CENTRE FOR SOCIAL DATA ANALYTICS

The Housing Assistance Screening Tool (DW) is a triaging tool to support better outcomes and prioritize resources for the highest-need housing clients.

- Accurately identifies at-risk clients
- Respects privacy and minimizes intrusive questions
- Eliminates reliance on self-reporting
- Supports better engagement with human services teams
- Enables faster assessment of eligibility
- Shorter waitlists and more certainty for clients
- Allows resources to be directed towards the highest need
- Can flag risk in Black and African American clients more accurately than theoretically validated methods*
- Can operate with no evidence of race or age bias, positive discrimination for disability*

* Based on independent ethics assessment of the Allegheny Housing Assessment Tool by ETICAS

HOUSING ASSISTANCE SCREENING TOOL (DW)

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA VERSION

Empowering human services teams to more accurately assess and support at-risk housing clients

HOW DOES THE HOUSING ASSISTANCE SCREENING TOOL (DW) WORK?

The Housing Assistance Screening Tool (DW) (HAST(DW)) is a triaging tool that uses existing administrative data together with homelessness data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to more accurately identify those clients most at risk of adversities associated with homelessness.

Unlike traditional off-the-shelf assessment tools, the HAST(DW) uses previously collected data about a client to assess their risk, which removes the reliance on self-reporting and reduces stress and intrusion for vulnerable housing clients. The tool is built and validated specifically for the jurisdiction in which it is being used.

A risk score is generated, based on existing administrative data and homelessness data from HMIS, which indicates the likelihood a client will experience harms related to homelessness within 12 months of the assessment, for example: a jail booking, use of acute inpatient mental health services or multiple emergency room visits. Risk scores can be embedded into the triaging process to improve the quality of decisions about the allocation of assisted housing.

Any Continuum of Care (CoC) running live, integrated data systems can use the HAST(DW) — and will be supported to achieve transparent and ethical implementation of the tool.

1 CLIENT CALLS COORDINATED ENTRY

2 STAFF ESTABLISH PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

3 HOUSING ASSISTANCE SCREENING TOOL (DW)

4 STAFF BEGIN PROGRESSIVE ENGAGEMENT

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CoCs can replace traditional off-the-shelf assessments with the Housing Assistance Screening Tool (DW) in existing triaging systems for more accurate identification of clients at risk of adverse outcomes associated with homelessness.

CASE STUDY

ALLEGHENY COUNTY: TRIAGING NEED WITH HOUSING ASSESSMENT TOOL

Allegheny County's Department of Human Services has been using a housing assessment screening tool – the Allegheny Housing Assessment (AHA) – since 2020, to help prioritize admissions to supportive housing services for individuals or families experiencing homelessness.

The triaging support tool uses administrative data from Allegheny County's data warehouse to calculate the likelihood of three types of events occurring in a person's life if they remain unhoused over the next 12 months: a mental health inpatient stay, a jail booking and frequent use of emergency rooms.

Like Allegheny's previous tool (the VI-SPDAT) the AHA data tool assigns a risk score that is used as part of the housing prioritization process, but it is far more accurate and equitable and doesn't require the time, or incur the potential trauma, associated with asking sensitive questions at the time of housing crisis.

To learn more about Allegheny County's experience with the screening tool visit their website

"Using these triaging tools has enabled our team to quickly identify the clients most at risk of harms, and to prioritize them for housing support."
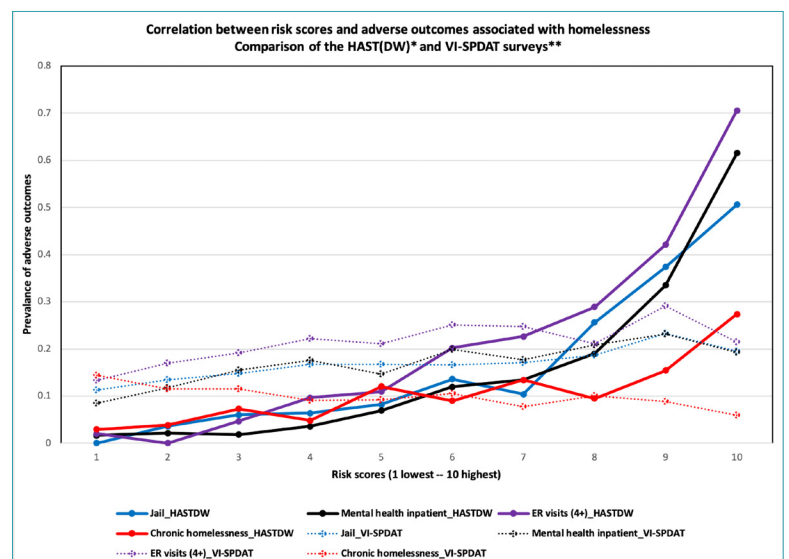
Erin Dalton,
Director, Allegheny County
Department of Human Services,
Allegheny County, PA

PREVENTING HARM BY PRIORITIZING RESOURCES FOR AT-RISK HOUSING CLIENTS

Demand for homelessness programs is outstripping capacity. Prioritization of housing resources for vulnerable people is now more crucial than ever.

Risk scores calculated using the HAST(DW) are much more accurate than risk scores based on tools like the VI-SPDAT, and show substantive differentiation in risk ratings.

Human services teams can readily identify and support the clients most at risk of harms associated with homelessness including jail bookings, inpatient mental health services, four or more emergency room visits, and even mortality and chronic homelessness

Correlation between risk scores and adverse outcomes associated with homelessness
Comparison of the HAST(DW)* and VI-SPDAT surveys**

Legend: Jail_HASTDW; Mental health inpatient_HASTDW; ER visits (4+)_HASTDW; Chronic homelessness_HASTDW; Jail_VI-SPDAT; Mental health inpatient_VI-SPDAT; ER visits (4+)_VI-SPDAT; Chronic homelessness_VI-SPDAT

With the HAST(DW) we can see the risk score corresponds to the prevalence of adverse outcomes – in contrast to off-the-shelf assessment tools such as VI-SPDAT, where the relationship is not clear.

* Based on Allegheny County data

** The VI-SPDAT is only described as being predictive of housing stability and mortality

To learn more about this tool, visit: csda.aut.ac.nz/hast