

Enhancing Care Delivery for the Homeless: A Collaborative Needs Assessment Initiative

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Introduction

- With an estimated 582,642 Americans experiencing homelessness, understanding their needs is crucial. Current assessment tools often overlook health factors, hindering effective support. This study aims to pilot a comprehensive assessment instrument to tailor harm reduction and health programs for the homeless.

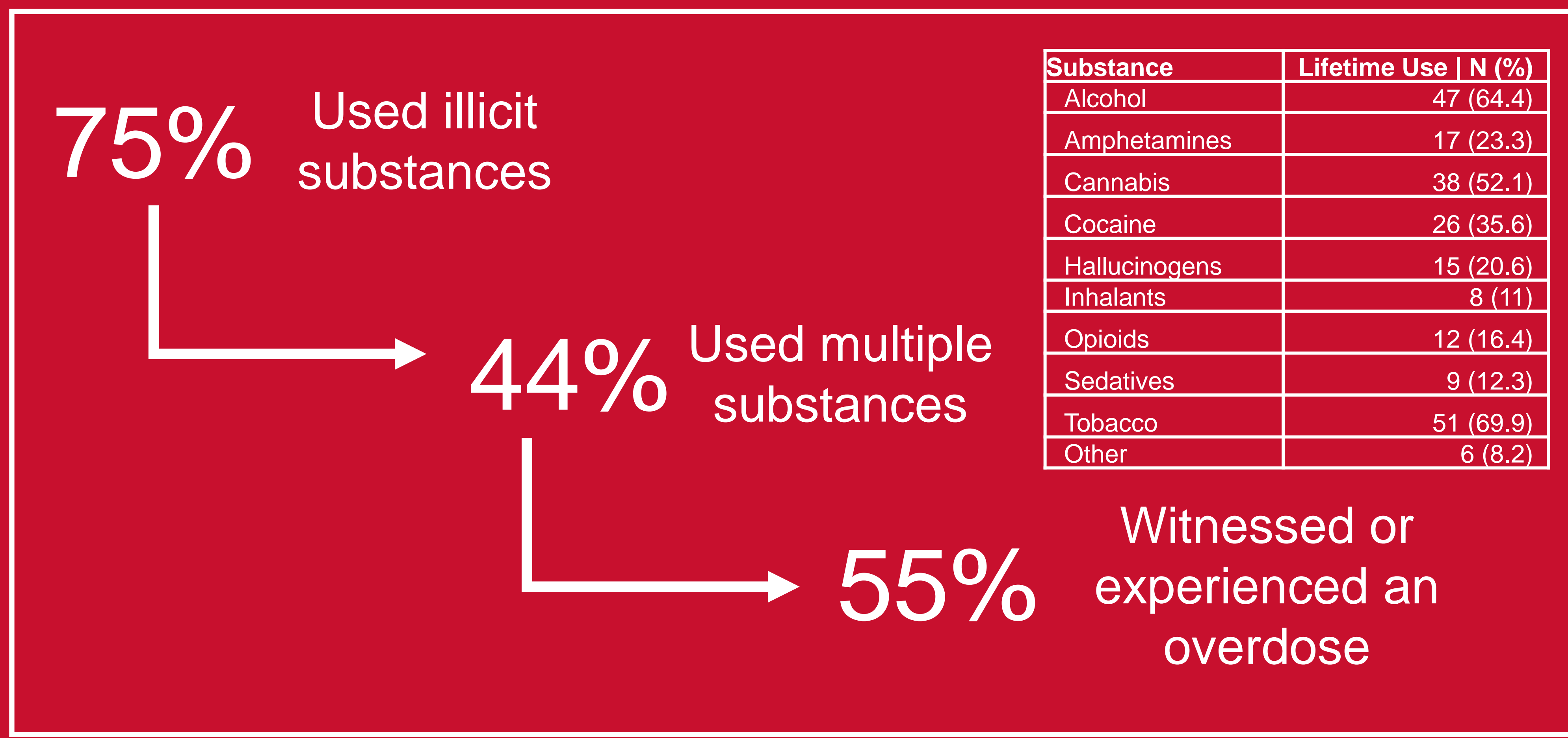
Methods

- A multidisciplinary team, including peer recovery support specialists, homelessness service providers, and researchers, collaborated to develop a comprehensive needs assessment instrument tailored for individuals experiencing homelessness. Six key domains were identified: general homelessness history, health resource utilization, physical health history, mobile technology use, mental health status, and substance use disorder history. The instrument included validated scales such as the PHQ-2, GAD-2, and PC-PTSD-5 for mental health assessment, and the ASSIST for substance use disorder screening. To expedite administration, adaptive testing and skip logic were employed. Trained pharmacy and graduate students administered the instrument at a mobile shower site in a dense urban area in Houston, Texas on twelve occasions between July 2022 and October 2023. Participants were offered a \$5 incentive for completing the assessment while waiting to use the shower.

Conclusion

- Programs prioritizing low or no barrier management of physical and mental health conditions alongside substance use disorder treatment are needed.
- Mobile hygiene sites, like the one utilized in this screening, can facilitate routine care delivery as they often serve the same guests each week.
- Approximately half of unhoused individuals in the sample have experienced or witnessed an overdose, suggesting the distribution of naloxone and training on administration could be a valuable harm reduction strategy.

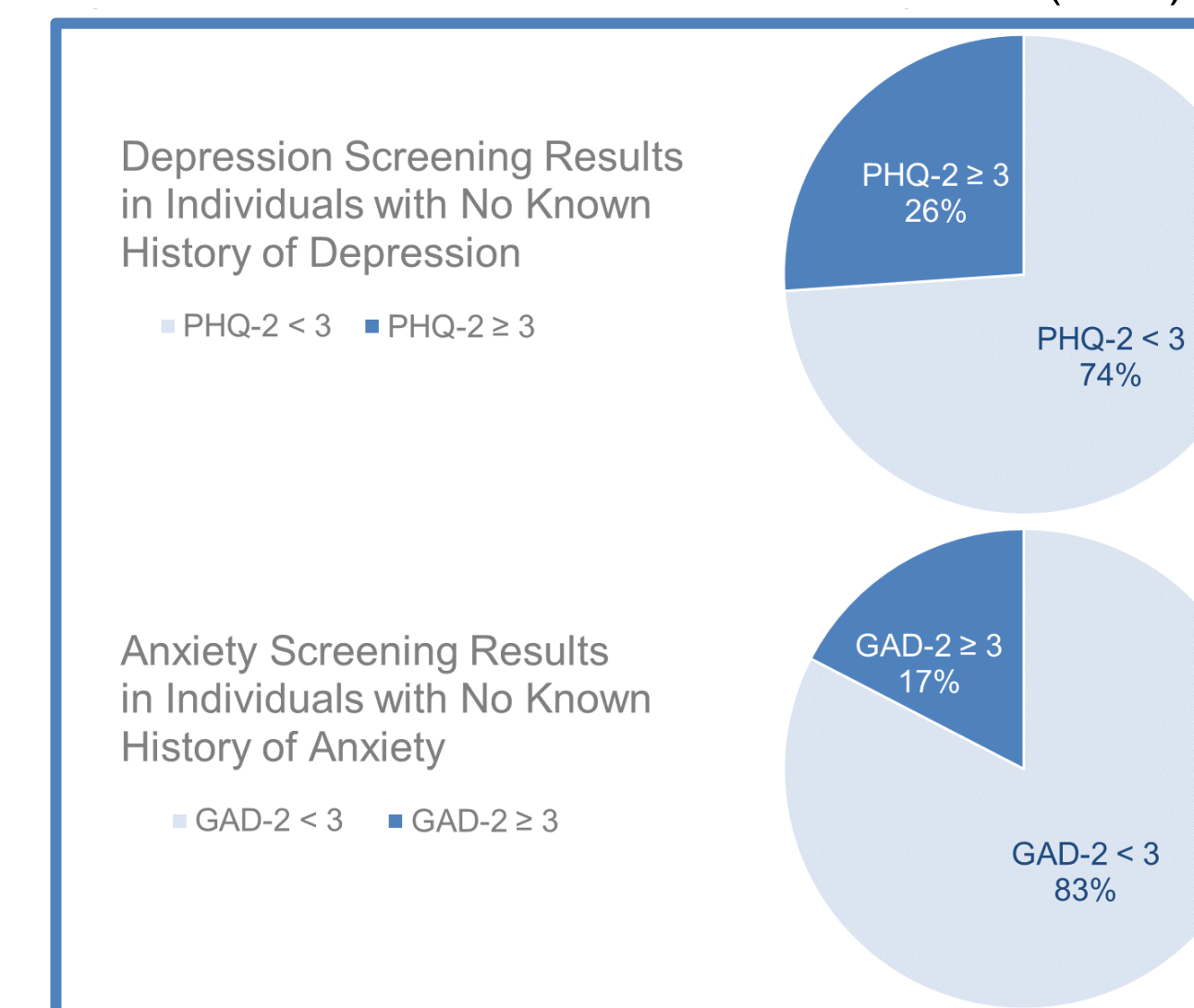
People experiencing homelessness face a higher risk of experiencing untreated mental health conditions and overdose



Figures and Tables

Cohort Demographics N (%)	
Race and Ethnicity	
Black or African American	28 (38.4)
White/Caucasian	19 (26)
Hispanic	12 (16.4)
Other/Prefer Not to Say	14 (19.1)
Age (Years)	
34 or Younger	16 (21.9)
35-44	15 (20.6)
45-54	20 (27.4)
55-64	14 (19.2)
65-74	6 (8.2)
Prefer not to answer	2 (2.7)
Sex at Birth	
Male	55 (75.3)
Female	15 (20.6)
Prefer not to answer/Unknown	3 (4.1)
Educational Attainment	
Eighth Grade or Lower	7 (9.6)
Grades 9-12	31 (42.5)
Some college or trade school	18 (24.7)
College or Higher	14 (19.2)
Prefer not to answer/Unknown	3 (4.1)
Time Spent Unhoused (Current Episode)	
Three months or Less	15 (20.6)
4-6 months	7 (9.6)
7-11 months	8 (11)
12 months or longer	34 (46.6)
Prefer not to answer/don't know	9 (12.3)
Current Cell Phone Ownership	
	28 (38.4)

Health Service Utilization N (%)	
Last PCP Visit	
Less than six months ago	21 (28.8)
6-12 months ago	4 (5.5)
More than a year ago	17 (23.3)
Never	31 (42.5)
Last Specialist Visit	
Less than six months ago	8 (11)
6-12 months ago	3 (4.1)
More than a year ago	6 (8.2)
Never	56 (76.7)
Last Psychiatrist Visit	
Less than six months ago	5 (6.9)
6-12 months ago	3 (4.1)
More than a year ago	9 (12.3)
Never	56 (76.7)



Comorbidity Burden N (%)	
Anxiety Disorder	22 (30.1)
Arthritis	15 (20.6)
Asthma	11 (15.1)
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	13 (17.8)
Bipolar Disorder	20 (27.4)
Borderline Personality Disorder	5 (6.9)
Cancer	5 (6.9)
Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder	6 (8.2)
Heart Disease	5 (6.9)
High Blood Pressure	22 (30.1)
High Cholesterol	7 (9.6)
Major Depression Disorder	27 (37)
Myocardial Infarction	4 (5.5)
Schizophrenia	8 (11)
Stroke	2 (2.7)
Substance Use Disorder	17 (23.3)
Diabetes	6 (8.3)

Overdose Experience N (%)	
Experienced an overdose	3 (10.3)
Witnessed an Overdose	14 (52)
Overdose Response Characteristics N (%)	
Emergency Responders on Scene	9 (31.0)
Transported to the Hospital	9 (31.0)
Death on Scene	7 (24.1)
Bystanders watched with no intervention	2 (6.9)
Fled the scene	1 (3.5)
Naloxone Administered	1 (3.5)
Naloxone Carriage N (%)	
Carry or know someone who carries naloxone	4 (14.9)



Key References:

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- Folsom DP, Hawthorne W, Lindamer L, Gilmer T, Bailey A, Golshan S, Garcia P, Unützer J, Hough R, Jeste DV. Prevalence and risk factors for homelessness and utilization of mental health services among 10,340 patients with serious mental illness in a large public mental health system. *Am J Psychiatry.* 2005 Feb;162(2):370-6. doi: 10.1176/appi.ajp.162.2.370. PMID: 15677603.

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