Inequity in the Permanent Supportive Housing System in Los Angeles:

Scale, Scope and Reasons for Black Residents' Returns to Homelessness

NORWEETA G. MILBURN, EARL EDWARDS, DEAN OBERMARK and **JANEY ROUNTREE**

CALIFORNIA POLICY LAB

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I. Executive Summary

Background

In Los Angeles County, Black people represent 9% of the general population yet comprise 40% of the homeless population. In its 2018 groundbreaking report, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) Ad Hoc Committee on Black People with Lived Experience of Homelessness (the "Ad Hoc Committee") concluded that homelessness is a by-product of racism in the United States (*Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority*, 2018). The Ad Hoc Committee's report examined the combined impacts of institutional and structural racism in education, criminal justice, housing, employment, health care, and access to opportunities as drivers of homelessness among Black residents in Los Angeles. It also found racial inequities in outcomes for Black residents of homeless services, particularly residents of Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). Specifically, Black single adults were exiting PSH and falling back into homelessness at a much higher rate than White single adults were. The Ad Hoc Committee recommended further research to examine these inequities and to understand the experiences of Black residents of PSH.

Our work picks up the task set out by the Ad Hoc Committee and, in partnership with LAHSA and community-based service providers, further examines why there are racial inequities in returns to homelessness for Black PSH residents. PSH is an intervention that combines subsidized housing with voluntary supportive services to address the needs of people experiencing homelessness. There are two broadly recognized types of PSH, including project-based housing and tenant-based housing. In project-based housing, residents live in a single site with some supportive services located on-site. In tenant-based housing, residents live in different units across a community with supportive services individually provided through case managers. Both types of PSH are common in Los Angeles.

Our work used a mixed-methods approach, including both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. To estimate the racial inequity in returns to homelessness, we used administrative data from the Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS). To identify potential factors that contribute to Black residents falling out of PSH and returning to homelessness, we conducted interviews and focus groups with PSH program managers (n = 14), case managers (n = 11), and Black residents (n = 8).

As we explored potential factors that contribute to Black residents falling out of PSH and returning to homelessness at higher rates, we organized our findings according to three broad stages in the housing process: (1) enrollment in PSH and the search for housing, (2) obstacles encountered while housed, and (3) challenges encountered during transitions from PSH and after exiting PSH. Factors at each stage may be important contributors to the overall inequities in returns to homelessness from PSH.

Key Findings

There are clear racial inequities in returns to homelessness after enrolling in PSH.

- Between 2010 and 2019, one in four (25%) Black, single adult residents returned to interim housing or street homelessness after being placed in PSH. In the same period, the return rate for White single adult residents was 18%.

- Black PSH residents are 39% more likely to return to homelessness than White residents. Adjusting for resident demographics, prior homelessness and HMIS service history, housing type, and specific PSH programs, Black residents are still 19% more likely than White residents to return to homelessness.

Findings related to enrollment in PSH and the search for housing:

- **Segregation and bureaucratic structures:** Case managers explained that bureaucratic structures shape PSH program and housing options for Black residents. Program and housing options for Black residents are sometimes limited to the Service Planning Area (SPA) where they initially received support services which can maintain and perpetuate existing patterns of residential segregation.

- **Housing Discrimination:** According to case managers, landlords' racial discrimination limits the housing options of Black residents with tenant-based vouchers. Case managers anticipate racial discrimination from some landlords, and thus suggest housing placements with landlords they know or expect will accept Black residents. These landlords are often in under-resourced neighborhoods.

- **Variation in PSH programs and residents' perception of PSH:** Both quantitative and qualitative findings point to enormous variability between PSH programs in the Los Angeles Continuum of Care (CoC). PSH programs vary in terms of housing type, unit characteristics, funding sources, and supportive services, yet there is limited differentiation of purpose and goals. The homelessness services system seems to view and allocate PSH as if all PSH is the same and appropriate for all residents. In addition, while

program managers viewed PSH as a long-term housing solution for residents, Black residents largely described PSH as impermanent, short-term housing and considered it a "steppingstone" to other long-term housing options like Section 8 housing vouchers.[1]

Findings related to obstacles encountered while housed in PSH:

- **Lack of safety and security:** Black residents—particularly Black women—felt that project-based buildings were not safe. They referenced a high frequency of trespassing and illegal activity perpetuated by non-residents and associated such incidents with a lack of building security. Safety concerns carried over to the surrounding neighborhood as well. Residents described being re-traumatized when leaving their homes. Due to the lack of security, some residents felt personally responsible for securing their PSH buildings and protecting themselves.

- **Case management turnover and inconsistency:** Black PSH residents face challenges to receiving case management services due in part to the high turnover of case managers. Case managers and program managers cited the lack of opportunities for promotion and inadequate salaries as a common reason for case managers leaving their positions. Competition for employees among providers was also cited as a driver of case manager turnover.

- **Lack of opportunities for growth and independence:** As Black residents became more stable and achieved milestones such as long-term sobriety and increased mental health, they found their PSH programs and units inadequate for continuing their growth. Many discussed being limited in their opportunities to reconnect with family or find a life partner. Some stated that their newfound stability and mental health were threatened by their residence in PSH. Other residents desired larger spaces with their own kitchens and bathrooms.

- **Pathologizing and racist treatment:** Case managers described Black residents being subject to unequal treatment, microaggressions, and pathologizing that may occur throughout their interaction with the homelessness services system. Residents discussed dehumanizing interactions with system staff.

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1   Section 8 or the Housing Choice Voucher program is a large-scale federal program to provide subsidized housing in the private market via subsidies paid to landlords on behalf of participating tenants.

Findings related to transitions and exits from PSH:

- **Lack of preparation to transition out of PSH:** Black residents that aspired to move beyond their PSH unit and program felt they did not receive adequate preparation to successfully transition into non-PSH housing programs or the private market.

- **Loss of supports once residents have exited PSH:** Black residents who move out of PSH may lose case management support and connections to service providers.

- **Navigating a structurally racist housing market and society:** Black residents are returning to the same structurally racist housing markets that may have shaped both their prior homelessness and experience of PSH. This can make utilizing a housing voucher especially challenging and in turn increase housing instability.

Policy Recommendations to Address the Research Findings

Acknowledge and collect information about the range of PSH types in Los Angeles County

Even though the Coordinated Entry System (CES) refers to two broad categories of PSH resources—tenant-based and project-based—participants highlighted many nuances that suggest the need for a more complex typology. The major PSH system actors—including LAHSA, the Department of Mental Health (DMH), and the Department of Health Services (DHS)—should develop a more accurate and expansive typology of PSH in LA county. This may help quantify and address inequities occurring throughout the system.

Plan for a more differentiated PSH system in Los Angeles County

Black residents view PSH is an interim step towards more independent and permanent Section 8 housing. The CES should recognize that not all residents consider PSH to be a permanent living arrangement. This may be particularly true for residents in PSH with shared housing configurations and PSH residences with policies that restrict residents' autonomy. The system should assume and plan for varying retention and turnover rates that stem from different types of PSH and residents' housing goals.

Address implicit bias, prejudice, and discrimination that exists among case managers, property managers, and landlords

Training, accountability structures, and legal means are needed to resolve implicit bias, prejudice, and discrimination. Black residents should not be matched to particular housing just because that is perceived as the most efficient and quickest way to house them. Additionally, the County and PSH system actors should continue to implement the Ad Hoc Committee's Recommendations (specifically recommendations 9, 58, and 59) for addressing anti-Black racism in PSH. Recommendation 9 calls for biannual reconvening of the Ad Hoc Committee to review their recommendations' implementation progress. Recommendations 58 and 59 speak directly to housing discrimination and call for bolstering tenant protections at the local, state, and federal level (58) as well as increased funding for fair housing investigation and enforcement (59).

Fund 24-hour services to enhance safety

PSH project-based housing should have nighttime staff that can provide support and enhance security during evening hours. Any nighttime staff members should be equipped with trauma-informed skills to de-escalate issues.

Reduce case management turnover

Major system actors should explore professionalizing the case manager role by providing a clear path to promotion and standardizing compensation, including ensuring a minimum living wage across providers, and coordinating regular salary increases for case managers. As part of enhancing case managers' professional development, the CES should also collaborate with providers to make available and incentivize regular, ongoing training for case managers on trauma-informed practices, community services and resources, and other areas identified by case managers as essential for their professional development.

Develop a peer advocate program for Los Angeles and use as PSH case manager pipeline

To improve case management consistency and case managers' connection to residents, system actors should explore developing and more generally implementing peer advocate models. Peer advocates—fellow PSH residents with lived expertise and experience of homelessness—help transition residents into their new homes and provide additional help to residents as needed throughout their tenancy. The peer advocate model could also be the beginning of a career pathway into case management. Peer advocates—fellow residents with lived expertise and experience of homelessness—can provide a critical link between residents and case managers.[2] Additional research is needed to develop a peer advocate model (or models) for Los Angeles County. This research should focus on existing promising models, like the Skid Row Housing Trust's peer advocacy program.

Provide sustained services to support transitions to independent housing after exit

Adding case management services (e.g., a year extension) for residents who move out of PSH could enable them to successfully transition into other stable housing arrangements. Additional case-management could be especially important for residents transitioning out of PSH that provides more intensive supports.

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2   See https://www.samhsa.gov/homelessness-programs-resources/hpr-resources/peer-advocates-transition-residents for an overview of Skid Row Housing Trust's Peer Advocate program.

II. Introduction

In its 2018 groundbreaking report, the Ad Hoc Committee examined the combined impacts of institutional and structural racism in education, criminal justice, housing, employment, health care, and access to opportunities as drivers of homelessness among Black residents in Los Angeles. Among the report's findings was a stark anti-Black inequity in the Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) system. PSH is an intervention that combines subsidized housing with voluntary supportive services to address the needs of people experiencing homelessness. Black residents are more likely to return to homelessness after being placed in PSH than other racial/ethnic groups. This troubling inequity—its scale and scope, as well as the reasons behind it—are the focus of our research. We are responding to the Ad Hoc Committee's call for additional research into potential causes of this inequity and the "need to examine permanent housing programs and learn from program participants to identify the barriers driving these high rates of returns, and additional supports needed to improve equity in outcomes" (p. 42).

III. Research Questions, Approach, and Conceptual Lens

We use an exploratory mixed-methods (i.e., using quantitative and qualitative methods) approach to investigate two overarching research questions that seek to quantify the inequity in returns to homelessness, explore underlying causes, and illuminate intervention points for system change.

Question 1: What is the size of the racial inequity in returns to homelessness for residents in PSH?

Question 2: What factors contribute to Black residents falling out of PSH and returning to homelessness?

Our quantitative data source is the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority's (LAHSA) Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). The HMIS collects data on service usage across the Los Angeles homelessness services network.[3] We use HMIS data on PSH program enrollments for single adults from 2010 through June 2019.

Our qualitative data were collected in a series of interviews and focus groups in the second half of 2020 and involved three groups of research participants: PSH program managers (n = 14), case managers (n = 11), and Black residents (n = 8). Program managers are PSH system employees tasked with administering PSH programs and supervising PSH staff, such as case managers. Case managers are responsible for day-to-day supportive services for PSH residents, and sometimes assist with other functions like finding housing for residents in tenant-based PSH. Residents are people who currently live in (n = 4) or previously lived in PSH (n = 4). We identified our program manager and case manager sample through our analysis of HMIS data and sought to interview staff of both programs with large and small inequities in Black residents' vs. White residents' returns to homelessness. We recruited residents using "snowball" sampling, meaning our participants referred us to other participants (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981).

We applied a structural racism lens when examining Black residents' experiences and how the system operates leading up to PSH placements, during PSH tenancy, and outcomes following PSH. We assumed that racism goes beyond individual intentional actions and manifests across multiple interlocking institutions to produce racialized outcomes (powell, 2007). Turning this lens to Los Angeles' PSH system clarified how racism produces cumulative disadvantages for Black residents and illuminated potential policy interventions within the broader homelessness services system.

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3   For additional background on the HMIS, see: https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hmis/. For details about Los Angles' HMIS implementation, visit: https://www.lahsa.org/hmis/

IV. Background on PSH in Los Angeles

PSH is an intervention that combines housing subsidies with voluntary supportive services to address the needs of people experiencing homelessness. PSH programs are designed to build independent living and tenancy skills and connect people with community-based health care, substance use treatment, employment services, as well as other services responsive to residents' needs. Research on PSH has generally shown positive effects on housing stability and mixed effects on health outcomes (*National Academies of Sciences*, 2018).

Los Angeles' homelessness services network (i.e., Continuum of Care) operates a vast and complex PSH system that is the second largest system in terms of beds in the United States (*Department of Housing and Urban Development*, 2020). The portion of the system serving single adults ("Single Adult PSH system"), the focus of our work, accounts for 74% of LA's total PSH beds. In HMIS data spanning from January 1st, 2010, through June 30th, 2019, we see 16,026 enrollments into PSH programs that makeup LA's Single Adult PSH system. Los Angeles uses PSH as part of a Housing First approach to homelessness, which emphasizes low-barrier, expedited permanent housing resources and needed supportive services for people experiencing homelessness (*Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority*, n.d.).

There are two broadly recognized primary types of PSH: project-based housing and tenant-based housing. In project-based housing, residents live in a single site with some supportive services located on-site. In tenant-based housing, residents live in different units across a community with supportive services individually provided through case managers. Both types of PSH are common in Los Angeles. Within these housing types, availability and types of services vary widely. Prior research on PSH in Los Angeles found widespread availability of case management, primary and mental healthcare, and substance use treatment, but lower availability of education and legal services (Henwood et al., 2018). In practice, availability of services does not necessarily translate to routine provision of services, and providers described barriers to delivering services like large case management loads, housing location and proximity to services, as well as fragmented service contracts resulting in a patchwork of services (p. 210–212).

Several local government agencies have large roles in administering and managing Los Angles' PSH system. The Department of Mental Health, Department of Health Services, and LAHSA both collaboratively and independently administer PSH programs. These agencies also work with the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) and Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA) to allocate housing subsidies and vouchers for people experiencing homelessness. Both federal and local funding streams support Los Angeles' PSH system through funding construction, housing subsidies, and supportive services. At the federal level, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) fund many forms of PSH funding (*Department of Veterans Affairs*, n.d.; *Department of Housing and Urban Development*, n.d.) At the local level, Proposition HHH funds PSH construction in the City of Los Angeles and Measure H funds supplement many housing programs and services (*Housing + Community Investment Department, City of Los Angeles*, n.d.; *The Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative*, n.d.).

V. How large are racial inequities in returns to homelessness?

Before examining why there are racial[4] inequities in PSH, we first estimated the size of the inequity through several statistical techniques. Because we cannot directly observe residents' experiences of homelessness, we use administrative data from the homelessness services system contained in the HMIS. In particular, if a resident who was enrolled in PSH is subsequently enrolled into a street outreach program or interim housing (i.e., shelters or safe haven programs), we define them as experiencing a return to homelessness. Examining nearly a decade of HMIS program enrollment data[5], we see 25% of Black PSH residents return to homelessness (Table 1).

TABLE 1: Enrollments and Returns to Interim Housing or Street Outreach Single Adult Enrollments from 2010 through June, 2019

RACE/ETHNICITY	NUMBER	PERCENT OF ALL ENROLLMENTS	PERCENT RETURNING
American Indian or Alaska Native	131	1%	21%
Asian American	277	2%	12%
Black	8,253	51%	25%
Latinx	3,231	20%	19%
Other groups	544	35%	19%
White	3,590	22%	18%
Column Total	16,026	100%	22%

Notes: See footnote 4 below for more information on race and ethnicity variables.

Returns consist of returns to shelter, safe haven, or street outreach HMIS Project Types

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4   We used the HMIS' race and ethnicity binary variables to construct a single combined race and ethnicity variable. The HMIS records program participants' self-identified race or ethnicity using the following categories: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, White, and Hispanic or Latino. Participants may identify with as many of the six above groups as they desire. In our encoding scheme, Latinx ethnicity supersedes any racial group identification (e.g., a participant indicating they identify as Latinx and Asian would be coded as Latinx) because HMIS participants are instructed to report both race and ethnicity separately (i.e., participants cannot identify as Latinx alone or primarily).

   We include Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander in the Other groups category in our analyses because of small membership in the sample (n = 51). We are also including multiracial and multiracial-ethnic participants in the Other groups category because of small membership in the sample of particular multiracial or multiracial-ethnic groups. Finally, the Other groups categories contains a small number of enrollments for program participants that did not provide race or ethnicity information.

5   It's important to note that HMIS enrollment data covers a majority of PSH and interim housing beds in recent years (e.g., 2019), but does not currently or historically cover the entirety of the homelessness services system in the Los Angeles continuum of care. Additionally, some street outreach providers do not use the HMIS. Because of incomplete coverage of HMIS data, the count of returns we report is very likely an undercount. Moreover, incomplete data may produce different return rates by racial and ethnic group if enrollments that are excluded from the HMIS are systematically different than those that are included. To the best of our knowledge, no organization in the Los Angeles continuum of care holds administrative data that covers the entirety of the homelessness services system.

Counting returns over a ten-year period shows that almost 2,100 Black residents were in PSH and then returned to homelessness. However, a simple count may disguise differences in how long residents went before returning to homelessness, as well as mask racial and ethnic group differences in risk due to changes in group representation in PSH programs over time. To better estimate residents' risk of return, we use time-to-event analysis.

In our time-to-event analysis, we continue to see that Black residents face a considerably higher risk of returning to homelessness than all other racial and ethnic groups. Compared to White residents, Black residents are 39% more likely to return to homelessness (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: Estimates from a univariate Cox Model using race or ethnicity to estimate risk of returning to homelessness by group

Black residents' risk of return exceeds that of all other groups

Risk compared to White residents (hazard ratio)
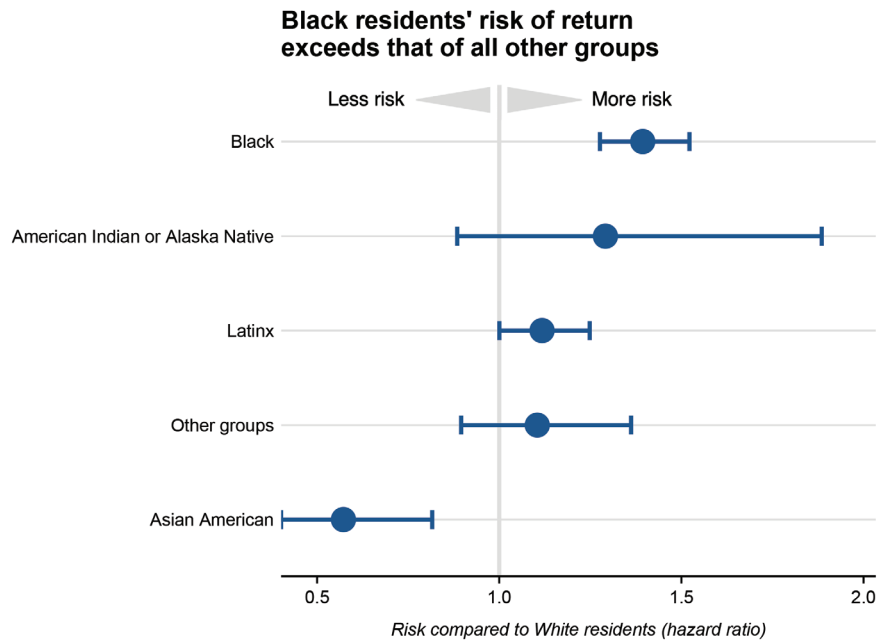
Building on the model shown in Figure 1, we adjusted for other covariates that may relate to returning to homelessness or racial and ethnic group membership. This adjustment process can help illuminate factors that contribute to the inequity. In our adjusted model, we included residents' prior enrollment in street outreach or interim housing, other prior HMIS enrollments, whether residents lived in tenant-based, project-based, or clustered site PSH, veteran status, and HMIS record of a disabling condition. Finally, we fit a special model (a Cox mixed-effects model) that also allowed us to adjust for the influence of the programs where residents enrolled (Austin, 2017; Therneau, 2020).

The results of our adjusted model indicate the program of enrollment has a large effect on residents' risk of returns and the inequity between Black residents and other racial and ethnic groups. However, our data lacks details on program characteristics, so we cannot pinpoint issues (e.g., differences in funding). Moreover, the adjusted model suggested many factors beyond those included in the model are important for understanding Black residents' elevated risk of returning to homelessness (Figure 2), emphasizing the need and value of qualitative investigation into Black residents' experiences.

FIGURE 2: Comparison of estimates of risk of returning to homelessness by group from covariate adjusted Mixed Effects Cox model and Cox Model using only race or ethnicity

Covariate adjustment reduces but cannot explain racial and ethnic inequities

Risk compared to White (hazard ratio)

Adjusted   Unadjusted
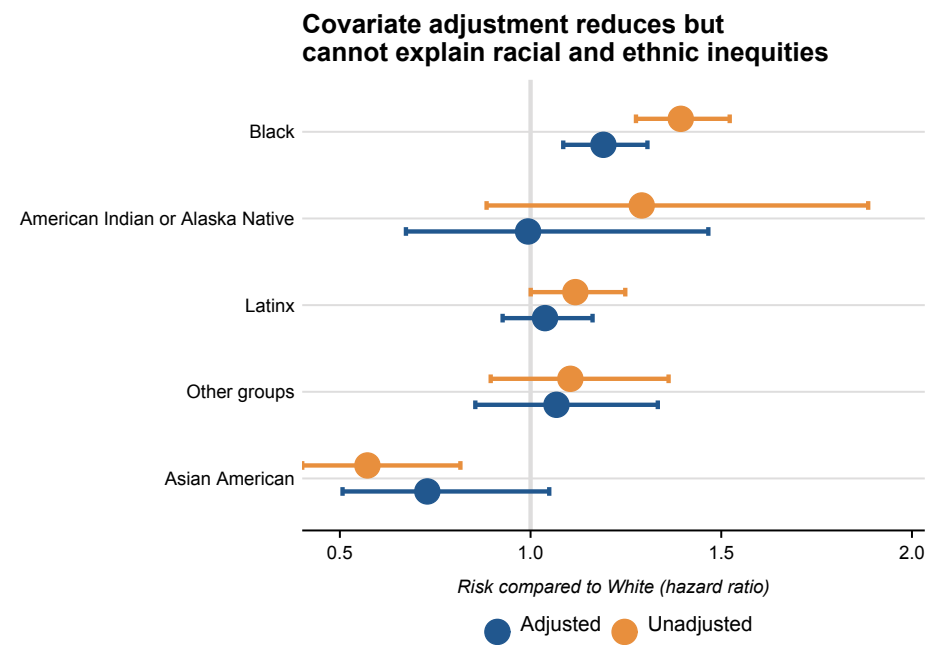
VI. What factors contribute to Black residents falling out of PSH and returning to homelessness?

The quantitative data analysis confirmed a large and robust racial inequity in returns to homelessness but did not explain the causes of that disparity. To further explore potential factors that contribute to Black residents falling out of PSH and returning to homelessness at higher rates, we conducted a series of interviews and focus groups in the second half of 2020 and involved three groups of research participants: PSH program managers (n = 14), case managers (n = 11), and Black residents (n = 8). The research team has renamed all research participants to help conceal participants' identities. Our findings are organized according to three broad stages in the housing process PSH residents navigate: (1) enrollment in PSH and the search for housing, (2) obstacles encountered while housed in PSH, and (3) challenges encountered during transitions from PSH and after exiting PSH. Factors at each stage may be important contributors to the overall inequities in returns to homelessness from PSH.

Enrollment in PSH and the Search for Housing

Study participants discussed issues that affect residents' retention in housing that started as early as enrollment into PSH and the search for housing. Those include segregation; discrimination; and housing type, quality, and location.

Bureaucratic processes and structures respond to and reinforce residential segregation

All of the Black residents we interviewed were enrolled in PSH programs located in or around South Los Angeles and Central Los Angeles—two communities that have been historically under-resourced and disenfranchised due to racist policies and practices like redlining in the 1930s (Lewis and Burd-Sharps, 2018).[6] Redlined communities, including the communities in which residents we interviewed live, have fewer parks and healthy food markets than other communities in Los Angeles County (*Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation*, 2016; *Department of Agriculture*, n.d.). These communities experience higher crime rates, higher rates of police activity, and their residents have some of the lowest life-expectancies in the County (Lewis and Burd-Sharps, 2018; Painter et al., 2020). Residents were aware that they were being placed in under-resourced communities and expressed wanting more from a long-term housing option.

> "We only service mostly SPA 6. We get most of our clients from our mental health agency. **So that's why we're kind of stuck with SPA 6.**"
>
> — Denise, South Los Angeles Case Manager

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6   Redlining was a discriminatory mortgage appraisal practice that used the racial composition of a neighborhood as a determining factor for access to loans. The discriminatory practice devastated Black communities in Los Angeles County and continues to impact those neighborhoods and Black residents today. These historical practices remain contributors in making Los Angeles one of those most segregated regions in the United States (Acs et al., 2017).

Los Angeles County divides the county into eight geographically distinct service planning areas (SPAs) to provide targeted health and social services to meet the needs of different regions (*Los Angeles County of Public Health,* 2021). Each SPA establishes regional service networks that work together to provide health and social services (e.g., homelessness services). Because SPAs are geographically defined on top of the highly segregated landscape of Los Angeles, they can potentially reinforce existing patterns of segregation. This can be especially problematic for a housing program like PSH that may house people in the SPA where they previously received services.

Case managers described how SPA dynamics can concentrate Black residents in historically Black, redlined communities in Central and South Los Angeles. Denise, a case manager who works for a non-profit agency that provides housing navigation and intensive case management services to people in PSH, reported that most of her PSH applicants came directly from her agency's mental health program which was also located in SPA 6. For her agency to keep serving people once they are housed, the agency prefers that the PSH applicants reside in SPA 6. While this process is meant to promote service continuity, it shows how Black applicants are sometimes inadvertently tracked into PSH in SPAs 4 and 6.

Housing discrimination and resident steering

PSH residents in tenant-based programs have more flexibility and choice in their housing. However, the bureaucratic structures described above combine with landlords' racial discrimination to limit Black residents' options. Case managers reported several examples of explicit landlord discrimination, such as having landlords who would agree to house their participants and then rescind the offer after learning that they were Black. A case manager also reported that landlords would openly request participants with specific demographic characteristics (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, age).

Andre, a case manager and housing navigator, candidly disclosed that Black applicants had to be "10 times better than everyone else in order to be housed." He explained, "If I have two similar clients and one is Black and let's just say Hispanic...usually that Hispanic client is going to be considered for that place." Andre continued, "Black clients end up going to more substandard places in most cases than the general clients. There's been cases where you have a perfect fit for this client, but they're not considered for the property because of their race."

"[Racial discrimination in the housing market], it's almost like an unwritten definition…so when there is a challenge, we can address it by reporting it to the housing authority and start-up that process…And yes, we should take the time reporting that it ended for discrimination…But it's just too time consuming...we just gotta go on to the next one."

— Jennifer, Case Manager

While some case managers reported going through the process of reporting discriminatory landlords, others did not. Case managers noted that reporting landlords for housing discrimination rarely led to substantive action and that the filing process slowed their progress in placing applicants into housing.

In addition to stating that it was "too time-consuming" to report housing discrimination, some case managers shared concerns about hurting their working relationships with landlords and property managers. Several case managers stated that they (and their agency) built relationships with landlords and property managers over time. Reporting the landlord for housing discrimination could cause landlords to decline future applicants altogether. Denise explained:

> "If we report them to housing rights, then it becomes, 'Oh, we're not going to use [your organization's] clients anymore because you guys report us.' I don't know. It's like a weird triangle. It's like a double-edged sword kind of thing. We've been trying to utilize landlords that we've made relationships with, you know, 'here are two units. I got two clients. Here you go.' So, we've been just holding on to those landlords for dear life."

In response to landlord discrimination and the rush to house residents, case managers reported steering Black residents towards landlords and neighborhoods where they were likely to be accepted. Frequently this resulted in housing Black residents in disinvested and under-resourced neighborhoods. Andre discussed having to house Black residents in areas known for high drug use, prostitution, or gang activity, as well as avoiding showing housing options to his Black residents where they may not be accepted. Often residents had to be persuaded that no better options were available. Andre stated:

> "West Los Angeles they would go straight for the [non-Black] client. As opposed to somewhere in an area for example 72nd and Figueroa, uh, yeah. [Black applicants are] going to be considered a lot quicker and easier…A lot of times you've got to convince the Black client and say 'hey, this is probably the best you're going to get.' Especially after working with them for a while and a lot of cases, they say, 'I don't want to live off of Figueroa, I don't want to live off [a street known for sex work].'"

PSH programs vary widely and not all are seen by residents as permanent housing solutions

Los Angeles' PSH model of subsidized housing paired with supportive services is implemented in varied ways across Los Angeles' County's Continuum of Care (CoC) (see Background section). The CES recognizes two broad types of PSH: project-based and tenant-based. Beyond these broad categories, research participants discussed or referred to several features they felt differentiated PSH

programs, including how services are provided, and the type of property manager. Program managers and case managers referenced three ways services are provided—co-located on site, located in a shared site near housing, and provided via mobile case managers. Case managers discussed three different types of property managers, including independent managers, managers who work for the service provider, and landlords who are managing their own property. Residents described housing configurations ranging from Single-Room Occupancy (SRO) buildings where residents had small rooms and shared kitchens and bathrooms, to project-based PSH-only buildings, to more traditional 1-bedroom apartments where case managers would visit to provide services.

While there is wide variation in service models, property management, and housing types, program managers almost universally viewed PSH as a long-term or permanent housing for residents. All the residents we interviewed, however, viewed PSH as a short-term housing solution. They were all formerly homeless[7] and lived either on the streets, in their vehicle, or in interim housing (i.e., shelters), prior to enrolling in PSH. They enrolled in PSH because of a dire need for housing and sometimes services. Rather than viewing PSH as a source of permanent housing, they saw PSH as a pathway towards obtaining a traditional housing voucher.[8] Stacy and Ronnie, two Black former PSH residents, both reported initial dissatisfaction with their PSH housing and communities, as well as their plans to leave PSH when they could secure better alternatives.

Stacy became homeless after she lost her job and apartment upon escaping an abusive relationship. For four years, she couch-surfed, slept in her car, and occasionally stayed in private interim housing programs. After two years of homelessness, a staff member at a domestic violence resource center in South Los Angeles referred her to PSH. Stacy completed a PSH application and waited two years before being accepted into a project-based PSH program in South Central Los Angeles. Stacy reported that she did not want to live in the PSH unit she was assigned. However, she feared turning down a housing opportunity. She recalled,

> *"I don't want to move here. I don't want to live in the ghetto. I see drugs. I see gangbangers, I see prostitutes, I see pimping going on, women taking wash-ups in the library bathroom. You know what I'm saying? This is not where I want to be...I look at it [Permanent Supportive Housing] more as a steppingstone and not permanent. This is not where I'm going to land. So, I was looking forward to that two-year mark. I looked at it like, just settle down here for two years and then bounce."*

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7   We use "homeless" to mean living outside, in interim housing, or in another place not meant for habitation (e.g., car or abandoned building) as opposed to living temporarily in traditional housing with friends, family, or others.

8   Most residents seemed to refer to Section 8 housing vouchers. Section 8 or the Housing Choice Voucher program is a large-scale federal program to provide subsidized housing in the private market via subsidies paid to landlords on behalf of participating tenants.

While Stacy could have turned down the PSH unit, she reported that she feared that waiting for another available unit could take years. She accepted the PSH unit in South Central, Los Angeles with hopes of ultimately receiving a traditional housing voucher and moving out as soon as possible.

Ronnie had a similar mindset as Stacy upon moving into a PSH unit outside of Skid Row. Ronnie lost his apartment after incurring a back injury and experiencing a delay in qualifying for assistance for people with disabilities (e.g., Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI)). Prior to securing a PSH unit, he was in an interim housing program that required waiting in line to a secure a bed for the night. On the nights that Ronnie could not secure a bed, he slept in his car. After six months in interim housing, he accepted the offer to enter a PSH unit. He reported that he "wanted to live in a nicer neighborhood" and entered the PSH program intending to get a traditional housing voucher and leave PSH as soon as he received his assistance for people with disabilities.

Obstacles Encountered while Housed in PSH

Interviewees identified a number of barriers to housing stability once participants are housed in PSH, including lack of safety, inconsistent case management, lack of growth opportunities, and racist and pathologizing treatment from system staff.

Lack of safety and security

A lack of security inside project-based PSH buildings, coupled with project-based and tenant-based programs' inability to mitigate the potential for victimization in the surrounding community, contributed to Black residents leaving PSH. Most of the residents lived in neighborhoods that they perceived as unsafe (e.g., high crime rates, sex trafficking, and drug trade) and over policed. Many residents reported a lack of safety in their buildings and/or surrounding communities as a primary reason for wanting to leave their PSH programs.[9]

Laura, a former resident who lived in a project-based PSH unit in South Central Los Angeles for two and half years explained that her housing site did not provide residents with sufficient security and stated, "I never felt safe there, never." Laura described living on the first floor and witnessing non-residents hop over her building's gate and enter the building. Laura and other tenants asked the property manager and PSH program to add a more secure door, but management denied their request. Laura explained, "They told us, 'No.' They denied it. I have it in writing because I put in a reasonable accommodation for it, and they denied it and said that it was a fire hazard."

"I never felt safe there, never."

— Laura, former resident

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9   While some PSH residents requested a reasonable accommodation transfer to another PSH building or program. PSH program managers reported that they were not responsible for or did not have the capacity to ensure the safety of residents beyond some minimal, site-specific accommodations (i.e., building monitors).

Residents who lived in SROs that did not have a private kitchen or bathroom also reported safety concerns. Eve lived in one such residence. She described having a building management agency that employed a security team to do "rounds." However, the security team had over 30 buildings to patrol. The team was inconsistent and did little to deter uninvited non-residents. Eve reported:

"[non-residents] will utilize drugs in the restroom, or they sleep in the restroom… And the security is not there on a regular basis. Like, I might see a security officer this month [October 2020] and I might not see another one until February of 2021… Residents have been complaining a lot about that. They have signed petitions and everything. So those have been issues that I'll just say have been slow to be addressed."

Eve could not lock herself inside of her apartment at night to stay safe. Due to the nature of her SRO unit, she had to use common areas. For instance, she must leave her apartment to use the restroom in the middle of the night.

Thomas, a recently hired project-based case manager also noted a lack of safety at night in some PSH buildings. He stated, "There's just stuff going on at all hours of the night. We don't have security 24 hours. So, we all clock out, and then it's just a normal apartment building after 5:00. We do our best when we're here, but you show up in the morning, it's like, who knows what happened last night."

Out of safety concerns, some residents reported carrying weapons (e.g., knives and tasers) to protect themselves. Stacy, a tenant-based PSH resident, reported contemplating getting a gun for safety after defusing a domestic dispute outside of her building, and then being verbally assaulted and harassed by the man in the domestic dispute. The man sat outside the liquor store next to Stacy's building every day harassing women. Stacy fearfully ran to and from her car to avoid interactions with him for three years until she exited her PSH unit.

"I would be scared leaving [my apartment] and scared coming [to my apartment]. As I'm getting ready to walk out of the door, [I get] all of my PTSD, anxiety, and adrenaline, just to leave my house. And as I'm pulling up to park on the street or whatever, I get the same thing because this guy was staying literally right there whenever I came home… [I spent] three years scared of this guy."

Stacy told her PSH case manager and property manager her concerns, and their response was that "there's nothing that they could do because it's outside of the building."

Eric, who lived in a project-based PSH unit near Skid Row, reported that he started carrying a knife for protection in his late 50s. He noted, "I am not like that, brother, but due to the dynamics down here you know, downtown gangsters, veterans, a lot of people have died or OD. I just got that for protection."

Case management turnover and inconsistency

Most residents, case managers, and program managers reported high case manager turnover. Participants also frequently discussed the turnover of case managers as detrimental to residents and the overall goal of providing high quality services. In some cases, interviewees identified low quality case management as contributing to lack of retention among Black residents.

> "**Look at me.** Listen to my needs and start to work on that. And then the next thing you know they're out the door."
>
> — Eve, resident

As Maya, a program manager for a large PSH program stated, "[Case managers] all seem to have a kind of a shelf life, if you will. I think they have a year to three years depending on how old they are, and where they are in their career lives." Case managers and program managers cited entry-level salaries and demanding responsibilities as key reasons for why case managers often quit or switch from one agency or program to another. Maya noted that it was common for case managers to leave their organization for another for as little as "25 more cents [an hour]" because of the high cost of living in Los Angeles County.

Residents reported having two to eight different case managers since being housed. Some residents lacked case managers for two to three months at a time. While residents benefited from case managers' support, having to retell their life histories and recount traumatic experiences to new staff regularly was "disheartening." For example, Eve has lived in an SRO unit for seven years. In those seven years, she has had about six different case managers. Eve stated,

> "I don't want to have to keep repeating my story. What happened to me, what I've been through, you know, every three to four months. You know what I mean. And another thing is that I've had some really good case managers who will come in. Look at me. Listen to my needs and start to work on that. And then the next thing you know they're out the door. So it was very disheartening."

Case manager turnover left long-term Black residents with gaps in services. New case managers had to establish trust and dependability (i.e., demonstrate that they would not be leaving soon) before they could set goals with residents. Thomas has been a project-based case manager for a year. He noted that it took him about six months before some of his building residents learned his name. He explained,

> *"It takes time for people to warm up to you. So, I would say it probably takes at least six months before you really effectively know your clients and they know you super well. And I think most people don't even last that long, and that's discouraging to clients, for sure, to open up, to build trust with someone, whatever, and then they just disappear, disappear… If you're working on something with someone that may take a few months to complete and then that person just kind of chickens out, the thing never gets done. And then the next thing you know it's eight years, and that thing never got done."*

Lack of opportunities for growth and independence

According to Black residents, PSH programs were not designed to accommodate their personal growth and development over time. As residents became more stable, they wanted opportunities to pursue careers, get married or reconnect with family, and obtain higher quality housing. However, their programs did not provide them with support to achieve their goals, and, as residents became more stabilized, their housing started to have a detrimental effect.

Marvin, a resident living in an SRO, found his building's shared facilities difficult. He stated, "This is not an ideal living situation. Living in a single room occupancy there's shared baths and shared kitchens. I mean it's ideal for someone who has been chronically homeless to get in and then you know transition into their own place." Further, living with people that are in earlier phases of recovery, has started to negatively impact his mental health. He reported:

> *"That's one of the things that being in permanent supportive housing I find difficult, is that now that I have some sense of clarity of mind, and I'm becoming more involved in these outside activities, I'm becoming more normal, I think. And I see how, I hate to say, 'crazy' things are around me in my living situation. And that's not healthy for me. And that could be something that I find discouraging, which will... I just got to just get out of this place and move on."*

Thomas, a case manager, attributed the psychological distress endured by residents who are ready for a reduced level of support to flawed PSH system design. "There needs to be a next step," he stated. He expanded on the idea of a next step from PSH:

"There seems to be a lack of that next step [and] that kind of keeping people here, and that to me is I think problematic, because then maybe someone who is eight years sober, but there's new people coming in off the streets all the time...and it could cause people to slip up and maybe get involved in stuff that they shouldn't have, and that can kind of derail them."

Several other residents cited that prolonged residence in PSH impacted their psychological well-being. Eve, for example, lives in an SRO and described the inability to cook a meal for her family and friends as causing, "wear and tear on [her] mental health."

> "They're prejudiced. They don't know how to talk to you. And we're seen as drug addicts, we're seen as mental, we're seen as lazy, baby-getters. **They don't see us...**"
>
> — Cynthia, former resident

Pathologizing and racist treatment of Black residents

Case managers and program managers reported racial discrimination played a significant role in pushing people out of both tenant-based and project-based housing. Case managers and program managers perceived that property managers more strictly hold Black residents to lease agreements and are more likely to take punitive actions against Black residents. Case managers also discussed how Black residents suffered microaggressions, misdiagnoses, and were likely to be pathologized as dangerous and unintelligent.

Jacqueline, a case manager, shared that a property manager nearly evicted a Black resident because his son stayed with him for seven consecutive days. While Jacqueline's colleague was able to intervene and the resident was not formally evicted or asked to leave, the experience made the resident want to leave. Jacqueline explained:

"He is Black, and he had his son stay with him for a week. And the housing manager there was very upset about it and was already drafting up the notice because he went over his days. I think there was supposed to be a break between the days that you have a visitor. So, his case manager was able to, you know, talk [the housing manager] down but it shouldn't have been that serious...he was asking us to help him find a different kind of housing because he didn't want to deal with that housing manager."

Jacqueline interpreted differentially strict enforcement as a reason Black residents leave. She explained further, "I think there's very low tolerance among certain housing managers that just make it not worth their [Black residents] while to

be there." She concluded that a combination of microaggressions and racially discriminatory lease enforcement make residents leave: "They get sick of dealing with a very difficult housing manager or the microaggressions at their building. That's one of the reasons that they [Black residents] would leave and look for different housing."

Scott, a case manager, believed PSH staff would pathologize Black residents as unintelligent and that some residents carried misdiagnoses. Scott shared, "The amount of times that I have seen my Black clients being diagnosed with mental retardation is unbelievable. I will talk with these clients and these guys are not mentally retarded. They're intelligent as hell…you'd be amazed how much that comes up or being considered that they're, like, they're stupid."

Scott provided another example of a Black resident that would have verbal confrontations with PSH staff and would sometimes disturb neighbors with yelling and banging whenever he had a drug or alcohol relapse. Scott shared this behavior was a relatively common occurrence in the project-based sites that he supported. Scott felt, however, that perceptions of this Black resident's behavior were repeatedly exaggerated. In one instance, he was described as having a "manic episode" after having an isolated verbal confrontation with a PSH staff member. While such incidents did not directly jeopardize the Black resident's housing, when the resident fell behind on rent, these incidents were part of the case for evicting him.

Several residents described being treated like children and/or dehumanized because they are Black. Cynthia, a former resident, felt PSH staff and homelessness system workers would generally treat White people experiencing homelessness with empathy and Black people as if they did something wrong. She stated:

> "They're prejudiced. They don't know how to talk to you. And we're seen as drug addicts, we're seen as mental, we're seen as lazy, baby-getters. They don't see us sometimes as just people and there's a lot of frustration and they don't understand what you've done. Now, that White woman, she can go into Section 8 and [PSH program], and cry up a river, and get help quicker than we can… She could cry, fall out, scream that she was scared, and they would help her. And if you were Black, you were talked to like you weren't shit. Why did we get homeless? Are you on drugs?"

Challenges Encountered during Transitions from PSH and After Exiting PSH

Finally, interviewees described a lack of support during transitions from PSH and after exiting PSH as potential causes of returns to homelessness.

Lack of support to transition out of PSH

Several PSH residents, both current and former, spoke to the lack of preparation they received to leave PSH. Jacob, a project-based PSH resident for over a decade, stated the following response when asked why he believed that Black residents left PSH housing and later fell back into homelessness:

> "I know some people were qualifying for them Section 8 vouchers and they would take them and leave without understanding what their future was going to look like.... So as soon as they were eligible for that voucher, they took it. But now that they're out there, you're not prepared to pay a water bill, gas bill because your income is not set for that. And we've seen a lot of our residents take that voucher and fail and now they ended up back in the system or homeless or whatever."

"I wished at first they would have prepared me for things after [PSH], because in [PSH Program name] there's no preparing. And if you don't know how to do it, you're messed up"

— Cynthia, former resident

Jacob's comments suggest some Black residents are leaving PSH before mastering important skills—things such as money management and budgeting—that can support housing stability. Jacob also points to residents' limited incomes as a reason for returning to homelessness. Several residents wanted their case managers to assist in updating their resumes and/or in learning budgeting skills, but few case managers were able to provide this type of assistance. While Jacob shared that his PSH program has recently started to have workshops to prepare residents for transitioning out of PSH, other PSH residents felt inadequately prepared to move on.

Cynthia, a former resident, described how certain aspects of PSH program design can discourage residents from preparing to exit PSH. She shared that residents are fearful of seeking out education and work opportunities because of how it may affect their program eligibility and benefits, "…many people who are on permanent housing, they're afraid to go to school because certain permanent housing say, 'You can only go half time.'…also people are fearful of going back to work. It's like, how would you lose your benefits?" In her interpretation, PSH staff failed to help residents navigate potential growth opportunities, and that meant residents would be less prepared to transition out of PSH. She concluded, "Those are some of the things as we go through, we have fear of, do I work? Can I go to school? How am I going to make it? How am I going to eat? And there is no really preparing you for that. There's nobody to keep you on how to do that."

"I was on my own."

— Ronnie, former resident

Loss of supports once residents have exited PSH

Compounding potential housing instability due to lack of preparation to transition out of PSH, residents who did exit their PSH programs encountered an immediate drop-off in supportive services. This discontinuity of services can be challenging and potentially destabilize residents who are transitioning into other housing. While most of the former PSH residents we interviewed had navigated their transitions successfully, they still desired to have more continuity of support.

Laura received a "Moving On"[10] housing voucher and left her project-based unit with a promissory note from a nonprofit organization committing to paying her new apartment's deposit. After moving into her new apartment, she discovered that the unit needed significant repairs and did not meet the housing quality standards set by the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA). She was then made aware that she did not qualify for the nonprofit organization's deposit assistance.

At the time of her interview, Laura was three months removed from PSH and already at-risk of losing her housing. When asked if her PSH case manager or program knew of her situation, Laura replied, "That's the thing. No one [from the PSH program] has asked me anything about if I am okay. They still don't know that my move-in deposit hasn't been paid." Laura cited the lack of a follow-up from her PSH program as a cause for concern, as she could fall back into homelessness and her previous PSH agency would have no way of knowing.

Stacy, a former resident, highlighted issues navigating the Section 8 program and putting together a security deposit as risk factors for returning to homelessness. With support from her PSH program over, she engaged in self-advocacy and was able to obtain deposit assistance. Stacy was concerned that other residents may not have the same powers of self-advocacy: "Let me tell you what happened to me. And I don't know if it's going to happen to too many other people. [non-profit organization] helped me [with a deposit]. But see, I'm vocal."

Like Laura and Stacy, Ronnie was successful in getting a housing voucher and used it to leave his PSH program. He was also successful in finding a new apartment in the Echo Park Lake area. Despite his largely successful transition, he reflected that he would have benefited from some continued support, particularly around saving and budgeting.

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10 Moving On strategies make use of other housing resources, including subsidized housing programs like Section 8, to provide residents with pathways to transition out of PSH. For additional background, see: https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/moving-on/

Navigating a structurally racist housing market and society

Once Black residents exited PSH, they re-entered a housing market that is subject to discrimination and segregation. Although some residents received a traditional housing voucher to exit PSH, their housing options were often in the same under-resourced communities they were attempting to leave. As Stacy, a former resident, put it, "most of the places that take Section 8 are right here in the ghetto, if you want to live in L.A." She left her PSH program but was only able to find an apartment that was five minutes up the street. While Stacy prefers her current residence to PSH, she is still striving to obtain a permanent residence.

It is important to note that Black former residents—regardless of their prior participation in PSH—are still subject to the same structurally racist precipitants of homelessness that the Ad Hoc Committee report details at length (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, 2018). In particular, the Ad Hoc Committee report discusses: structural and institutional racism, discrimination, and implicit bias (p. 18); Los Angeles' high cost of living and lacking employment opportunities (p. 21); and criminal justice system contact and involvement (p. 24). For former PSH residents, these factors still matter and shape their post-PSH experiences and outcomes, including returns to homelessness.

VII. Conclusion and Recommendations

PSH provides thousands of people experiencing homelessness with a critical housing option and access to services that support physical and mental health (National Academies of Sciences, 2018). In Los Angeles County, however, a quarter of Black residents who enroll in PSH will leave their housing and fall back into homelessness, and Black residents are 39% more likely to return to homelessness than White residents. Our study begins to explore the reasons behind this inequity through interviews with a small, intentional sample of service providers, including program managers and case managers, and Black PSH residents. While the scope of our sample is limited and our findings are not generalizable to all PSH providers and residents, our findings are important indicators of what Black residents may be experiencing in PSH, as well as some of the potential drivers of the PSH system's inequities. There are likely factors beyond those our study points to that also contribute to these inequities.

Interviewees discussed potential causes of racial inequities at every stage of the process—from PSH search and enrollment to being housed in PSH to transitioning or exiting from PSH.

Black residents reported accessing PSH programs with fewer resources due to systemic issues in how and where homeless services are provided and structural racism and discrimination in the rental housing market. Residential segregation in Los Angeles County, and the structure of the county's service planning area configuration, contribute to the channeling of residents into PSH programs with varying resources. Case managers reported that some landlords refuse Black tenants, and the landlords who are amenable are often in under-resourced neighborhoods. These discriminatory practices influence how case managers make housing placement decisions. While these PSH staff are committed to getting residents housed as quickly as possible, this focus on finding amendable landlords can result in placing residents in housing in neighborhoods where they do not want to reside long-term. Together these structural mechanisms limit the housing placements of Black PSH residents and increase the likelihood of Black residents falling out of PSH and/or returning to homelessness.

In addition, both residents and service providers reported that Los Angeles' PSH system, despite providers' uniform goal of offering truly permanent housing, is highly differentiated, composed of programs using different housing types, unit configurations, and supportive services. The Black PSH residents we interviewed viewed PSH as an opportunity to get out of homelessness, receive critical social services to stabilize themselves mentally and physically, and then ultimately move on to another housing opportunity that provides them with the space and flexibility to pursue their life goals.

Once housed, our research participants reported a mix of factors that can undermine the stability of Black residents within PSH and push them towards leaving. Black residents find themselves in buildings or neighborhoods where they do not feel safe and secure. Though case managers provide initial guidance and support, they are inconsistent in the long-term due to high turnover. Throughout their continued interactions with the homelessness services system, some residents and case managers reported Black residents' experiencing unequal treatment ranging from racial microaggressions to being treated like children to being pathologized. Some residents and case managers also report that Black residents have little opportunity or support to further develop and have housing that provides more physical space and independence.

Some Black residents who left PSH for other types of housing, reported that they were not adequately prepared for their transition. The current role of case managers does not include providing outgoing residents with planning, support, or resources to ensure a smooth transition to other stable housing. After leaving PSH, residents reported a loss of support, and having little or no access to their former service providers. They also reported having to navigate a structurally racist housing market that may have contributed to their former experiences of homelessness.

Building upon the groundwork of the Ad Hoc Committee's report, our work sheds light on inequities in the PSH system and potential causes. Below we conclude with policy recommendations we reached through our quantitative and qualitative analysis and understanding of the PSH system based upon perspectives of Black PSH residents, Case Managers, and Program Managers who participated in our research.

Policy Recommendations to Address the Research Findings:

Acknowledge and collect information about the range of PSH types in Los Angeles County

Even though the Coordinated Entry System (CES) refers to two broad categories of PSH resources —tenant-based and project-based—participants highlighted many nuances that suggest the need for a more complex typology. The major PSH system actors—including LAHSA, the Department of Mental Health (DMH), and the Department of Health Services (DHS)—should develop a more accurate and expansive typology of PSH in LA county. This may help quantify and address inequities occurring throughout the system.

Assume and plan for a more differentiated PSH system in Los Angeles County

For many Black residents, PSH is an interim step towards more independent and permanent Section 8 housing. The CES should recognize that not all residents consider PSH as a permanent living arrangement. This may be particularly true for residents in PSH with shared housing configurations and PSH residences with policies that restrict residents' autonomy. The system should assume and plan for varying retention and turnover rates that stem from different types of PSH and residents' housing goals.

Address implicit bias, prejudice, and discrimination that exists among case managers, property managers, and landlords

Training, accountability structures, and legal means are needed to resolve implicit bias, prejudice, and discrimination. Black residents should not be matched to housing just because that is perceived as the most efficient and quickest way to house them. Additionally, the county and PSH system actors should continue to implement the Ad Hoc Committee's Recommendations (specifically recommendations 9, 58, and 59) for addressing anti-Black racism in PSH. Recommendation 9 calls for biannual reconvening of the Ad Hoc Committee to review their recommendations' implementation progress. Recommendations 58 and 59 speak directly to housing discrimination and call for increased funding for fair housing investigation and enforcement (59), as well as bolstering tenant protections at the local, state, and federal level (58).

Fund 24-hour services to enhance safety

PSH project-based housing should have nighttime staff that can provide support and enhance security during evening hours. Any nighttime staff members should be equipped with trauma-informed skills to de-escalate issues.

Reduce case management turnover

Major system actors should explore professionalizing the case manager role by providing a clear path to promotion and standardizing compensation, including ensuring a minimum living wage across providers, and coordinating regular salary increases for case managers. As part of enhancing case managers' professional development, the CES should also collaborate with providers to make available and incentivize regular, ongoing training for case managers on trauma-informed practices, community services and resources, and other areas identified by case managers as essential for their professional development.

Develop a peer advocate program for Los Angeles and use as PSH case manager pipeline

To improve case management consistency and case managers' connection to residents, system actors should explore developing and more generally implementing peer advocate models. Peer advocates—fellow PSH residents with lived expertise and experience of homelessness—help transition residents into their new homes and provide additional help to residents as needed throughout their tenancy. The peer advocate model could also be the beginning of a career pathway into case management. Peer advocates—fellow residents with lived expertise and experience of homelessness—can provide a critical link between residents and case managers.[11] Additional research is needed to develop a peer advocate model (or models) for Los Angeles County. This research should focus on existing promising models, like the Skid Row Housing Trust's peer advocacy program.

Provide sustained services to support transitions to independent housing after exit

Adding case management services (e.g., a year extension) for residents who move out of PSH could enable them to successfully transition into other stable housing arrangements. Additional case-management could be especially important for residents transitioning out of PSH that provides more intensive supports.

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11 See https://www.samhsa.gov/homelessness-programs-resources/hpr-resources/peer-advocates-transition-residents for an overview of Skid Row Housing Trust's Peer Advocate program.

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