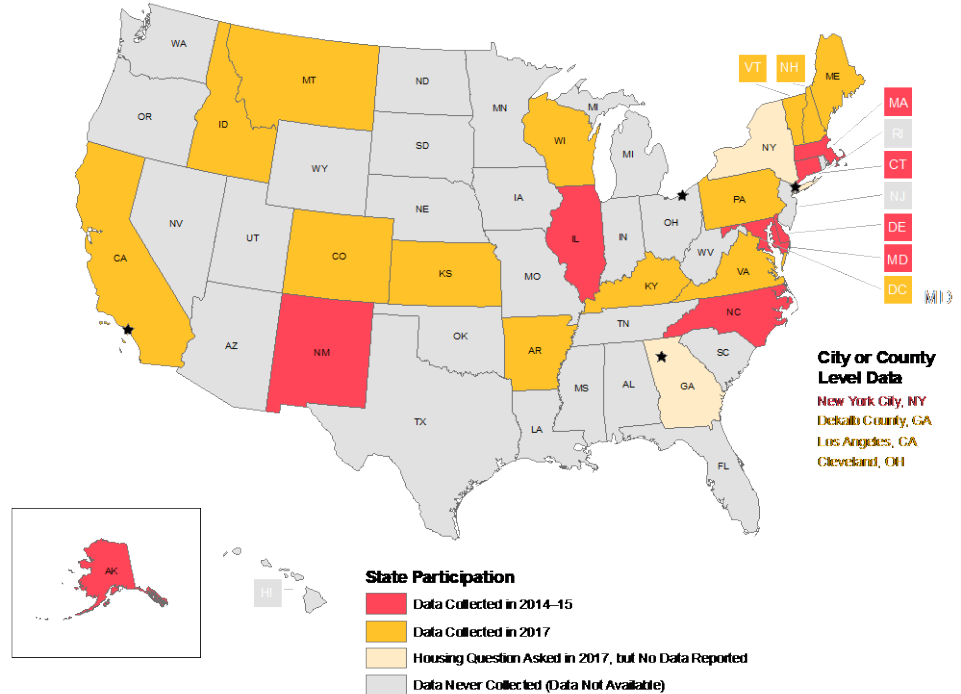
New York City

During the past 30 days, where did you usually sleep?

- 1 In my parent's or guardian's home
- 2 With friends, family, or other people because my parents or I lost our home or cannot afford housing
- 3 In a motel or hotel
- 4 In a shelter or emergency housing
- 5 In a car, park, campground, or other public place
- 6 I moved from place to place
- 7 Somewhere else  
Missing

# Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

- Housing question was expanded to more than 20 states and cities in 2017
- Contact your local YRBS partner agency to ask about adding it in your state




# Homeless Students in Surveyed States

- Across the surveyed states and city, 7% of high schoolers reported homelessness
- Rates of homelessness among high schoolers ranged from 4% in Delaware to 13% in New York City

Geography	Percent Homeless	Percent Housed	Total Students
Alaska	6%	94%	29,903
Connecticut	11%	89%	146,086
Delaware	4%	96%	39,390
Illinois	7%	93%	525,225
Massachusetts	7%	93%	263,931
Maryland	7%	93%	246,689
North Carolina	5%	95%	419,464
New Mexico	5%	95%	93,682
New York City	13%	87%	198,469
<b>Total</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>1,962,840</b>





“When a youth is experiencing homelessness and unstable housing crises, they are forced to operate in survival mode—with all energy and focus honed toward meeting basic needs. They live in a state of trauma and often are bringing additional trauma experiences to the table.

This means excelling [at] and attending school takes the back burner as the youth tries to navigate survival in a world that disproportionately impacts them. Homeless students have more difficulty finding time and space to do assignments, paying attention during courses and often feel like the education system is not made for them.”

**Kiara, Washington State, AmeriCorps VISTA Training Project Specialist at YouthCare**

# Depression Rates

- How are self-reported rates of depression associated with:
  - Housing status
  - Binge drinking
  - Drug use
  - Bullying
  - Dating violence
- Depression question asked in every state

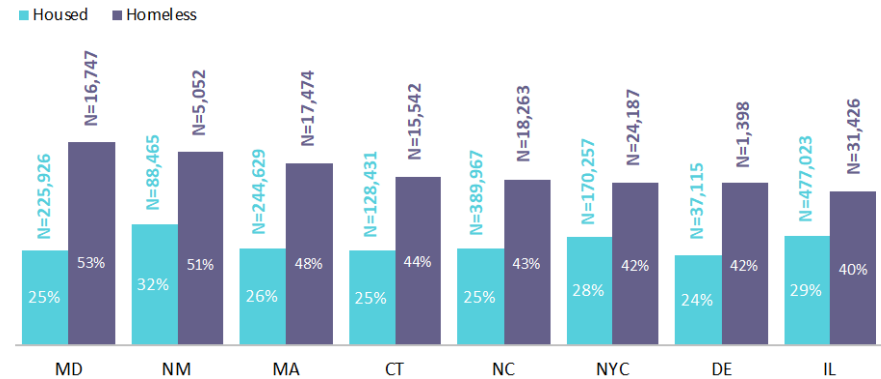
**During the past 12 months, did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities?**

1	Yes
2	No

# Depression Rates

- Homeless students reported higher depression rates than housed students (45% to 27%)
- Rates of depression for homeless students are highest in **Maryland and New Mexico**

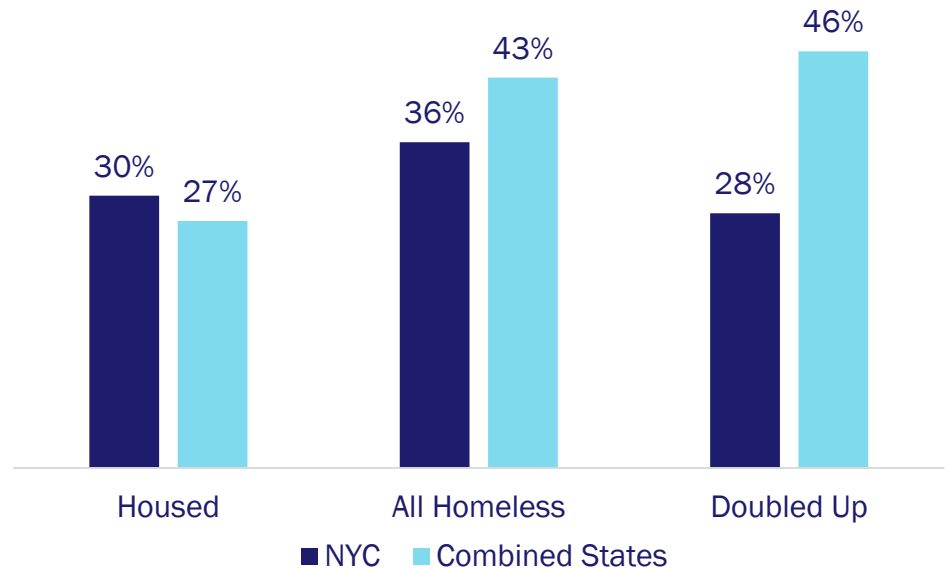
## Depression Rates 2014 - 2015




# Depression Rates & Night Time Residence

- Homeless students reported higher depression rates than housed students (45% to 27%)
- Rates of depression for homeless students are highest in Maryland and New Mexico

Depression Rates by Primary Nighttime Residence  
2014 - 2015

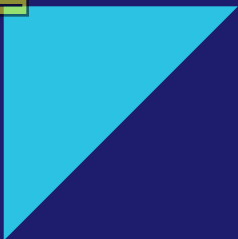





Which of these is **NOT** associated with higher rates of depression among homeless high schoolers?

- a) Bullying
- b) Dating violence
- c) Use of hard drugs
- d) Binge drinking





“Substance abuse can be seen as **both** a contributing factor to homelessness as well as a resulting symptom of homelessness. Victimization has the same dual relationship to homelessness in that abuse is a huge risk factor that can lead to homelessness and homelessness leads to increased risk of further victimization.”

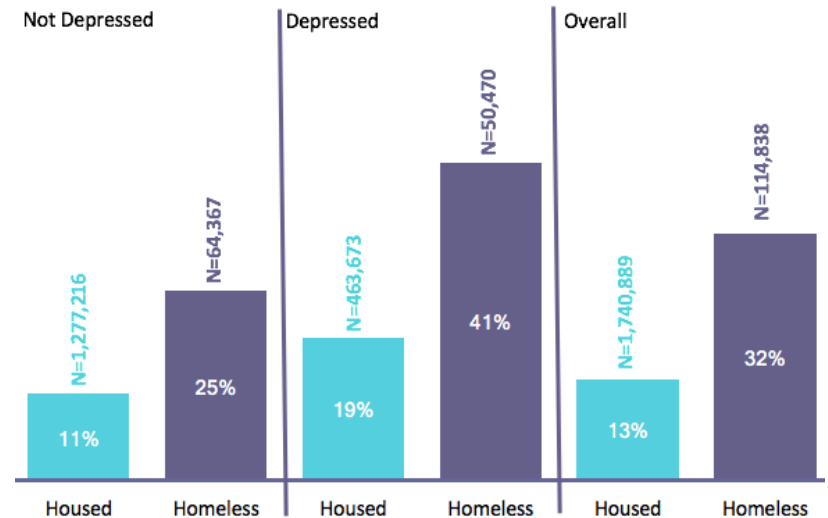
**Kirsten, Arizona, VOCA Counselor/Art Therapist, UMOM New Day Centers**



# Depression Rates & Binge Drinking

- Within each housing category, students who reported depression also reported higher rates of binge drinking
- Homeless students who reported depression were twice as likely to binge drink as housed students

Binge Drinking Reported by Depression  
2014 - 2015

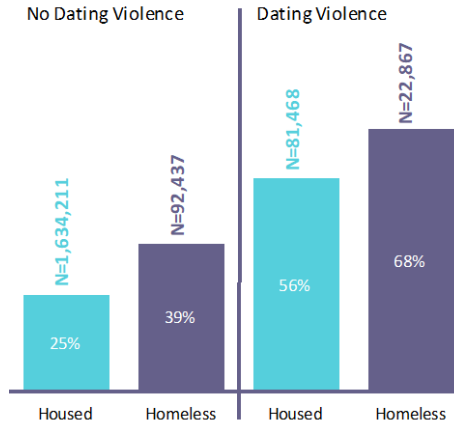




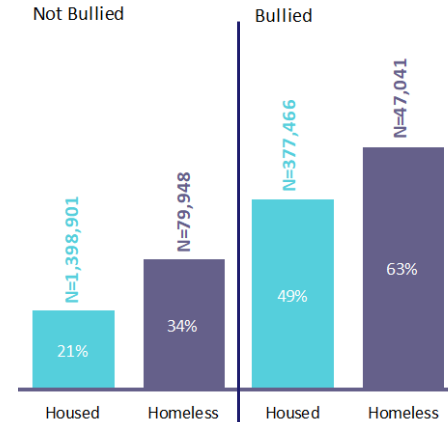
# Depression, Dating Violence, & Bullying

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- Homeless students who reported depression were twice as likely to binge drink as housed students

## Depression Rates by Dating Violence 2014 - 2015



## Depression Rates by Bullying 2014 - 2015



# Summarizing Depression

- Depression rates are significantly higher for homeless students compared to housed students, and rates are even higher for doubled-up students.
- Depression rates are higher for students who experienced dating violence or bullying. Approximately 2 in 3 homeless students who experienced dating violence or bullying reported depression.
- Homeless students were more likely to binge drink than housed students. Approximately 2 in 5 homeless students who reported depression had engaged in binge drinking.

# Self Injury

- How are self-reported rates of self injury associated with:
  - Housing status
  - Bullying
  - Suicide attempt
  - Sexual orientation
- Self injury question asked in:

Connecticut

Delaware

Massachusetts

New Mexico

New York City

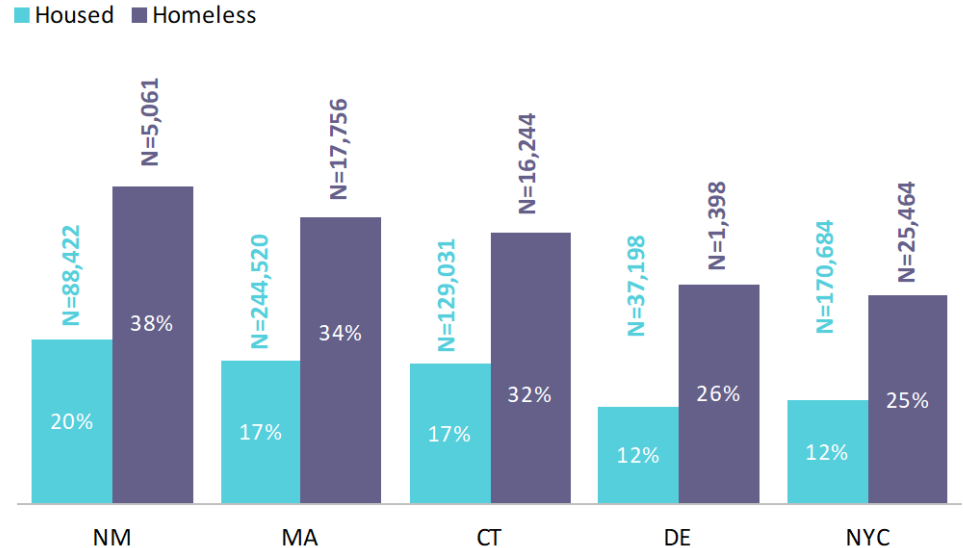
**During the past 12 months, how many times did you do something to purposely hurt yourself without wanting to die, such as cutting or burning yourself on purpose?**

1	0 times
2	1 time
3	2 or 3 times
4	4 or 5 times
5	6 or more times

# Self Injury

- In every state, homeless students injured themselves at greater rates than housed students
- Rates of self injury for homeless students were highest in New Mexico (38%) and Massachusetts (34%)

## Percent of High School Students Who Injured Themselves 2014 - 2015

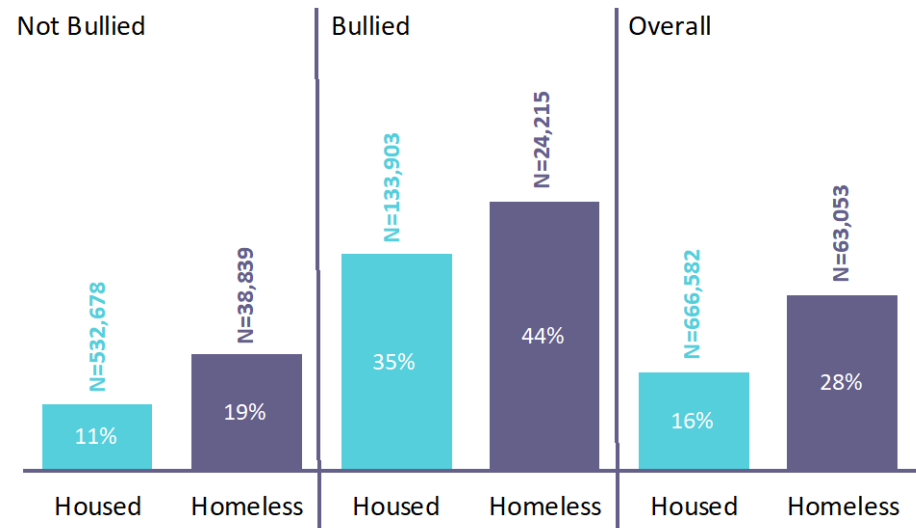


Geographies included:  
Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, New Mexico, New York City

# Self Injury & Bullying

- Students who reported bullying were more likely to injure themselves than those who were not bullied
- Nearly half of homeless students who were bullied had injured themselves

## Self Injury and Bullying 2015



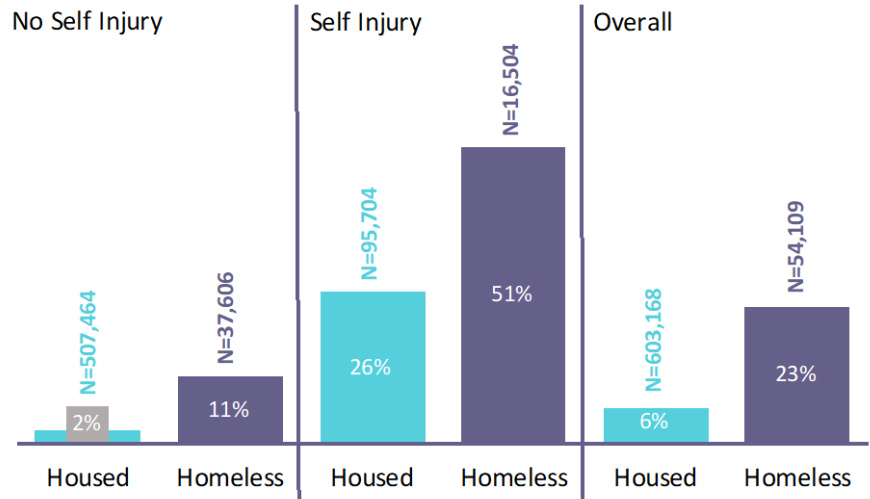
Geographies included:

Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, New Mexico, New York City

# Self Injury & Suicide Attempt

- Students who injured themselves had higher rates of suicide attempt than those who did not injure themselves
- Homeless students who injured themselves reported double the rates of suicide attempt compared to housed students who injured themselves (51% to 26%)

Suicide Attempt Rate by Self Injury  
2015



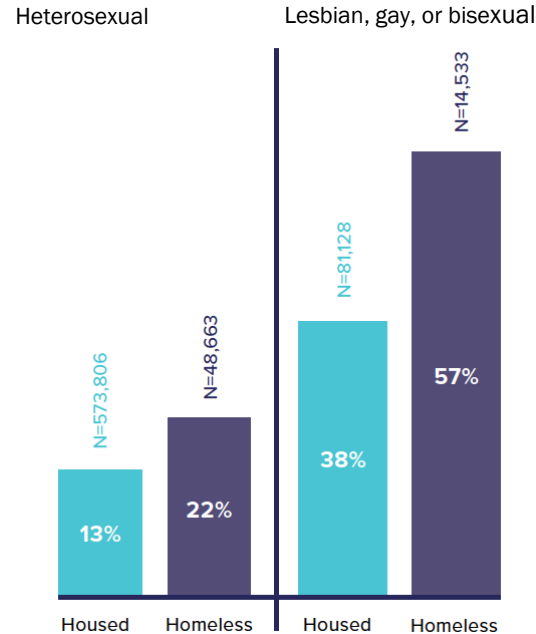
Geographies included:

Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, New Mexico, New York City

# Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual Teens

- Homeless lesbian, gay, or bisexual teens reported the highest rates of self injury
- They were more than 4 times as likely to injure themselves as housed heterosexual students and nearly 3 times as likely as homeless lesbian, gay, or bisexual students.

## Self Injury by Sexual Orientation 2015



Geographies included:

Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, New Mexico, New York City



# Summarizing Self Injury

- Homeless students report significantly higher rates of self-injury than housed students
- Students who were bullied were more likely to injure themselves. Nearly half (or 44%) of homeless students who were bullied had injured themselves.
- Students who injured themselves were more likely to attempt suicide. Half of homeless students who injured themselves had attempted suicide in the previous year.
- Homeless lesbian, gay, and bisexual students were more likely to injure themselves than other students.

# Discussion

- How is mental health talked about in your school or district?
- Is mental health incorporated into the school curriculum?
- Do school personnel have the training and resources necessary to address students' mental health needs?

# Suicidal Thoughts & Behavior

- How are self-reported rates of suicidal thoughts and attempts associated with:
  1. Housing status
  2. Sexual Orientation

During the past 12 months, did you ever seriously consider attempting suicide?

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1 | Yes |
| 2 | No  |

During the past 12 months, how many times did you actually attempt suicide?

- |   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| 1 | 0 times         |
| 2 | 1 time          |
| 3 | 2 or 3 times    |
| 4 | 4 or 5 times    |
| 5 | 6 or more times |

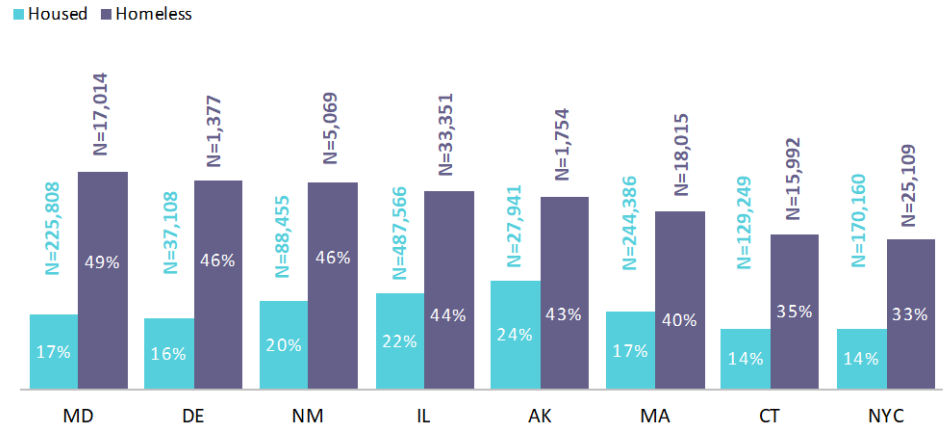
If you attempted suicide during the past 12 months, did any attempt result in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | I did not attempt suicide during the past 12 months |
| 2 | Yes   |
| 3 | No  |

# Suicidal Thoughts

- Homeless students reported higher rates of suicidal thoughts than housed students in every geography
- About half of homeless students in Maryland considered suicide

Rates of Suicidal Thoughts  
2014-2015



# Suicidal Thoughts to Attempts

- When homeless students consider suicide, they are more likely to attempt it than housed students.
- 69% of homeless students who seriously considered suicide also attempted suicide.

51%

of housed students who seriously considered suicide also attempted suicide

53%

of all students who seriously considered suicide also attempted suicide.

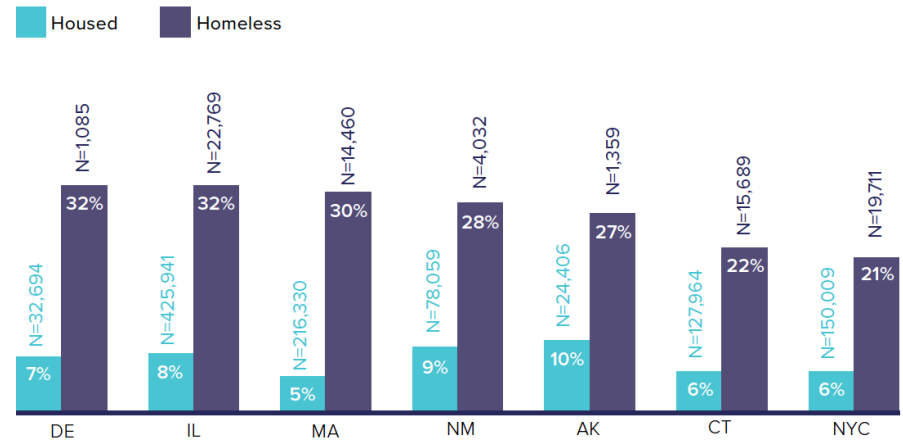
69%

of homeless students who seriously considered suicide also attempted suicide.

# Suicide Attempts

- Suicide attempt rates among homeless students were more than double those for housed students in every geography
- In Massachusetts, suicide attempt rates were 6 times as high for homeless students as for housed students

Attempted Suicide Rates  
2015



# Suicide Attempts Needing Treatment

- Homeless students who attempt suicide are more likely to require medical treatment afterward compared to housed students.
- 55% of homeless students who attempted suicide reported needing medical treatment

37%  
of housed students  
who reported  
attempting suicide  
needed medical  
treatment  
afterward

40%  
of all students who  
reported attempting  
suicide needed  
medical treatment  
afterward.

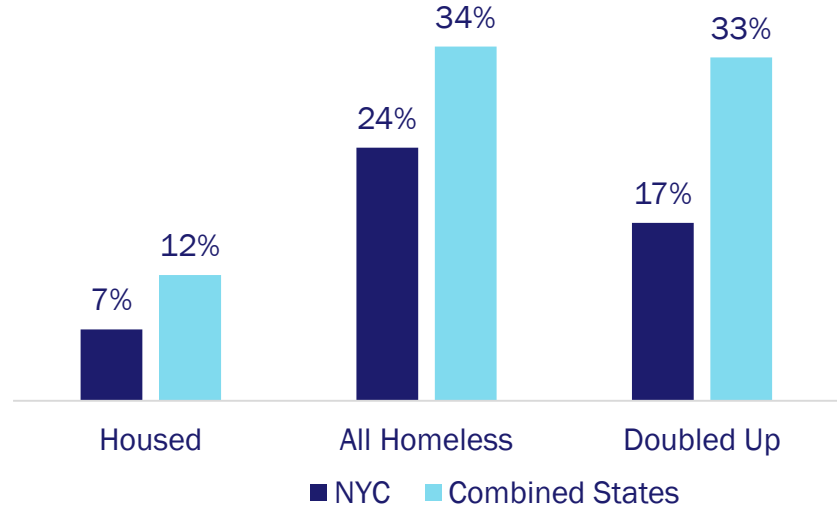
55%  
of homeless  
students who  
reported attempting  
suicide needed  
medical treatment  
afterward



# Suicide Attempts & Nighttime Residence

- Suicide attempt rates for doubled-up students were similar to other homeless students in the surveyed states

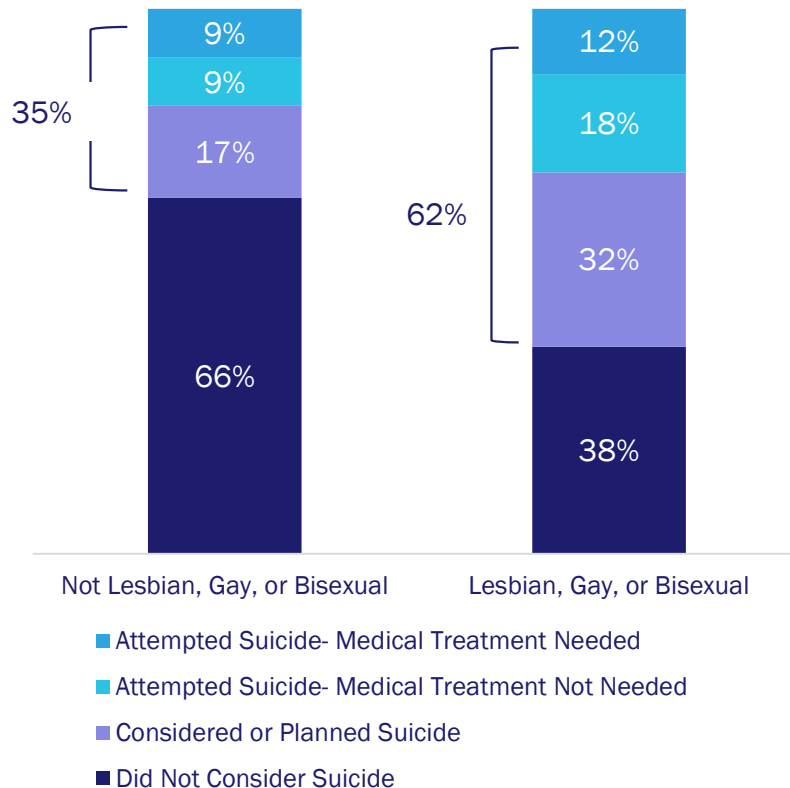
Attempted Suicide by Primary Nighttime Residence  
2015



# Suicide & Sexual Orientation

- Homeless lesbian, gay, or bisexual teens considered suicide at nearly twice the rate of homeless, heterosexual teens (62% to 34%)
- 30% of homeless lesbian, gay, or bisexual teens attempted suicide
- Homeless lesbian, gay, or bisexual teens students who reported being bullied had higher depression rates than those who were not bullied (68% to 47%)

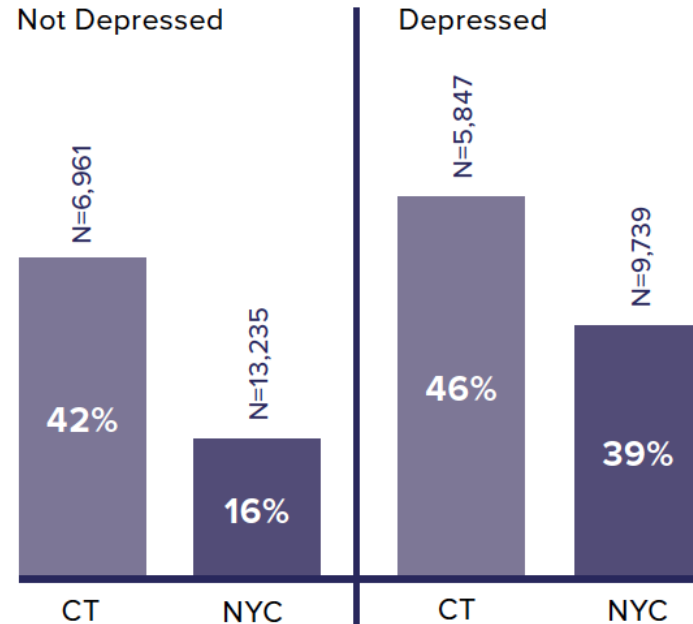
Homeless Students Who Considered, Planned, or Attempted Suicide, by Sexual Orientation 2014 and 2015



# Use of Mental Health Services

- New York City and Connecticut collected data on students who accessed mental health services
- In CT, homeless students used mental health services at similar rates whether or not they were depressed
- In NYC, homeless students who were depressed were more than twice as likely to use mental health services

Mental Health Care Received for Homeless Students, by Depression  
2015





# Discussion

- What types of mental health services does your school offer, if any?
- Are homeless students taking advantage of these services?

# Policy Considerations

- Increase availability of mental health care services at school
- State policies that require the integration of mental health into school health education curricula
- Incorporate trauma-informed care into teacher and school staff trainings
- Strengthening coordination between liaisons and mental health care providers
- Target mental health care services and outreach to homeless lesbian, gay, or bisexual students

# Key Takeaways

- Homeless students are at greater risk for depression, self injury, and suicide than housed students
- Bullying and dating violence are associated with higher rates of depression
- Homeless lesbian, gay, and bisexual teens are at critical risk of attempting suicide
- Students access mental health services when they are available



# Resources



- Interactive data for surveyed states & cities
  1. Compare geographies
  2. Housing, demographic, behavioral, & health data
  3. [https://www.icphusa.org/interactive\\_data/the-health-and-well-being-of-homeless-high-school-students/](https://www.icphusa.org/interactive_data/the-health-and-well-being-of-homeless-high-school-students/)
- Reports & infographics: dating violence, asthma, ELL students, & more
- United States of Homelessness: compare trends in student homelessness by state <http://www./icphusa.org/USH>

# Questions?







# THANK YOU!

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