

# Housing Stability Among Homeless Individuals with Serious Mental Illness Participating in Housing First Programs

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Carol L. Pearson & Ann Elizabeth Montgomery  
Walter R. McDonald & Associates, Inc.  
Rockville, MD

# Context

- Emphasis on permanent supportive housing to meet needs of chronically homeless people, many with psychiatric or substance abuse issues
- Increasing popularity of approaches emphasizing access to housing without service requirements
- Evidence (including this study) that housing stability and tenure are better in Housing First programs

# Purpose of the Study

- Exploratory look at program features and client outcomes in three Housing First programs serving homeless individuals with serious mental illness

# What is Housing First?

- Direct, or nearly direct, placement into housing
- No requirement that participants use supportive services
- Assertive outreach and use of a harm reduction approach
- Provision of services and housing during temporary leaves

# Housing First Programs

- Downtown Emergency Services Center (DESC): Seattle, WA
- Pathways to Housing: New York City
- Reaching Out and Engaging to Achieve Consumer Health (REACH): San Diego, CA

# Housing First Programs

Feature	DESC	Pathways	REACH
Established	1993	1992	2000
Units	306	450	250
Housing types	Owned by DESC: 3 SRO buildings, 1 Safehaven	Scattered-site apartments in private buildings	SRO, Safehaven, Independent Living Facilities, scattered-site apartments
Colocation of housing, services	Yes—on-site staff provide property and case management	No—ACT team members visit clients in home	No—case managers visit clients in home
ACT team	Modified	Yes	Modified

# Study Participants

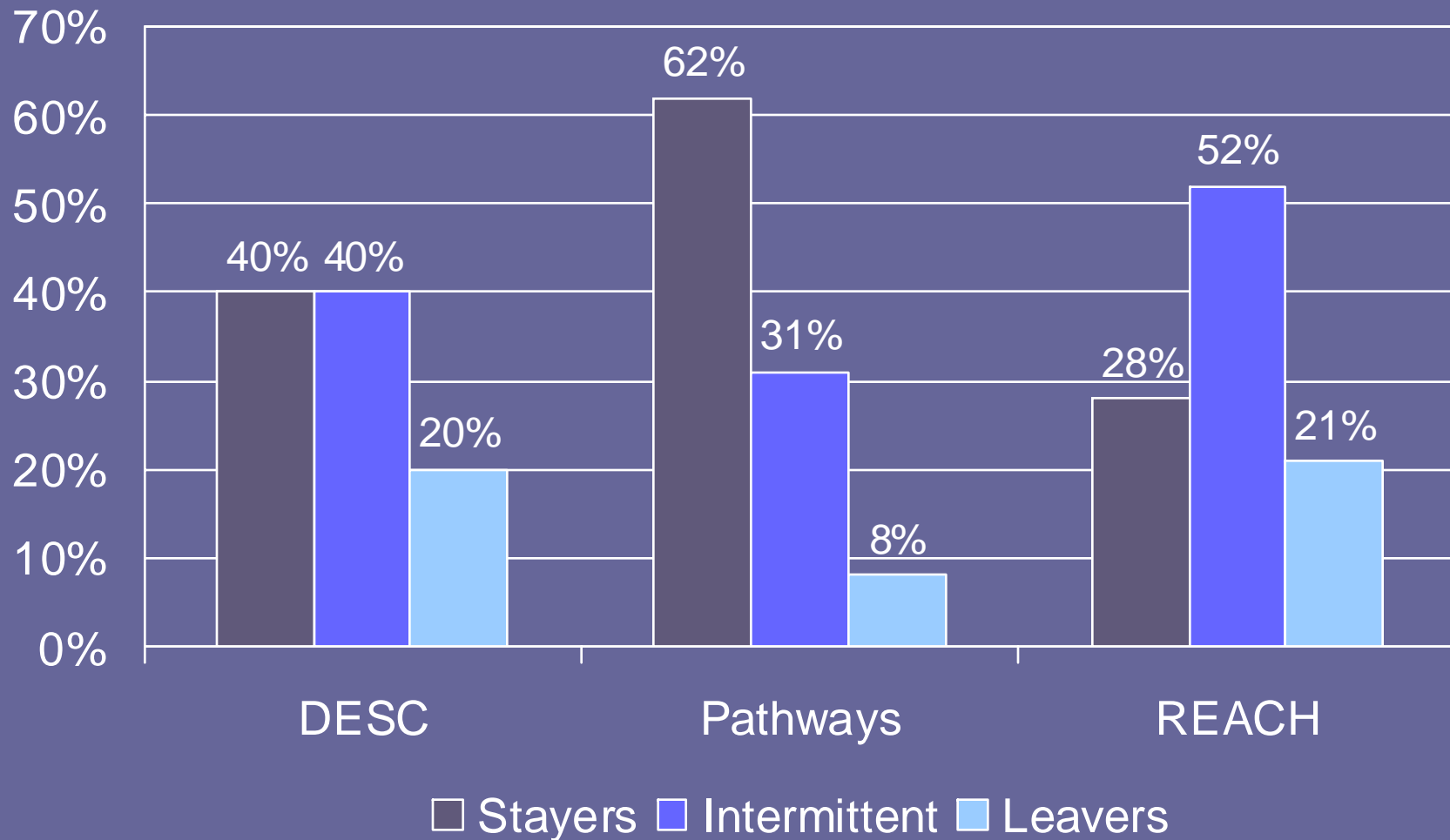
- Chronically homeless (88%)
- Co-occurring mental illness and substance-related disorders (69%)
- Prior living situations varied
  - 39% streets
  - 28% shelter
  - 18% psychiatric hospitals
  - 17% other or unknown

# Housing Tenure

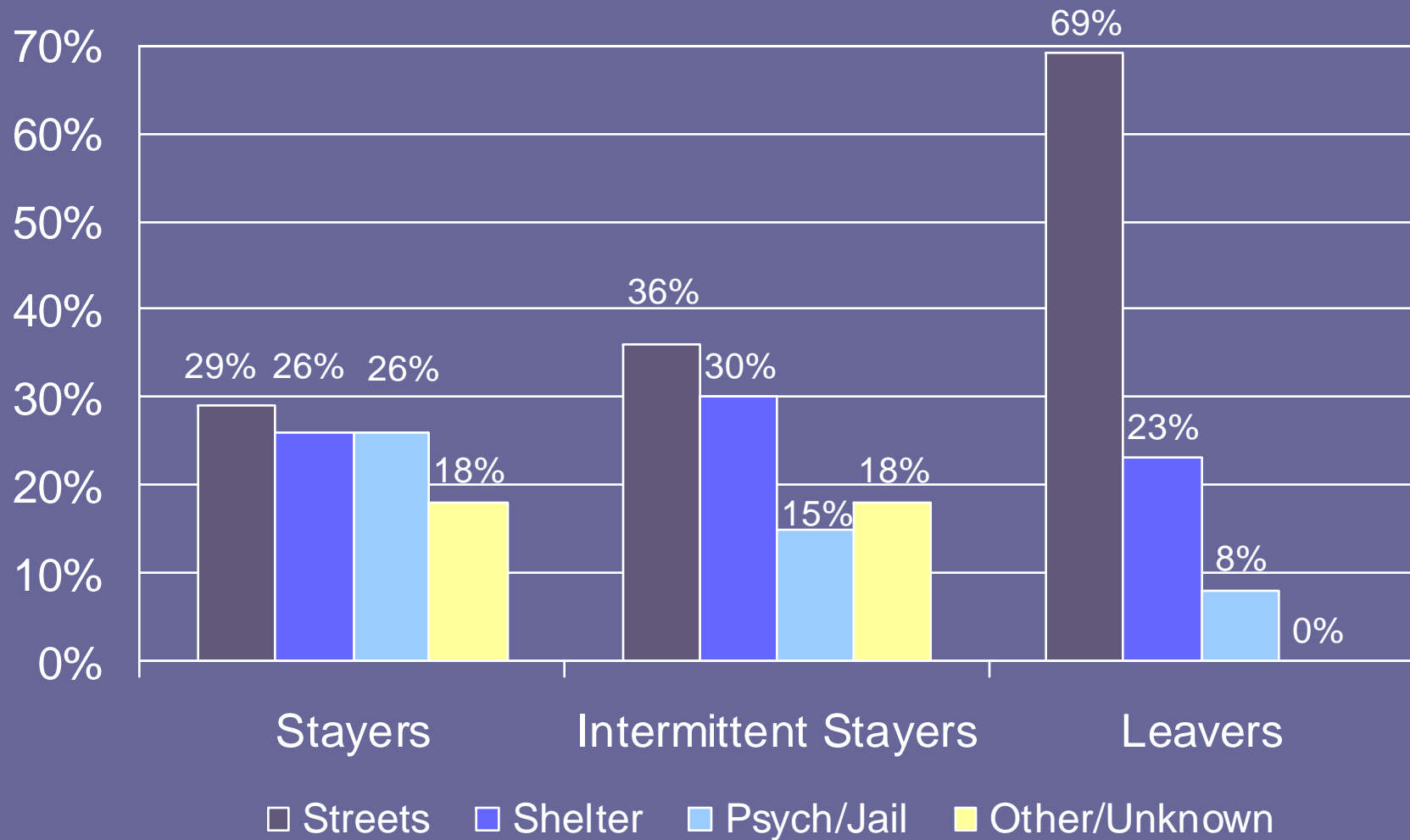
- Housing stability viewed differently in Housing First programs
- 84% of participants stayed in Housing First program for 12 months
  - 43% stayers (n = 34)
  - 41% intermittent stayers (n = 33)
  - 16% leavers (n = 13)



# Level of Housing Stability



# Prior Living Situation by Housing Stability



# Impairment from Mental Illness and Substance Abuse

- Little change in level of impairment from mental illness over 12 months but considerable fluctuations for individual study participants
- No overall improvement
- Changes in level of impairment may be the result of better clinical information over time

# Implications

- Program elements contribute to success of Housing First programs
  - Access to housing stock
  - Wide array of supportive services
  - Staffing structure that ensures responsive service delivery

# Funding

- This study was funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- The full report may be found at:  
<http://www.huduser.org/Publications/pdf/hsgfirst.pdf>

# For More Information

- Carol Pearson, PhD  
Walter R. McDonald & Associates, Inc.  
[cpearson@WRMA.com](mailto:cpearson@WRMA.com)
- Ann Elizabeth Montgomery, MPA, MSSW  
Walter R. McDonald & Associates, Inc.  
University of Alabama at Birmingham  
[aemontgo@UAB.edu](mailto:aemontgo@UAB.edu)