

# Youth At-Risk of Homelessness

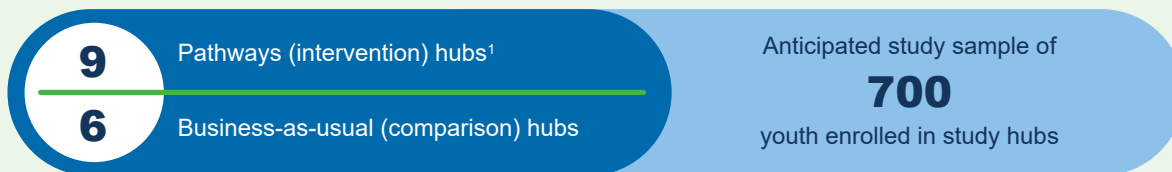
## Impact Study

### IMPACT STUDY PURPOSE

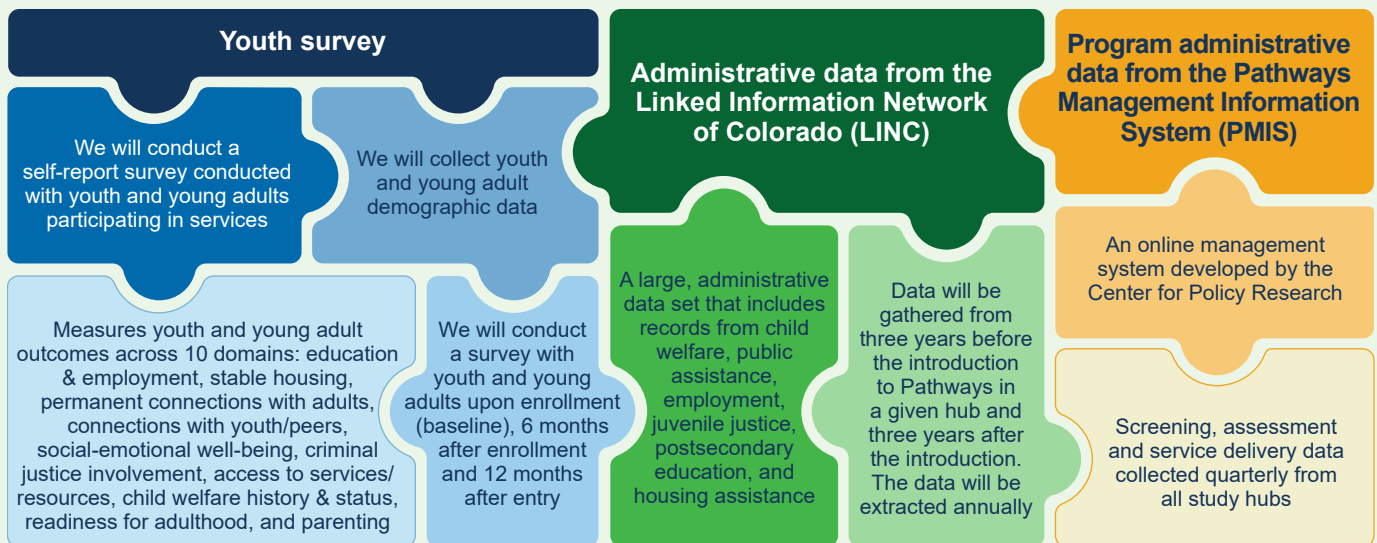
The impact study uses a large, cluster quasi-experimental impact study design to test the effectiveness of Colorado's Pathways to Success (Pathways) comprehensive service model. The study focuses on three main objectives.

1. Examine the magnitude of Pathways' effect on participant outcomes, including but not limited to housing, educational attainment and employment, connections to supportive adults, and well-being
2. Examine whether Pathways is particularly effective for key subgroups of the population served for the full study sample
3. Provide exploratory evidence that links features of implementation to participant outcomes

### DATA SOURCES FOR YARH-3 IMPACT STUDY



#### PRIMARY SOURCES OF DATA



#### SUPPLEMENTAL SOURCES OF DATA TO AID ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION



**Additional administrative data to demonstrate baseline equivalence among the analytic sample to estimate program impacts:**

- 2022 Colorado child welfare data system (Trails) data
- 2020 U.S. Census data
- 2013 National Center for Health Statistics Urban-Rural Classification Scheme for Counties
- 2020 Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count data



**Evidence from existing literature to conduct a Bayesian interpretation of impact findings**

<sup>1</sup> Some counties have a small number of youth and young adults who need services. In these cases, adjacent counties form a hub for service provision.

## YARH IMPACT STUDY

**Youth At-Risk of Homelessness (YARH) overview:** To expand the evidence base on interventions to prevent homelessness among youth and young adults who have been involved in the child welfare system, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services launched the Youth At-Risk of Homelessness (YARH) multiphase grant program. ACF is now in the third phase of YARH (or YARH-3) and is conducting a rigorous summative evaluation of a policy-relevant comprehensive service model developed and refined during the first two phases of YARH. The summative evaluation conducted under YARH-3 will examine the effect of Colorado's Pathways to Success comprehensive service model (Pathways) and business-as-usual services provided by counties in Colorado through Chafee funding (comparison).<sup>2</sup> Pathways is an intensive, coach-like case management model for youth and young adults with foster care history at age 14 or older.

**Impact study purpose:** The Pathways impact study will primarily examine the extent of program effectiveness on stable housing, education, employment, permanent connections to caring adults, and social-emotional well-being. The study will also show the effectiveness of Pathways at short- and long-term follow-up periods and estimate the extent to which the program is more or less effective for key subgroups. Lastly, the study will link features of the program's implementation—including dosage, quality, and adherence of program delivery—to youth outcomes. For more details on the impact study, please see the [YARH Impact Study Design Report](#) and other documents on the [OPRE website for the project](#).

**Research topics:** The impact study addresses research questions in three topic areas: 1) the impact of Pathways on key outcomes such as housing, education, employment, supportive connections, and well-being; 2) the effectiveness of Pathways for different subgroups of the primary population; 3) features of implementation that influence youth outcomes.

**Research design and data collection methods:** The study uses a large, cluster quasi-experimental impact study design to test the effectiveness of the Pathways program in Colorado. Some hubs train their workers to be Pathways Navigators who use coach-like strategies to engage with youth (intervention hubs), and all eligible youth in these hubs are exposed to Pathways. Other hubs do not train their workers to be Pathways navigators, and their youth receive business-as-usual services (comparison hubs).

A youth survey is conducted with intervention and comparison groups of youth and young adults on 10 outcome domains. The survey is conducted at baseline as well as 6 and 12 months after program entry. Follow-up surveys are administered through a multimode approach, utilizing the web with field and phone follow-up as needed. Between surveys, youth are contacted every three months to obtain up-to-date contact information. Youth are offered monetary incentives for their participation in each survey.

Data from the Linked Information Network of Colorado (LINC) are being used as an alternative outcome data source for estimating impact since it is anticipated that some outcomes measured in the administrative data will not be captured in the survey data (in particular, long-term outcomes). The Pathways Management Information System (PMIS) is an online management system developed by the Center for Policy Research for the Pathways to Success intervention. PMIS contains the screening tool used to determine eligibility for enrollment and serves as the online case management system for Pathways Navigators and comparison program workers.

### **Supplemental data for analysis and interpretation:**

- To establish the credibility of an impact from the study, we will assess the baseline equivalence of key baseline characteristics in the analytic sample used to estimate program impacts. This additional administrative data, at study entry (baseline), will describe the primary population and complete the selection process for comparison hubs works as intended. Utilizing U.S. Census data, Colorado Trails data, NCHS Urban-Rural Classification data, and Kids Count data from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, this process will ensure that intervention and comparison hubs are well matched.
- We will explore using Bayesian analysis approaches to refine our analysis, drawing on existing sources of credible evidence on the effectiveness of programs that attempt to improve outcomes for a broad range of at-risk youth. With experts, we will select and identify the evidence that aligns with Pathways and its target primary population.

This brief was prepared by Mathematica, under contract to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE). The Contract Number HHSP2332015000351/75P00119F37041. The Mathematica project director is M.C. Bradley.

This brief is in the public domain. Permission to reproduce is not necessary. Suggested citation: Marston, Anna, Joyce Kim, Yvonne Marki-Korosec, and Robin Lindquist-Grantz (2024). Youth At-Risk of Homelessness: Impact Study Data Sources, OPRE Report # 2024-149, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

This brief and other reports sponsored by OPRE are available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre>. The YARH-3 OPRE page can be found at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/building-capacity-evaluate-interventions-youth/young-adults-child-welfare-involvement>.

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<sup>2</sup>The John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (the Chafee program) is a federal program that provides funding to support youth and young adults in or formerly in foster care in their transition to adulthood. For more information, please see: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/grant-funding/john-h-chafee-foster-care-independence-program>.