

Manatee County's Roadmap to Address Homelessness



A Report Prepared for the Manatee County
Board of County Commissioners
By the Florida Housing Coalition | March 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. Executive Summary**..... 3
- II. Summary of Recommendations**..... 4
- III. Report Design** 6
- IV. An Effective Housing Crisis Response System**..... 6
 - A. Continuum of Care Structure..... 8
- V. Stakeholder Perspectives Summary** 9
 - A. Lived Experience Surveys..... 9
 - B. Focus Groups..... 10
 - C. Interviews 12
 - D. Stakeholder Surveys..... 14
- VI. System Evaluation** 16
 - A. CoC Lead Agency..... 16
 - B. Outreach and Coordinated Entry..... 17
 - C. Diversion and Homelessness Prevention..... 19
 - D. Short Term Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing..... 20
 - E. Rapid Rehousing..... 22
 - F. Permanent Supportive Housing..... 24
- VII. Housing Affordability**..... 25
- VIII. Data on Homelessness**..... 26
 - A. Annual Point-In-Time Count Trends..... 26
 - B. Manatee County Homeless By-Name-List and Coordinated Entry Data Trends..... 29
 - C. Coordinated Entry to Housed Timeline..... 31



I. Executive Summary

The Florida Housing Coalition (Coalition) was engaged by the Manatee County Board of County Commissioners to develop an actionable Roadmap to Address Homelessness (Roadmap). This Roadmap offers Manatee County actionable and effective strategies for addressing and reducing homelessness. It reviews the current state of homelessness in the County, examines available services and housing, and details recommendations tailored to the community.

The Roadmap is well-timed. Homelessness is a complex challenge and, as such can go unaddressed for many years. Addressing homelessness is a challenge because it requires tremendous coordination across nonprofit service agencies, businesses, local government, public safety, the healthcare sector, the continuum of care, and local leadership. Eventually, the crises associated with unaddressed homelessness become unavoidable, and the shortcomings of an unsustainable and ineffective housing crisis response system are exposed. Manatee County leadership recognized the problem and commissioned this report to identify a clear path forward.

A combination of political will, identification of the common challenges, and an eager network of service providers sets the County up well to move forward in addressing homelessness. Manatee County has experienced significant growth since 2010. As Manatee continues this growth, the County must consider all residents' needs. Education, opportunity, employment, community, and housing are crucial when considering planning and growth. People experiencing and at risk of homelessness in Manatee are among some of its most vulnerable residents, often priced out of housing which significantly impedes upward economic mobility.

The data analysis, interviews, and surveys all reflect a critical need for additional affordable housing that is accessible to households with extremely and very low incomes (ELI and VLI). Despite the many people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, one stark observation was that Manatee has no permanent supportive housing. Permanent supportive housing comes with a deep subsidy, making it affordable for households with no to extremely low incomes.

This Roadmap outlines several recommendations and strategies. These recommendations are intended to provide guidance to strengthen the entire housing crisis response system. Coordination and implementation of demonstrated best practices in the housing crisis response system are essential to address homelessness. This report offers clear, grounded solutions. The County alone cannot solve homelessness; the combined efforts of local governments, nonprofits, the Continuum of Care, foundations, healthcare, and the private sector will accelerate progress. The recommendations from this study are not meant exclusively for the County government but for all the stakeholders working together. The Coalition will continue to partner with the County and Taskforce on implementing recommendations and reporting progress to the BOCC through December 31, 2023.

The Florida Housing Coalition would like to thank the following stakeholders for providing information that was instrumental in developing this report. This report would not be possible without their effort and dedication to preventing and ending homelessness. We would also like to thank all the Manatee County officials and staff for dedicating time and resources to this effort.

Centerstone
HOPE Family Services
Hope Pathways of Manatee County
Manatee County Board of County Commissioners
Manatee County Government
Manatee County Sheriff's Office
More to Life

Salvation Army
Second Heart Homes
STREAM
St. Vincent de Paul CARES
Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness
Turning Points
We Care Manatee
Whole Child Manatee

A special thank you to all the people who shared their experiences of homelessness.

II. Summary of Recommendations

In this section, we provide a summary of the recommendations. We evaluated six parts of the housing crisis response system. Each part has its own recommendation(s). A complete list of recommendations with funding is available throughout the report and compiled in Appendix A.



CoC Lead Agency (Overall Coordination)

1.1. Develop the Manatee Homeless Taskforce as a standing committee to the CoC committee structure.

STRATEGY

1. Leadership Council approves Manatee Homeless Taskforce as a standing committee.
2. Manatee County staff (Homeless Policy Coordinator) serves as Chair of this committee.
3. Manatee County designated staff (Homeless Policy Coordinator) continues to serve on the Leadership Council.
4. A leader from Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness (SPEH) will hold a seat on the Taskforce to offer expertise and increase collaboration.

Outreach and Coordinated Entry

2.1. Implement a coordinated outreach approach among all outreach providers.

STRATEGY

1. Given the wide variety of outreach providers, a standing meeting should occur, either standalone or as part of the Oneby1 list meetings, to provide outreach under a uniform, agreed-upon strategy.
2. Homeless outreach should focus on unsheltered households.
3. Utilize the data already collected and available by the outreach teams identify a more accurate count of unsheltered households.
4. SPEH to identify unmet outreach staffing needs.

2.2. Increase effectiveness of Coordinated Entry in Manatee County.

STRATEGY

1. Expand funding for service provider staff working to help households through the CE process. This includes funding staff at designated access points in Manatee County. Each agency directly and substantially serving people experiencing homelessness should have a minimum of one (1) full-time CE staff. We estimate that four additional (4) FTE staff will be needed for the Manatee County CE implementation.
2. Expand funding to support SPEH staff in tracking CE assessment data.
3. SPEH to track data for low-scoring households to understand better the need for diversion, revention, and early intervention.
4. All outreach staff to serve as designated CE access points.

Diversion and Homelessness Prevention

3.1. Offer flexible funding to help divert households from entering the housing crisis response system and into stable living situations.

STRATEGY

1. Create “flex funds” to either be directly awarded or accessible to agencies with formal diversion in place.
2. SPEH to provide continued training and support to agencies implementing diversion practices.
3. SPEH to provide uniform diversion tracking across participating agencies.

3.2. Establish a Manatee County permanent rental assistance program.

STRATEGY

1. Similar to the Treasury’s Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), communities can establish their own self-funded rental assistance program.
2. Offer prevention assistance to households with 80% of the area median income (AMI) or below.
3. Target a portion of prevention assistance to households with 50% AMI who are at the highest risk of homelessness.

Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing

4.1. Support low-barrier, housing-focused emergency shelter and transitional housing programs.

STRATEGY

1. Develop a scoring rubric for all County-funded emergency shelters and transitional housing, including points for low-barrier policies.
2. Develop Requests for Proposals (RFPs), deliverables, and contracts focused on reducing the length of time a household is experiencing homelessness, increasing the percentage of households exiting to permanent housing, and reducing returns to homelessness.
3. Ensure that for every dollar dedicated to short-term interventions, more is invested in permanent solutions.

Rapid Rehousing

5.1. Expand the capacity of existing Rapid Rehousing programming to adequately address the needs of the current households on the Oneby1 List waiting for assistance.

STRATEGY

1. Develop a Coordinated Investment Plan between all major funders and SPEH to support a \$4.2 million investment in RRH over the next 1-3 years.
2. RRH programs should follow best practices for implementation as designated by national research and resources to ensure the highest level of success and results.
3. Create a Landlord Risk Mitigation Fund of \$250,000 total to provide incentives for landlords to rent to tenants with a perceived higher risk.

Permanent Supportive Housing

6.1. Invest in Permanent Supportive Housing through scattered-site leasing and affordable housing development for chronically homeless households.

STRATEGY

1. Invest \$3.6 million in a scattered-site leasing program to serve 200 households. Partner with an experienced provider to implement and operate the program.
2. Use existing affordable housing resources and funding to increase a portion of set-asides for extremely low-income (ELI) and permanent supportive housing in new requests for funding.
3. Utilize available data through the PIT Count, Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and Coordinated Entry to track progress and determine ongoing needs

III. Report Design

The Coalition collected qualitative and quantitative data in its analysis of Manatee County. This report first examines community outreach conducted during the research phase, including surveys, interviews, and focus groups. The analysis then turns to a discussion of the effectiveness of the local housing crisis response system, a phrase used to describe the broader systems responsible for addressing homelessness. Then it offers insight into the challenges presented in Manatee’s system. Finally, a review of available data is included, including locally available data on homeless system performance measures, point-in-time count data, and data on the broader affordable housing environment.

It is important to note that Manatee County is included in a two-County Continuum of Care (CoC). This means that the CoC Lead Agency, Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness, reports much of its data through combined Sarasota and Manatee counties data. Data has been disaggregated to separate the counties wherever possible. Finally, the report details specific recommendations and strategies, which we project to take up to three years (2023 through 2026) to implement. Each recommendation aims to bolster Manatee County’s housing crisis response system to become robust, driven by best practices, and fiscally sustainable. While the recommendations do contain specific strategies and funding recommendations, the Taskforce will be responsible for gaining consensus on recommendations and strategies, creating a detailed timeline, identifying funding and capacity, and creating specific tasks related to each strategy.

The authors provide full names with acronyms where possible. A list of terms and definitions can be found in Appendix B.

IV. An Effective Housing Crisis Response System

Effectively addressing homelessness means that the community has a comprehensive response that ensures homelessness is prevented whenever possible or, if it cannot be prevented, it is a rare, brief, and one-time experience. This requires a robust menu of services, programming, and housing options to meet the diverse and complex needs of community members. This comprehensive response is what we refer to here as the housing crisis response system. This is a system designed to:

1. Quickly identify and engage people at risk of or experiencing homelessness,
2. Intervene to prevent the loss of housing and divert people from entering the homelessness services system, and
3. When homelessness does occur, provide access to shelter and crisis services. At the same time, permanent housing and appropriate supports are being identified, and people are quickly connected to housing assistance and services to help them achieve and maintain stable housing.

COMPONENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE HOUSING CRISIS Response System



Figure 1: Components of an Effective Housing Crisis Response System

The graphic above is not representative of every program or service available; rather, it provides a framework for the components that must be present in a community to address homelessness. What makes each community unique is the need to identify the right size of each component and intervention. An effective housing crisis response system has five key components:

- 1. Outreach and Coordinated Entry**
- 2. Diversion and Homelessness Prevention**
- 3. Emergency Shelter**
- 4. Rapid Rehousing**
- 5. Permanent Supportive Housing**

These components work best when there is a strong foundation and a Continuum of Care (CoC) comprised of all the relevant organizations necessary to address homelessness. The foundation requires a community collaboration that (1) uses a systems approach, (2) focuses on specified outcomes, and (3) makes decisions based on data and best practices. Below, we offer a description and analysis of each part of the system.

A. Continuum of Care Structure

The term CoC will be mentioned throughout this report, so we begin here by defining what the CoC is and how it is structured. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines a Continuum of Care (CoC) as the group organized to carry out the responsibilities prescribed in the CoC Program Interim Rule for a defined geographic area. A CoC should be composed of representatives of organizations, including nonprofit homeless providers, victim service providers, faith-based organizations, governments, businesses, advocates, public housing agencies, school districts, social service providers, mental health agencies, hospitals, universities, affordable housing developers, law enforcement, organizations that serve homeless and formerly homeless veterans, and homeless and formerly homeless persons.

Responsibilities of a CoC include operating the CoC, designating and operating an HMIS, planning for the CoC (including coordinating the implementation of a housing and service system within its geographic area that meets the needs of the individuals and families who experience homelessness there), and designing and implementing the process associated with applying for CoC Program funds.ⁱ

At their core, CoCs have three governing entities: the membership (i.e., the relevant organizations described above), the Lead Agency, and the Governance Board. The CoC Lead Agency is often referred to as the “backbone” of the housing crisis response system because they help carry out HUD-mandated responsibilities and coordinate community efforts to prevent and end homelessness. In Manatee and Sarasota, the Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness (SPEH) is the designated CoC Lead Agency. The membership comprises stakeholders throughout Sarasota and Manatee counties, and the Governance Board is referred to as the Leadership Council.

CoC Lead Agencies must be sufficiently supported to meet its many demands. One agency cannot do all the work. As SPEH leads the efforts, Manatee providers can come alongside as members serving on the Leadership Council, committees, and workgroups to offer support. Local governments, including Manatee County and its larger municipalities, can support SPEH by including them and using their valuable expertise when making funding and resource allocation decisions.

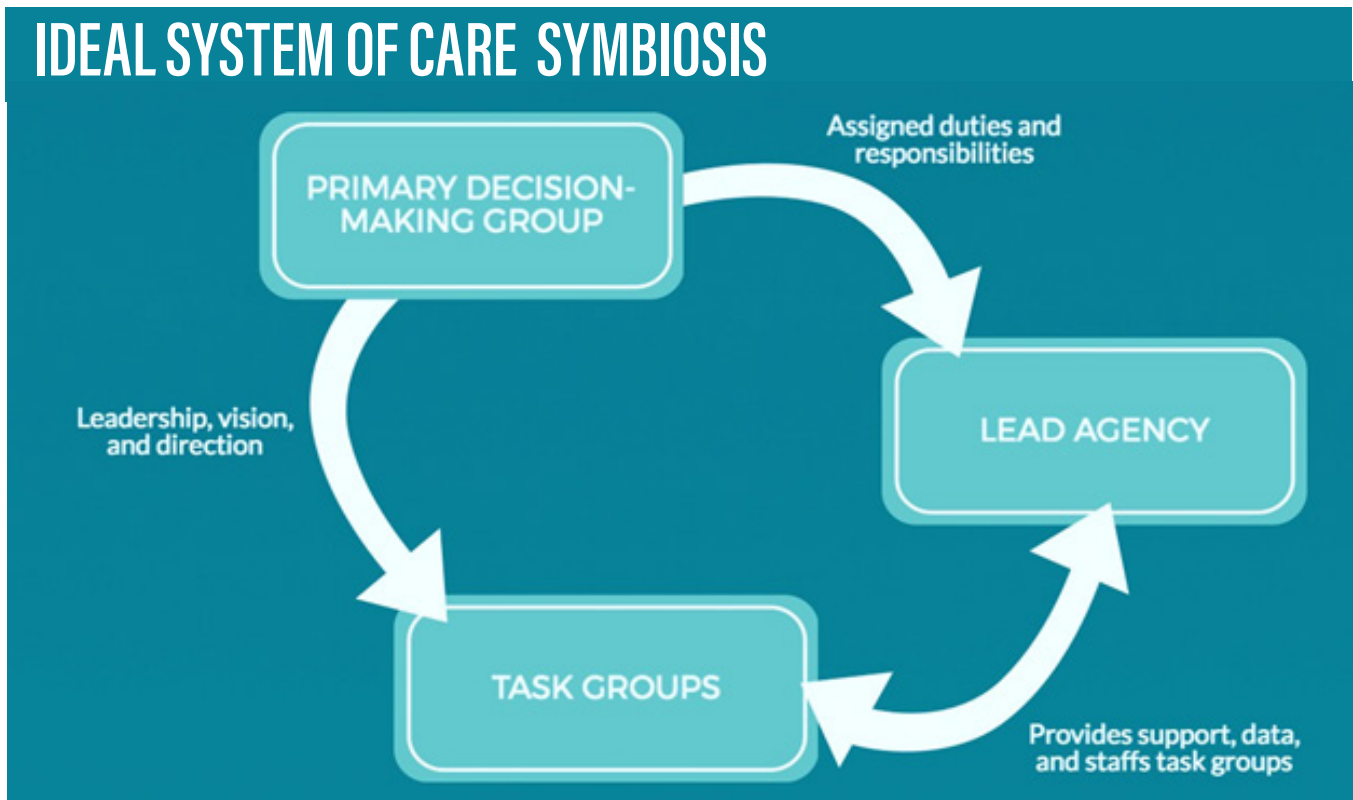


Figure 2: Ideal System of Care Symbiosis

V. Stakeholder Perspectives Summary

We start here with a full overview of the stakeholder feedback collected in this process. Over six months (September 2022 – February 2023), the Coalition engaged stakeholders with a nexus to homelessness in Manatee County. These stakeholders included the service provider community, housing providers, elected officials, local government services, behavioral and physical healthcare providers, the faith community, CoC leadership, people with experience of homelessness, and law enforcement agencies. This outreach aimed to ensure that the findings, data analysis, and recommendations included in this report were wholly grounded in the reality of Manatee’s challenges with homelessness. No report is complete without robust stakeholder engagement, including people impacted the most by the trauma of homelessness.

This section features critical themes raised by the organizations interviewed, survey responses, and a summary of the focus groups conducted with people who have experienced homelessness.

Community & Stakeholder Engagement



Figure 3: Snapshot of Community & Stakeholder Engagement

A. Lived Experience Surveys

A survey was distributed to people with previous or current experiences of homelessness. Survey respondents could complete the survey online alone or with the assistance of an outreach worker or other service provider staff. The survey did control for people who had not experienced homelessness or did not reside in Manatee County. Though there were 22 respondents, only ten lived in Manatee County and had experienced homelessness.

Sixty-six percent were currently experiencing homelessness at the time of the survey. The living situations were split between emergency shelter, unsheltered situations, living with others, and living in a hotel. Eighty-three percent had been homeless less than a year, with one person reporting over five years homeless. Respondents were asked, "What were the main reasons that led to your homelessness?" The number one reason people gave for their current situation was problems with friends or family. Following that, the following three reasons were ranked highest:

- Asked to leave or evicted
- Financial crisis
- Unable to pay rent, mortgage, or utilities

These reasons are in line with many communities. Often, communities label and characterize homelessness as an issue with substance use or mental health. While these can be contributing factors, some of the top reasons people experience homelessness are related to housing instability and finances. Therefore, addressing all factors is critical.

Respondents listed the following challenges when trying to get housing on their own.

Q8: What challenges have you experienced when trying to get housing on your own? Choose ALL that apply.

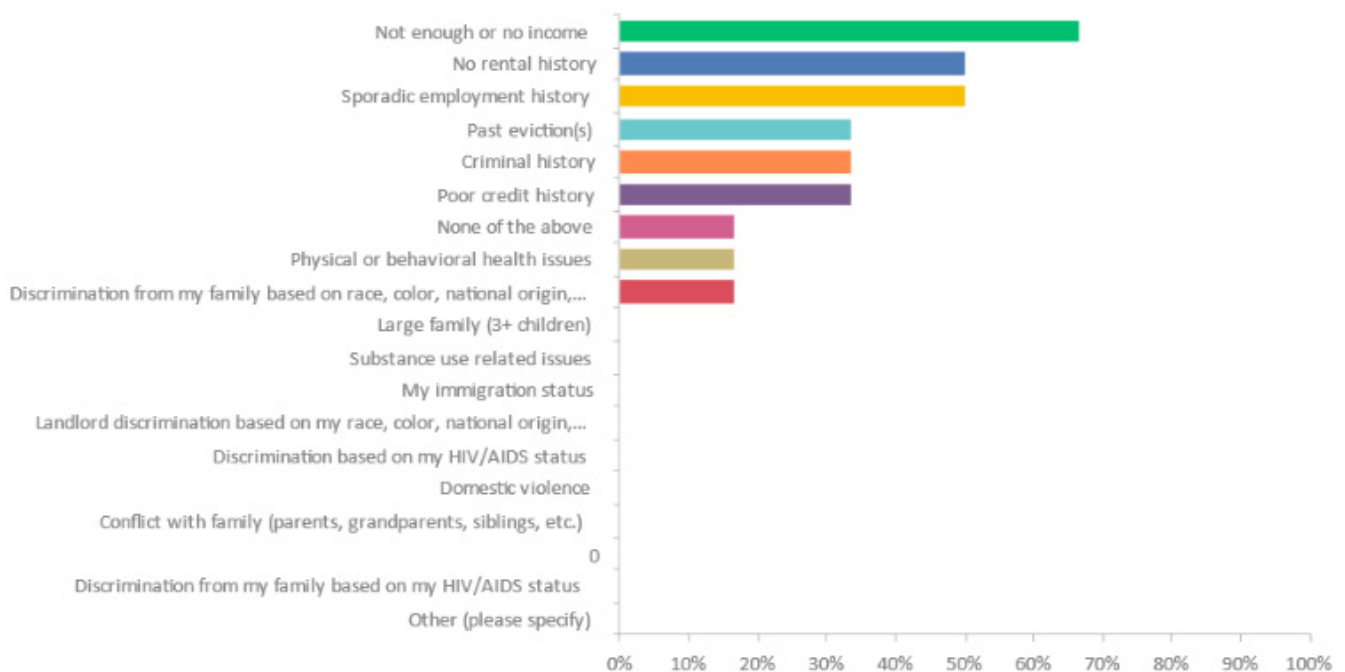


Figure 4: Housing Challenges

Most respondents answered that it was very difficult to get back into housing and found that the most helpful services were housing and education assistance. Respondents had mixed responses regarding their level of confidence in the ability of homeless service agencies to help them leave the homeless system, ranging from extremely confident to not so confident.

B. Focus Groups

An important part of this study was feedback beyond a survey from people with lived experience. Volunteer facilitators conducted four focus groups. For convenience and increased participation, the focus groups were held at different locations in Manatee County, and one group was for Spanish-speaking individuals. There were 21 total participants. The following questions were asked, though facilitators had the flexibility to change questions based on responses by the participants and the flow of the conversation.

1. When you first found yourself without a place to live, where was the first place you went to get help in Manatee County?

A common response was Turning Points. Other participants stated they had nowhere, church, family and friends in the area, and jail.

2. How did you find out about the place you went to? Was it easy to find help?

Many responses were congruent with responses to #1. A common response was word on the street – other responses were personal relationships and church. One person responded that they did not look for any help.

3. What did that agency help you with, and was it helpful?

- ✓ Food stamps ✓ Identification ✓ Clothes, shoes ✓ Hygiene services ✓ Medical services
- ✓ Showers ✓ Blankets ✓ Jobs ✓ Volunteer opportunities

4. During your housing crisis, what services are, or have been, the most helpful?

“It’s easy to find help for hygiene and food, but not housing.”

5. For those of you who are homeless right now, where do you stay most of the time?

Most people were unsheltered – staying in the woods, living in their vehicles, staying in the streets, and one person was staying in a shed behind a family member’s house.

6. For those of you who are not homeless anymore, where did you stay most of the time?

Participants responded that they stayed at Salvation Army, their car, or on the street.

7. Has anyone ever completed an assessment or a list of questions with you and told you it was to help you get into housing? (This question is to see if people are on the Oneby1 List)

Two people out of all participants had received an assessment. One person completed it years ago and was told there was an 18-month waiting list. Most people were unaware of the process of getting an assessment to get into housing.

8. If yes, were you able to get into housing after you did the assessment? If not, how long have you been waiting?

N/A

9. What have been the biggest barriers to getting back into housing?

There were many different responses to this question, but many participants mentioned the cost of housing and utilities, employment (lack of or underemployment), finances, and stable transportation. Other barriers included access to healthy food, lack of safe storage, being around drugs, depression, complacency, and criminal records.

10. While you were homeless, were you ever discriminated against because of your race, gender, religion, age, disability, or another reason? Please explain.

Many participants talked about being discriminated against simply based on their situation of experiencing homelessness. For example, participants stated they are labeled dirty, gross, and criminal. Here are a few verbatim quotes from participants when asked this question.

- Treated like a criminal
- I don't care what others think about me, they've never lived this life before, as I am homeless and have lived this life, I know how hard it is but I do not show it. I keep my problems to myself to not burden others, but I struggle and have my days. I have no shame, I fell on a bad time, and although I have a roof over my head, I still talk to my friends that live on the streets because all we need is a person to talk with and some help as we have felt off at a bad time in life.
- They feel like I'm going to rob them, when asking for a few dollars.
- I keep to myself, and keep on going, although when I turn my back, I may get physically hurt.
- Discriminated because we are dirty from working in the fields, and they do not know that we are working in the fields and have been working hard for our money; unlike most of them.
- You are going to steal from me, people believe that because they make a few extra dollars than me that they are better than me

11. How could services and programs be improved to help people experiencing homelessness?

One participant responded that "Sarasota has everything." Participants want jobs, housing, shorter wait times for housing, and more help and support. One participant noted they do not look into services because of the rejection and denials. Additionally, one Spanish-speaking individual stated that they must learn English to find employment. There were several other responses, including:

- Case managers need to be understanding. They (participants) come from a traumatizing lifestyle and want to feel accepted rather than a problem.
- Flexibility with program rules
- Housing and decent food
- Nowhere to go during the day except for Turning Points, the library, etc.

Other Notes and Themes

Participants expressed that they appreciated the opportunity to talk in the focus group and that the facilitators were listening.

Participants in each focus group discussed the importance of employment and the difficulty surrounding finding and keeping employment. In addition, transportation was noted to be difficult to access to visit organizations and go to work.

The focus groups had common themes regarding housing, employment, and discrimination. Still, a key takeaway is that each person in each focus group had an individual story with nuances and complexities that resonated with their peers. The response to homelessness in Manatee County must include this qualitative data in addition to the quantitative data analysis. These focus groups helped us understand that people experiencing homelessness need support, understanding, acceptance, and access to resources that provide safety and stability.

C. Interviews

The Coalition conducted interviews with approximately twenty stakeholders. The purpose of these meetings was two-fold. First, interviews with stakeholders served as a means for data collection. Many interviews included a request for organizational information, if available, so that the Coalition's systems analysis could benefit from information not publicly available. Second, interviews were designed to illuminate opportunities and challenges within the housing crisis response system and to understand the impact of homelessness on the community.

Service providers, healthcare organizations, faith communities, outreach workers, and the CoC Lead Agency (Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness (SPEH)) shared valuable perspectives on concerns regarding the broader homeless services system and housing challenges. In addition, elected officials, local government staff, law enforcement officials, and numerous other stakeholders provided important input on the adverse effects of homelessness on economic development, downtown revitalization, and costs borne by sectors outside of the homeless service sector.

Two common recurring themes among non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were a lack of affordable housing and a lack of coordination across entities serving people experiencing homelessness.

Common themes among local government officials and staff were ensuring nonprofits generate results with government funding, concern about the public safety associated with homelessness, and prioritizing serving people experiencing homelessness who reside in Manatee County. Manatee County local government staff also detailed current workforce housing initiatives and developer incentives that are resulting in new development.

Some other common terms, themes, and observations that evolved from the interviews are discussed below.

Results

The term “results” came up in many stakeholder interviews, and while this could be observed as a common theme, the definitions were subjective and individual to the stakeholder. For some, results meant ensuring people exited homelessness through permanent housing options. Others see results as the implementation and success of a particular model to address homelessness (e.g., transitional housing, faith-based programs, shelter, etc.).

Affordable Housing

Expectedly, one hundred percent of the stakeholders interviewed brought up affordable housing. There were two facets the Coalition specifically asked about during the interviews: individual housing barriers and systemic housing barriers.

Individual Housing Barriers

Individual housing barriers refer to the challenges individuals face when trying to obtain housing. Interviewees who directly serve people experiencing homelessness were asked about some of the individual barriers people experiencing homelessness face when trying to obtain housing. Below are the top barriers identified. These are not listed in any particular order.

- Poor credit
- Criminal history
- Previous evictions
- Behavioral health disorders (encompasses mental health conditions and substance use disorders)
- Lack of income (no or extremely low income)

Systemic Housing Barriers

- Lack of affordable housing, increasingly so with people with no or extremely low incomes
- Rent amounts exceed what is allowable for particular funding streams (e.g., Fair Market Rent)
- Lack of, or no, crisis housing resources to refer households to (interviewees commonly said there are “no resources”)
- Difficulty accessing emergency shelter due to stringent criteria or lack of available beds, most commonly the criteria for being at the shelter at a certain time to line up and gain access
- Lack of coordination with, or understanding of, the Coordinated Entry process
- No permanent supportive housing
- Program rules (e.g., programs requiring sobriety, employment at entry, etc.)

Coordinated Entry

The Coalition asked service providers and other NGOs about their understanding of the Coordinated Entry System (CES). While outreach workers such as law enforcement, paramedicine outreach, and SPEH staff had a clear understanding of how this process works in Manatee, most organizations did not understand how it could be accessed, what it consisted of, and what happened once someone was referred into the process. The CES and how it works in Manatee County are discussed in more detail later in the report. The access points are publicly available on the SPEH websiteⁱⁱ; however, agencies, by and large, seemed unaware of what an access point is and its function. Additionally, the access points on the website did not fully align with the interviewees’ report of access points.

Coordination Challenges

Lack of coordination was a repeated theme of stakeholder interviews and is similar to the theme of results. For some, lack of coordination felt like the SPEH's management of CoC coordination and resources only focused on Sarasota. Others reported the lack of coordination as the presence of separate initiatives in Manatee.

SPEH is the agency tasked with leading the Continuum of Care (CoC) in planning, coordination, and the overall response to homelessness in Sarasota and Manatee counties. CoCs are designated by HUD to carry out these activities. Manatee stakeholders did not hold consistent views on SPEH – some for lack of knowledge about a CoC Lead Agency, and others did not believe SPEH was focusing enough effort on and funding Manatee County. Through interviews and observations with SPEH, the Coalition found that SPEH was very responsive to requests for information, believed funding is distributed to the best of their ability, and acknowledged the lack of providers and resources in Manatee. SPEH has also struggled to bring stakeholders together in Manatee in a coordinated way.

People Assisting the Homeless (PATH) is an initiative led by Turning Points that is open to Manatee community partners to share resources and network. PATH describes itself as a continuum of care (separate from a HUD continuum of care) and is not affiliated with SPEH, though many partners participate in both. PATH also provides a publicly available comprehensive resource guide. The Coalition was able to participate in a PATH meeting and found that there is significant representation from a wide range of Manatee providers and stakeholders. This is a strong, long-standing initiative, and there is an opportunity here for better coordination with SPEH. This is addressed further in the report.

Another initiative that is newer in the last two years is Hope Pathways of Manatee County (HPMC). HPMC seeks to end homelessness through coordination, collaboration, and calculated compassion. The initiative brought charter organizations together who were working in this space to commit to working together, holding strategic meetings, and using a platform called United Us. Unite Us is a national platform that communities can utilize to connect people in need to services within the healthcare and human services space. It is a digital platform that agencies can use to provide the support households need – whether that's food, clothing, housing, healthcare, etc. Organizations can generate referrals, accept referrals, see status updates, and communicate through the platform. The charter organizations working together have all agreed to use the platform and cut the "red tape." HPMC's Founder and CEO, Christina Gerken, says that HPMC has had amazing results with collaboration and collaboration. She believes that is because of the unity and infrastructure for accountability across organizations. As of the Coalition's interview, they had not yet coordinated efforts with SPEH, but were planning on it.

There are also a few outreach initiatives for people who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness with high needs. The four entities providing outreach at the time of the study were Manatee County Community Paramedics Team, Manatee County Homeless Outreach Team, Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness, and Centerstone. Each outreach initiative looks a little bit different and have had varying levels of coordination with each other in the past few years.

D. Stakeholder Surveys

A stakeholder survey was conducted to include any stakeholder that considered themselves part of the response to homelessness. The overall purpose of the survey was to identify the strengths and challenges of the housing crisis response system and to assess the current effectiveness of the community's resources and response.

There were 98 responses total, which is a very positive, robust sample of stakeholders. The results below only represent 78 respondents, as 20 respondents identified that they did not live or work in Manatee County. This sample offers confidence in the findings.

Homeless service providers were the biggest group of respondents at 29%, followed by "other," social service providers, and a split between advocates and other types of nonprofits. Twenty-eight percent of respondents had experienced homelessness themselves at one point.

Respondents were asked what the significant barriers were that prevent households from moving out of homelessness. The word cloud below represents the collective, common responses, with the most common response being “affordable housing.” These results align with the interviews, previous surveys, and focus groups.

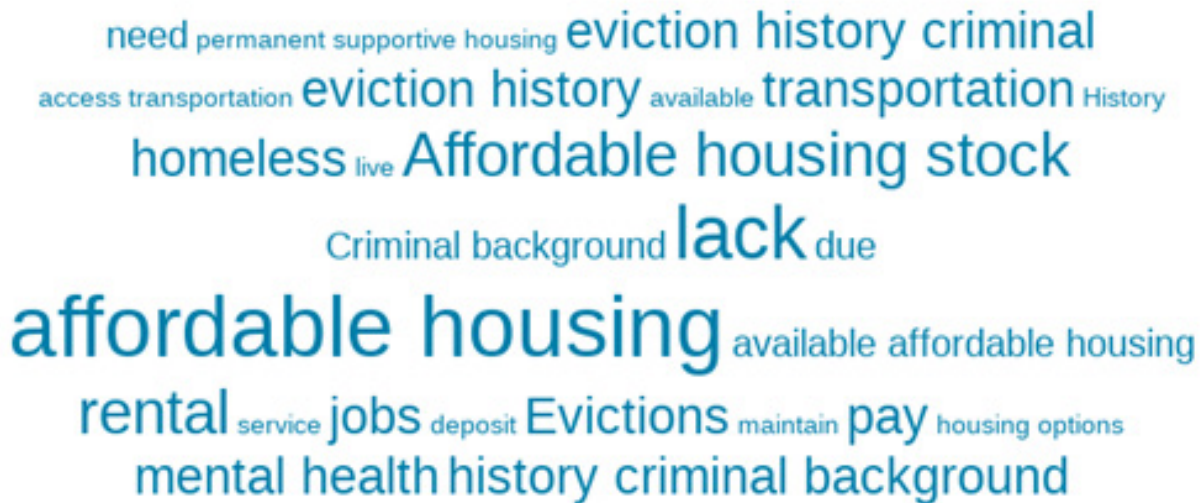


Figure 5: Word Cloud of Household Barriers

When respondents were asked the questions of what is not working well vs. what is working well, respondents had a much easier time answering the question of what is not working well. The tone of respondents’ answers was one of frustration. Respondents’ open-ended answers were varied with some crossover; however, the common theme was a lack of resources (i.e., funding and housing), lack of agency participation/coordination, and disagreement over who should be served.

Respondents were split on rating the coordination and planning activities between relevant stakeholders. Of note, 28% answered “Unsure or don’t know,” demonstrating a lack of community-wide understanding of current coordination and planning activities. Seventy-eight percent of respondents reported that the priority of homelessness with local elected officials is either not very important or not important at all. Finally, many organizations responded that they did not participate in the Coordinated Entry System.

It is important to note here that when a community needs more resources to the level that the County is experiencing, it is difficult to create a coordinated system where providers feel there are options for their clients. For example, some respondents reported that only chronically homeless individuals are being prioritized, leaving a gap for serving those with lower acuity but a serious need for affordable housing. This can cause tension between providers and lead to separate initiatives to address homelessness. As a result, providers have started separate initiatives, which are noted under the previous interviews section. This has resulted in an even more fragmented system requiring significant retooling. Instead of focusing on the system as a whole, the scarcity mode has made it difficult even to envision a coordinated system. Providers, by and large, do not have confidence in the current system to address homelessness.

Affordable housing is a top priority among respondents, and so are the supportive services. In open-ended responses, respondents mentioned behavioral health challenges, case management capacity, lack of consistent use of best practices, and lack of emergency shelter. Respondents mostly found that systemic barriers, such as the lack of affordable housing and resources, were the biggest challenge to assisting people experiencing homelessness.

Respondents’ answers demonstrate the complexity of homelessness, and without permanent housing that offers foundational stability for individuals and families, people will continue to have long lengths of homelessness.

VI. System Evaluation

This section of the report dives deep into an analysis of each housing crisis response system component with recommendations for each.

A. CoC Lead Agency

As mentioned earlier, Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness (SPEH) is the designated CoC Lead Agency for Sarasota and Manatee counties. SPEH is responsible for applying for and monitoring the use of more than \$4,881,520ⁱⁱⁱ in federal, state, and local homelessness funding on behalf of the CoC. As of December 2022, SPEH had thirteen staff, including two leadership-level staff, two HMIS system administrators, two coordinated entry support staff, three programs and contract management staff, and four direct client support staff. These staff support efforts across Sarasota and Manatee counties, but SPEH receives more funding locally from Sarasota to support dedicated positions serving Sarasota.

SPEH also supports and takes direction from the Leadership Council. The Leadership Council is required to be representative of the entire geographic area served by the CoC. They govern the work of the CoC as a whole. The Leadership Council’s role is to focus on the effectiveness of the housing crisis response system, including the entirety of the CoC coverage area, ensuring system-wide improvement, strategic planning for the system, and community engagement. The Leadership Council is comprised of influential community leaders and decision-makers from multiple sectors, including, but not limited to, business, health care, philanthropy, local government, law enforcement, service providers, and housing development. With the right Leadership Council, the system will experience visionary strategic planning and broad investment from the community.

As reflected in stakeholder interviews and surveys, there are varying levels of CoC knowledge, understanding of SPEH’s role, and unified efforts currently underway. Initiatives parallel to or separate from SPEH could easily be integrated into the overall strategy and CoC coordination. The CoC has committees and workgroups that convene for many different purposes. Often, CoCs that span multiple geographies will have regional committees or workgroups to address the more specific needs of a local community. In this case, Manatee could have a specific committee or workgroup that meets and reports to SPEH and the Leadership Council to ensure that Manatee’s needs are communicated clearly and consistently. Including existing initiatives, like Turning Points’ PATH meeting and HOPE Pathways of Manatee County, within the present framework of the CoC will be the easiest way to integrate efforts and reduce any duplication of planning efforts.

We recommend including the Manatee Homeless Taskforce as a formal committee of the Leadership Council to ensure continuity in planning for the entire system and consistent representation from Manatee County’s perspective on homelessness. Manatee County’s Homeless Policy Coordinator was recently appointed to the Leadership Council and should continue to serve in this role as well as the Homeless Taskforce Chair.

1. CoC Lead Agency Recommendations

1.1. Develop the Manatee Homeless Taskforce “Taskforce” as a standing committee to the CoC committee structure.

STRATEGY

1. Leadership Council approves Manatee Homeless Taskforce as a standing committee.
2. Manatee County staff (Homeless Policy Coordinator) serves as Chair of this committee.
3. Manatee County designated staff (Homeless Policy Coordinator) also serves on the Leadership Council.
4. A leader from SPEH will hold a seat on the Taskforce to offer expertise and increase collaboration.

No additional funding is needed at this time. The County currently funds the Homeless Policy Coordinator position.

B. Outreach and Coordinated Entry

An effective housing crisis response system starts with two fundamental components: knowing who is experiencing homelessness and prioritizing services for those persons based on a common scale. These two components are referred to as outreach and coordinated entry. We identified several opportunities for improvement in these components in Manatee County's housing crisis response system.

Desired State

A well-coordinated, robust street outreach program that allows for street outreach workers to quickly identify households experiencing unsheltered homelessness in Manatee County and conduct Coordinated Entry Assessments. The Coordinated Entry System (CES) provides easy and equal access to the system and assesses, prioritizes, and refers households to permanent housing and mainstream resources as quickly as possible.

Homeless service and housing providers have a working knowledge of how households get connected to CES and can facilitate either serving as a CE access point or helping a household connect to an access point for assessment quickly.

Current State – strengths and challenges

Outreach and Coordinated Entry serve as entry points into the housing crisis response system. When designed properly, they help divert households from entering the system, target the most vulnerable households for permanent housing, and prioritize households that need housing and services. HUD Notice CPD-17-1^{iv} requires each CoC to establish and operate a "centralized or coordinated assessment system" (referred to as "coordinated entry" or "coordinated entry process") to ensure that all people experiencing a housing crisis have fair and equal access and are quickly identified, assessed, and referred to housing assistance and mainstream resources based on their strengths and needs. Implementation in accordance with HUD's Notice was required by all CoCs on January 23, 2018. SPEH manages this local process.

Coordinated Entry is a consistent, streamlined process for accessing the resources available in the housing crisis response system. Ideally, Coordinated Entry can be the framework that transforms a CoC from a network of projects making individual decisions about whom to serve into a fully integrated crisis response system. Coordinated Entry helps in three main ways:

1. Provides a centralized, fair process for households to get matched with the appropriate housing and service interventions;
2. Increases collaboration between service providers working with households experiencing homelessness; and,
3. Guides decision-making and resource allocation in an accurate, data-driven manner.

One strength of SPEH has been implementing and managing the CES process over the past few years. CES is one of the most difficult pieces of the system to implement and maintain. It requires an inordinate amount of effort to bring providers together, educate the community and providers on the process, continuously adjust and evaluate it, and implement necessary improvements. While SPEH manages and oversees the process, the organizations must come together to carry out many of the functions of CES.

SPEH has seen organizations begin to come together, meet regularly, discuss the process, and make adjustments where needed to better serve households experiencing homelessness. The system has been able to transition to prioritize the most vulnerable through the development and implementation of Coordinated Entry, which is referred to as Oneby1, locally.

Another strength is that outreach services have been expanded recently to include the work of the paramedicine team, with that team having one dedicated outreach worker. In addition to that effort, Centerstone has two PATH outreach positions, SPEH has one part-time outreach position dedicated to Manatee County, and the Manatee County Sheriff's Office has two dedicated deputies for outreach. This totals 5.5 full-time positions for outreach dedicated to Manatee County.

One major challenge has been the varied coordination among outreach teams, providers, and SPEH staff to ensure outreach meets its goals in Manatee. Each organization operating an outreach program has its own unique priorities and may not always coordinate with other outreach programs. Stakeholder interviews revealed that various coordination efforts had been made on and off, but there is no whole system outreach plan for the County.

Though only HUD-funded recipients and sub-recipients are required to participate in the Coordinated Entry System, its functionality is crippled without full cooperation from every provider. More of a strategic effort and buy-in from all providers is needed to have a coordinated system and have all outreach teams serve as access points to the Coordinated Entry System.

2. Outreach and Coordinated Entry Recommendations

2.1. Implement a coordinated outreach approach among all outreach providers.

STRATEGY

1. Given the wide variety of outreach providers, a standing meeting should occur, either standalone or as part of the Oneby1 list meetings, to provide outreach under a uniform, agreed-upon strategy.
2. Homeless outreach should focus on unsheltered households.
3. Utilize the data already collected and available by the outreach teams to identify a more accurate count of unsheltered households.
4. SPEH to identify unmet outreach staffing needs.

Funding

- Coordinating the current outreach teams does not require additional funding.
- Upon identification of additional SPEH outreach staffing needs, the following are common sources of funding:
 - o Emergency Solutions Grant
 - o Challenge Grant
 - o Community Development Block Grant
 - o City/County

2.2. Increase effectiveness of Coordinated Entry in Manatee County.

STRATEGY

1. Expand funding for service provider staff working to help households through the CE process. This includes funding staff at designated access points. Each agency directly and substantially serving people experiencing homelessness should have a minimum of one (1) full-time CE staff. We estimate that four additional (4) FTE staff will be needed.
2. Expand funding to support SPEH staff in tracking CE assessment data.
3. SPEH to track data for low-scoring households to understand better the need for diversion, prevention, and early intervention.
4. All outreach staff to serve as designated CE access points.

FUNDING (\$300,000 Annually)

- \$225,000 will cover 4 FTE positions for service providers to employ at their designated access points.
- \$75,000 will support SPEH to expand their staff and technology capability to better track CE data.
- Funding sources include:
 - o HUD CoC Program – SSO and HMIS Grants
 - o Challenge Grant
 - o Emergency Solutions Grant
 - o City/County

C. Diversion and Homelessness Prevention

An effective method for reducing the number of persons entering the housing crisis response system is to engage in effective prevention and diversion processes. Prevention means providing assistance to help a person retain the unit they currently rent (e.g., payment of past due rent and utility payments). Diversion, however, addresses the immediate crisis of a person seeking help, so they do not have to enter shelter and the homeless system at all.

Data from communities across the country demonstrate that it is not true that only those with no other options will go to a homeless shelter. While this can be surprising, some studies show that up to 30% of persons attempting to enter emergency shelter can be provided immediate assistance and be diverted away from shelter entry. These individuals may need help reconnecting or a conflict mediated with a friend, colleague, or family member who will provide a short-term place for the person to stay while things are sorted out. By reducing the number of people coming through the “entry door” to shelter and the homeless system, those with no other options can be more readily assisted.

Desired State

Households seeking assistance from the housing crisis response system would first be assessed for diversion services. Homelessness prevention funding would be targeted toward households with the highest risk for homelessness.

Current State – strengths and challenges

Homelessness prevention assistance was very accessible through the pandemic with Emergency Rental Assistance Programs and increased ESG-CV funding. Without pandemic and disaster funding, minimal funding is dedicated to homeless prevention as of 2022. However, prevention is a high priority of the County. A total of \$237,991 was dedicated to prevention in 2022 through SPEH TANF funding and Manatee County CDBG and ESG funding. This funding includes direct client financial assistance for past due rent, utilities, and relocation, as well as funding for case management and staff supporting these services. The challenge here is that there are simply not enough dedicated resources for prevention, considering the rising rental market and the number of households needing this assistance.

Federal and state sources of funding dedicated to Emergency Rental Assistance Programs are coming to an end. An indicator of the scale and need for ongoing permanent Emergency Rental Assistance Programs is the number of households in a community that are cost-burdened, with income ranging between 50% to 80% of the AMI. According to the 2020 Schimberg data on Cost Burden by Income, 12,333 households in Manatee County are in the 50-80% AMI range and are spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs. Fifty percent (6,078) of those households are renters and may need access to emergency rental assistance.

Another indicator we use to assess the number of households with school-age children that need prevention assistance is by looking at the Florida Department of Education Homeless Student Count Data. According to the 2021-2022 data, Manatee County had 965 children in households that are doubled up or in shared housing situations due to economic factors. They only represent a segment of the population needing homelessness prevention assistance. Typically, prevention assistance averages between \$5,000-\$8,000 per household for the financial assistance component. Assuming an average household size of 3 people and providing \$8,000 in assistance per household, adequate resources for prevention for the homeless students who are sharing housing would total over \$2.5 million alone.

Currently, SPEH has a diversion specialist funded only for Sarasota households due to the funding source. Turning Points also offers resource navigators who meet with people daily to assist in providing short-term help and problem-solving to connect people to resources. SPEH partnered with the Coalition to provide training on diversion in late 2022.

3. Diversion and Homelessness Prevention Recommendations

3.1. Offer flexible funding to help divert households from entering the housing crisis response system and into stable living situations.

STRATEGY

1. Create “flex funds” to either be directly awarded or accessible to agencies with formal diversion in place.
2. SPEH to provide continued training and support to agencies implementing diversion practices.
3. SPEH to provide uniform diversion tracking across participating agencies.

Funding (\$50,000 for an initial pilot program)

- A flex fund generally requires a flexible funding source because of the nature of uses for the funding. The less restrictive the funding source, the better.
- Funding sources include:
 - o Emergency Solutions Grant (in limited situations)
 - o Challenge Grant
 - o Private/philanthropy (e.g., Season of Sharing)

3.2. Establish a permanent rental assistance program.

STRATEGY

1. Similar to the Treasury’s Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), communities can establish their own self-funded rental assistance program.
2. Offer prevention assistance to households with 80% AMI or below.
3. Target a portion of prevention assistance to households with 50% AMI who are at the highest risk of homelessness.

Funding (Additional \$500,000 annually)

- Continue current funding for prevention through sources like ESG and CDBG.
- Local housing trust fund or General Revenue. See the newly established City of Ft. Myers Rental Assistance Program.
- Private/philanthropy (e.g., Season of Sharing)
- City contributions (Bradenton and Palmetto)
- TANF

D. Short-Term Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing

Qualitative and quantitative data collection indicated a lack of availability of crisis beds. In this section, we discuss two different interventions: emergency shelter and transitional housing. Emergency shelter has been around for decades and became federally funded in the 1980s during a significant housing crisis. Since that time, federal funding has slowly transitioned to prioritize permanent housing interventions over crisis/emergency housing. The shift in federal funding priorities is based on national studies which demonstrate that it is more cost-effective to rehouse households than to keep people in a shelter, and sometimes more cost effective than transitional housing. Additionally, stable housing with support services can offer a feeling of stability and permanence that short-term interventions cannot provide.

Despite the shift in federal funding priorities, people experiencing unsheltered homelessness are at much higher risk of physical illness, behavioral health challenges, victimization, and early death. Unsheltered homelessness is a crisis that must be addressed. Ultimately, permanent housing is the solution. Emergency shelter and transitional housing programs can help facilitate this road back to housing. Low-barrier, housing-focused emergency shelter and transitional housing can accommodate the wide range of challenges people experiencing unsheltered homelessness face. Instead of high barriers that screen people out, programs can redesign and create trauma-informed policies that prioritize safety and belonging. When programs continue to have high prerequisites for

entry, people with extreme vulnerability and challenges, such as co-occurring disorders or substance use disorders, are screened out and continue to go without help. When high-barrier programs are the main option, homelessness cannot be addressed effectively. A wide range of interventions and trauma-informed services are required. Programs must be willing and able to meet people where they are at and utilize stable housing as a recovery tool and path to stability.

Desired State

Households in crisis are able to obtain emergency shelter. Emergency shelters have uniform, low-barrier eligibility requirements to accommodate people experiencing homelessness. Existing transitional housing programs serve special populations that might not be appropriate for or have access to emergency shelters (e.g., youth, young adults, survivors of domestic violence, people recovering from substance use disorders, etc.).

Current State – strengths and challenges

Almost every provider interviewed stated there was a lack of emergency shelter available in Manatee County. The consensus was that emergency shelter for families is very limited and often operates at capacity. However, upon looking at utilization data, shelter beds were not fully utilized on the night of the Point-in-Time (PIT) Count in 2022. Emergency shelter beds were 70% utilized, and transitional housing beds were significantly underutilized.

Transitional housing differs from an emergency shelter in that transitional housing is set up to be a longer-term program for households to stay beyond 30 days and up to two years. Transitional housing generally has prerequisites to admission, such as employment, ability to work, participation in classes, sobriety, and specific household compositions (e.g., women with children). When those prerequisites result in a denial of service, the alternative is often unsheltered homelessness, which is a crisis in Manatee County. Simply put, there are not enough beds. Even with full utilization, there would still be a shortage.

Emergency shelter has been a key topic of discussion among providers, stakeholders, and the County. However, emergency shelter discussions have waned recently due to the recognition of the high ongoing costs of operating an emergency shelter and a lack of consensus on shelter expansion within the City of Bradenton. Emergency shelters, similar to day centers, can be costly to build and operate, but can also be key to maintaining contact with clients as they enter the system. Emergency shelter, at a minimum, offers a humane alternative to sleeping outside, and at a maximum, a path back to stability.

Transitional Housing and Recovery Programs

Due to shifting federal priorities, transitional housing programs and recovery programs have lost federal funding, especially in the last 10 years. Here, we explain the reasoning behind our lack of recommendations around prioritizing expanding and investing additional funding in these programs. Firstly, these types of programs already exist in Manatee County. People experiencing homelessness have opportunities to access recovery-oriented programs and services. What is lacking are opportunities to access low-barrier crisis beds. Living on the streets is not conducive to participating in routine treatment of behavioral health disorders. In fact, living on the streets can increase the likelihood of misusing substances, experiencing increased mental health symptoms, and witnessing or being the victim of physical and sexual assault.

When those seeking a shelter bed in a crisis are not able to access a bed due to program requirements such as sobriety or strict curfew rules, the likelihood of them engaging and getting help moving out of homelessness is reduced; this, in turn, leads to more street homelessness and long-term homelessness. This perspective on the use of shelter beds and transitional housing programs for recovery housing should not be taken as lack of support for recovery; rather, it is based in the recognition that recovery is more likely to be long-lasting and successful when combined with one's own housing and tailored support services.

Effectively addressing homelessness means having a system with an array of living situations available, be it through shelter, transitional housing, or permanent housing that meet the needs of people wherever they are at in their journey. For hundreds of thousands of Floridians, recovery takes place daily while safely housed in our neighborhoods and supported by the community. If all emergency shelter options require sobriety, this means any person actively struggling with addiction would automatically not have access to shelter or housing programs that may be the start to their journey with recovery.

4. Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing Recommendations

4.1. Support low-barrier, housing-focused emergency shelter and transitional housing programs.

STRATEGY

1. Develop a scoring rubric for all County-funded emergency shelters and transitional housing, including points for low-barrier policies.
2. Develop future Requests for Proposals (RFPs), deliverables, and contracts focused on reducing the length of time a household is experiencing homelessness, increasing the percentage of households exiting to permanent housing, and reducing returns to homelessness.
3. Ensure that for every dollar dedicated to short-term interventions, more is invested in permanent solutions.

Funding

We do not recommend any additional funding to shelter or transitional housing in this report. The County has recommended funding for non-congregate shelter in its HOME-ARP Allocation Plan.

E. Rapid Rehousing

Rapid Rehousing (RRH) is a housing intervention that assists people experiencing homelessness to move into permanent housing as quickly as possible with time-limited financial assistance and support services. Rapid Rehousing is mostly tenant-based rental assistance not tied to living in a specific unit. Participants can identify housing and receive financial assistance to move-in and rental assistance thereafter. Rapid Rehousing can be funded in a myriad of ways, and funding sources each have maximum lengths of assistance, rent limits, and additional requirements. Typically, Rapid Rehousing assistance ranges from 3 to 24 months.

Desired State

A robustly funded Rapid Rehousing component in the housing crisis response system that maintains an 85% housing stability rate, meaning 85% of participants remain housed 12 months after program exit.

Current State – strengths and challenges

Rapid Rehousing programs are currently being funded in Manatee with pass-through federal funding, CoC funding, and private funding. Though Rapid Rehousing is a very flexible intervention, limited funding can make the implementation difficult. For example, rental assistance and support services should be tailored to each household. If a household enters a Rapid Rehousing program and needs significant help, the program may only be able to pay three months of rent when the household really needs twelve months. In robustly funded programs, providers have the ability to tailor the assistance to each household's need, without having to limit assistance or the number of households served.

COVID funding provided through the CARES Act, and later the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), has provided an immense opportunity to increase funding for Rapid Rehousing. Rapid Rehousing has continued to expand in Manatee County due to the Emergency Solutions Grant COVID (ESG-CV) funding, both available through Manatee Count and SPEH allocations. Additionally, Community Development Block Grant COVID (CDBG-CV) funds could be used for rental payments, along with Emergency Rental Assistance, and Coronavirus Relief Funds.

Even with significant tranches of funding, the lack of available and affordable units within rent limits made it incredibly difficult for providers to identify housing. During the pandemic, housing prices began to skyrocket, and rents became out of reach to many households and providers trying to locate housing. Some of the COVID relief provided flexibility. For example, ESG-CV funding allowed for landlord incentives including sign on bonuses, triple security deposits, and more that made landlords more amenable to accept clients with this type of assistance. It can be very difficult to encourage landlords and property managers to rent to those who are moving out of homelessness, especially in a relatively tight rental market such as Manatee County's. One effective tool that can help provide some security and assurance for a prospective landlord is a Landlord Risk Sharing Pool.

With a Landlord Risk Sharing Pool or Mitigation Fund, funds contributed by the public and private sectors are deposited into an account. Those funds are held in a secure account that is called upon only when a landlord makes a specific, eligible claim for their tenants participating in an eligible housing program. Landlords are capped at how

much they can request in a claim, and the funds typically cover damage to a unit or cost of repairs and maintenance. Part of the risk in renting property is the risk of property damage. Providing landlord incentives and mitigation funds can facilitate moving households out of homelessness and into permanent housing.

The Suncoast Housing Collaborative was recently launched to break down barriers slowing down the ability for households to lease up. These barriers often include the household’s situation (e.g., criminal history, poor credit, etc.), availability of housing, and a highly competitive pool of tenants. The Collaborative currently offers lease signing bonuses, among other benefits, to landlords to incentivize them to rent to perceived high-risk households. Funding could be invested to expand the Collaborative to also provide mitigation funds in the event damage is done to the property, extensive cleaning has to be done, or someone breaks a lease.

Another challenge is the current capacity of housing case management. Serving vulnerable households often requires support services that go beyond traditional case management and require small caseloads. Case managers must have the flexibility to provide home-based services that address a multitude of needs. Ensuring adequate funding is available to address both the housing and support needs for households is vital to a Rapid Rehousing program’s success and the stability of households assisted.

The typical sources of funding for most Rapid Rehousing programs in Florida are ESG, ESG-CV, and CoC Program funding. In addition to those sources, HOME funding can also be used to provide Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) to households moving out of homelessness. Local government HOME allocations can be used for this purpose. In addition, the Florida Housing Finance Corporation (FHFC) makes available TBRA specifically focused on families with children who are homeless, living in motels, or doubled-up with friends or family.

SPEH is supporting significant RRH funding efforts in Manatee County through state and CoC Program funds. Manatee County also funds RRH through ESG and ESG-CV. Additionally, Turning Points receives a diverse pool of funding for short-term prevention and rental assistance. Additionally, they are a subrecipient of RRH funding. Even with this combined investment, at least 283 households on the Coordinated Entry list, comprising 67% of all households, need RRH assistance. A robust RRH program resolving homelessness for 283 households, should be funded with a combined investment of \$4.2 million.

5. Rapid Rehousing Recommendations

5.1. Expand the capacity of existing Rapid Rehousing programming to adequately address the needs of the current households on the Oneby1 List waiting for assistance.

STRATEGY

1. Develop a Coordinated Investment Plan between all major funders and SPEH to support a \$4.2 million investment in RRH over the next 1-3 years.
2. RRH programs should follow best practices for implementation as designated by national research and resources to ensure the highest level of success and results.
3. Create a Landlord Risk Mitigation Fund of \$250,000 total to provide incentives for landlords to rent to tenants with a perceived higher risk.

Funding (\$4.2 million over 1-3 years for RRH) and (\$250,000 for Landlord Fund)

- This recommendation is a major investment for the community because it is one of the most significant ways the County can reduce homelessness.
- Funding sources will need to vary between multiple public and private sectors. The funding sources listed below are not all inclusive of the sources with potential to fund RRH.
 - o State ESG RUSH (Rapid Unsheltered Survivors Housing), ESG
 - o HOME TBRA (State and local)
 - o Challenge Grant
 - o Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)
 - o HUD CoC Program
 - o Private/philanthropy
 - o City/County contributions

F. Permanent Supportive Housing

Permanent supportive housing (PSH) is an evidence-based housing model that combines affordable permanent housing with access to flexible support services. Supportive housing is designed for people with disabilities who are unlikely to be able to maintain stable housing without service-enriched housing. This combination of affordable housing and individualized support services helps individuals live healthier, more stable lives.

Typically, supportive housing is rental housing with a standard or master lease. PSH units may be scattered throughout the community in mainstream apartment complexes or may be project-based rental units in one or more developments. In some cases, apartments are set-aside units in larger affordable housing complexes. Combined with the rental housing are individualized, flexible, and accessible support services. These services are robust and often include case management, health care coordination, behavioral health coordination, job and education coaching, assistance with daily living skills, transportation assistance, and assistance accessing mainstream resources such as food assistance and disability income.

Permanent supportive housing for those with disabilities not only saves lives and provides a platform for health and wellness, but it also results in significant cost savings to public service systems.

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) is a housing intervention characterized by three components:

1. Permanent. Tenants may remain in housing as long as they are abiding by their lease agreement.
2. Supportive. Tenants have access to the supportive services they need and want.
3. Housing. Housing is decent, safe, affordable, and integrated into the community.

While Rapid Rehousing focuses on households with low to moderate barriers, PSH is designed for households experiencing chronic homelessness. Households experiencing chronic homelessness have long lengths of homelessness and at least one disabling condition. Another significant difference is the cost of PSH. PSH is one of the highest-cost interventions in homeless services; therefore, it should be reserved for only chronically homeless households. In a scattered site leasing model, PSH generally costs between \$15,000 to \$20,000 per household annually. Even with this cost, research demonstrates that PSH programs save communities in significant ways by moving chronically homeless individuals off the street, out of jails, out of crisis stabilization units, out of detox facilities, out of emergency rooms, and directly into an apartment with the support they need to maintain stable housing.

Desired State

Households experiencing chronic homelessness who cannot be served by Rapid Rehousing, or who have timed out, will have access to Permanent Supportive Housing.

Current State – strengths and challenges

Manatee County's housing crisis response system faces a fundamental constraint in its capacity to move clients through the system from intake to permanent housing: a lack of funding for RRH and PSH programs. This underfunding represents fewer rent subsidies, fewer apartments accessible to clients, and an increased burden (staffing and budget) on the shelter system. The CoC does draw funds from HUD CoC Program for PSH; however, these projects are not accessible to Manatee County's chronically homeless and are primarily used in Sarasota County.

There is currently no dedicated PSH program for Manatee County. Upon the 2022 PIT Count, at least 1 unsheltered family with a child was identified as needing PSH, 28 single adults in shelter needed access to PSH, and 127 unsheltered adults needed access to PSH. This means, at a minimum, Manatee County needs at least 158 PSH beds available to meet the needs of those currently identified. This does not include the hundreds of others that outreach teams identify throughout the year living in their car, on the streets, or in encampments. PSH is imperative to reducing homelessness and providing long-term stability for those with the highest needs who may never gain stability without a deep rental subsidy and intensive support services.

Creating deeply affordable housing that also comes with intensive support services requires a significant upfront investment, commitment, and partnership. PSH is an evidence-based intervention necessitating operation and implementation by a provider well-versed in serving chronically homeless households.

There are two main ways to provide PSH: 1) through scattered-site leasing and 2) through the development or rehabilitation of units. Short-term investment can help stand up a scattered-site leasing program more quickly than construction and rehabilitation. However, both are necessary to address Manatee’s residents’ needs. The second strategy of increasing housing development is a critical one for Manatee County. Because no units dedicated to PSH exist and there is a significant shortage of housing that is affordable to those with the lowest incomes, new affordable housing must be produced. It is important that the new affordable housing developments are subsidized enough to provide set-aside units to those who have been chronically homeless and have extremely low incomes.

There are many experienced developers throughout Florida looking to expand their footprint and driven by the mission of improving Floridians’ quality of life by offering stable, permanent, and affordable housing. Manatee County has already implemented several initiatives to incentivize affordable housing development in its ordinances. The opportunity exists to work with developers, even more, to ensure units are created for the most severely cost-burdened households.

Manatee County has an opportunity to significantly decrease chronic homelessness with these two strategies over the next few years. We recommend investment from many community sectors: CoC, healthcare, philanthropy, business, and local government. Additionally, experienced developers are able to navigate the complex financing and subsidy layering required to make a PSH project feasible.

6. Permanent Supportive Housing Recommendations

6.1. Invest in Permanent Supportive Housing through scattered-site leasing and affordable housing development for chronically homeless households.

STRATEGY

1. Invest \$3.6 million in a scattered-site leasing program to serve 200 households. Partner with an experienced provider to implement and operate the program.
2. Use existing affordable housing resources and funding to increase a portion of set-asides for extremely low-income (ELI) and permanent supportive housing in new requests for funding.
3. Utilize available data through the PIT Count, Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and Coordinated Entry to track progress and determine ongoing needs.

Funding (\$3.6 million annually for scattered-site program)

- \$2 million in annual funding will help serve up to 100 households each year. Beyond that, the County can provide incentives for housing developers to increase the number of units dedicated specifically for PSH.
 - o Bringing in an experienced PSH developer will expedite Manatee County’s ability to bring PSH online by understanding the right amount of subsidy the County should invest.

VII. Housing Affordability

This report does not need to go into detail about the housing affordability challenges Manatee County residents face daily. The Commission is acutely aware and taking action. There is a strong link between housing affordability generally, and occurrences of homelessness in a community with a serious shortage of affordable housing for extremely low-income (ELI) households. As rents inflate to levels unaffordable to lower-income households, their housing insecurity and housing cost burdens also rise. Thus, any systems approach to homelessness must acknowledge the housing environment and understand the scale of the problem in the housing market.

Households that spend more than 30% of gross annual household income on housing costs are considered housing cost-burdened. It is assumed that households spending more than 30% of their income on housing must make sacrifices in the household budget to pay for groceries, utilities, transportation, and other typical household

expenses. This sacrifice can lead to crisis situations that put households at a high risk of homelessness. It is in a housing-strained environment that communities witness inherent increases in the number of persons experiencing homelessness.

Manatee County has an estimated 20,375 households considered to be cost-burdened according to the Shimberg 2015-19 Housing Affordability data for gross rent as a percentage of household income. When reviewing the Shimberg 2019 Surplus/Deficit of Affordable/Available Units^v by income for Sarasota and Manatee Counties, combined, there is an 8,568 unit deficit for households with extremely low income of 0-30% of the area median income (AMI), 4,595 unit deficit for households with very low income of 30-50% AMI. This data alone demonstrates the need for intentional investment in affordable housing in general. If the gap in affordable housing units is not intentionally addressed, more households will be faced with homelessness.

| Income Range | # of Unit Deficit |
|--------------|-------------------|
| 0-30% AMI | 8,568 units |
| 30-50% AMI | 4,595 units |
| 0-50% AMI | 13,163 units |

Table 1: 2019 Unit Deficit by AMI

VIII. Data on Homelessness

This section reviews data managed by Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness (SPEH), the Lead Agency for the region’s Continuum of Care (CoC). SPEH is responsible for managing federal and state funding for homelessness programs, maintaining and operating the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), and providing oversight on the County’s coordinated system of care. It should be noted that all data reviewed in this section are not necessarily specific to Manatee County alone unless specifically indicated. Further, it is recognized that certain organizations providing shelter and services to persons who are homeless do not provide data on their programs to SPEH because they do not utilize the community’s Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Because those programs are not included in the data analyzed below, the numbers are understated.

A. Annual Point-In-Time Count Trends

During the last two weeks of January each year, the CoC conducts a Point In Time (PIT) count, which is essentially a census of people experiencing unsheltered and sheltered homelessness on a specific night. Through this data collection, communities can glean a snapshot of what homelessness looks like on any given night, including demographics, household structure, subpopulation groups, etc. Though the PIT Count does not provide a comprehensive representation of the homeless population in a community, it does provide a starting point for understanding the volume, scale, and scope of the local homeless population. At the time of this report, data collection was complete for the 2023 PIT count, but the aggregation and analysis were not due to be complete until April 2023, when the report must be submitted to HUD. Thus, the 2023 PIT data is excluded from this report. This report includes 2022 PIT Data for the night of January 24, 2022.

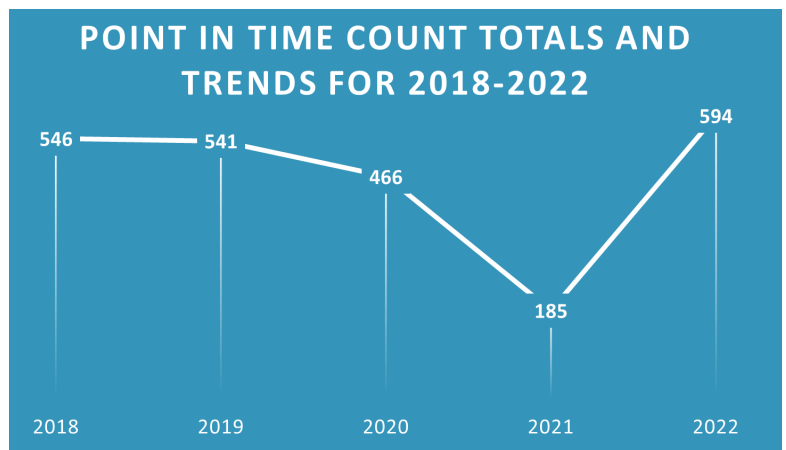


Figure 6: Point in Time Count Totals 2018-2022

The number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Manatee County on the night of the PIT Count has remained relatively consistent over the past 5 years. There was a significant decrease reported in 2021; however, this was due to the methodology of not surveying those experiencing unsheltered homelessness due to concerns of the COVID-19 virus, so this is not representative of the actual homeless population, but rather only the sheltered population on the 2021 PIT night. From 2018 to 2022, the PIT count increased by 48 individuals or 9%. It is safe to assume that if no additional resources and services are provided to support people exiting homelessness by 2030, the trend indicates there would be 718 people experiencing homelessness on the PIT night in Manatee County. This does not factor in external factors that tend to increase rates of homelessness like access to affordable housing units and rental markets increasing.

| Type of Living Situation | Type of Living Situation | Type of Living Situation |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Emergency Shelter | 223 | 37% |
| Transitional Housing | 29 | 5% |
| Unsheltered | 342 | 58% |
| TOTAL | 594 | 100% |

Table 2: 2022 PIT Breakdown (Manatee County Only)

According to the 2022 PIT Count, most of the homeless population is experiencing unsheltered homelessness, with 58% sleeping outside, in encampments, in cars, or in other places not meant for human habitation. When a community is looking at high rates of unsheltered homelessness, they must also assess their current utilization rates within existing programs utilizing Housing Inventory Chart (HIC) data. The HIC indicates if the emergency shelter or other beds available are being used to full capacity or not before investing additional resources.

According to the 2022 HIC data below, current shelter and transitional housing resources are being underutilized. In essence, this means these two types of programs had additional, unused, empty beds on the night of the PIT count. In this case, after interviewing stakeholders and understanding more about the program requirements for emergency shelter and transitional housing programs, it is reasonable to expect that there are some barriers or requirements that may be deterring unsheltered people from accessing existing shelter, beyond just the space and capacity of the programs.

| Type of Living Situation | Total # of Beds | # of people utilizing beds on 2022 PIT night | % Utilization |
|------------------------------|-----------------|--|---------------|
| Emergency Shelter | 325 | 229 | 70% |
| Transitional Housing | 80 | 55 | 69% |
| Rapid Rehousing | 31 | 31 | 100% |
| Permanent Supportive Housing | 0 | 0 | N/A |
| Other Permanent Housing | 0 | 0 | N/A |

Table 3: 2022 Homeless Housing Inventory Chart (Manatee County Only)

Even with reducing barriers and requirements for existing shelter and transitional housing programs in Manatee County, there is still a gap in the number of beds dedicated these programs. Analyzing the Coordinated Entry Data and By-Name List data further explains exactly how many people would benefit from emergency shelter versus transitional housing as an option. Reviewing all of the bed availability by program and population, there are gaps in emergency shelter and transitional housing beds for families with children, emergency shelter for adult-only households, and transitional housing for youth ages 18-24. A total of an additional 170 beds are needed for emergency shelter and transitional housing combined. The majority of these beds should be dedicated to adult-only households since 82% of the homeless population on the PIT County night were in adult-only households.

| Type of Living Situation | Families with at least 1 Adult and 1 Child | Adult Only | Youth 18-24 | Child Only |
|------------------------------|--|--------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Emergency Shelter Bed Gap | 10 Beds | 83 Beds | No Gap | No Gap |
| Transitional Housing Bed Gap | 16 Beds | 56 Beds | 5 Beds | No Gap |
| Total Bed Gap | 26 Bed Gap | 139 Bed Gap | 5 Bed Gap | 0 Bed Gap |

Table 4: Gap in Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing Beds (Manatee County Only)

A critical component to success in emergency shelter and transitional housing programming is having access to affordable housing that is sustainable and meets the needs of those exiting shelter and transitional programs. When considering expanding resources dedicated to shelter and transitional housing, a concurrent plan must be implemented to develop and create affordable housing stock and programs for this same population, so they have a path to long-term sustainable permanent housing.

| Location the night of the count | HH w/ Adult and at least 1 child | HH w/out children | Veteran HH w/out children | Parenting Youth HH | Unaccompanied Youth HH |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Emergency Shelter | 22 | 138 | 22 | 1 | 4 |
| Transitional Housing | 2 | 25 | 19 | 1 | 4 |
| Unsheltered | 3 | 321 | 17 | 0 | 10 |
| TOTAL | 27 | 484 | 58 | 2 | 18 |

Table 5: 2022 PIT Sub-Population Household Compositions (Mantee County Only)

| Location the night of the count | Mental Illness | Substance Use Disorder | HIV/AIDS | Domestic Violence |
|---------------------------------|----------------|------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Emergency Shelter | 19 | 8 | 1 | 21 |
| Transitional Housing | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Unsheltered | 20 | 14 | 0 | 13 |
| Total | 43 | 25 | 2 | 33 |

Table 6: 2022 PIT Disabling Conditions Breakdown (Manatee County Only)

B. Manatee County Homeless By-Name-List and Coordinated Entry Data Trends

Part of the CoC Lead Agency function is to design and implement a Coordinated Entry System (CES) inclusive of maintaining a By-Name List of everyone experiencing homelessness within the CoC catchment area. The By-Name List (BNL) helps the CoC and service partners understand current needs and prioritize highly vulnerable homeless individuals for the appropriate services and housing interventions. The BNL also provides the most reliable data on the current homeless population and time frames for achieving housing, referrals, and length of time homeless.

SPEH enacted the CES in 2018 for Manatee County. Part of the CE process includes conducting a standardized assessment of everyone experiencing homelessness. This Assessment (the VI-SPDAT) helps determine what level of support and service is needed to end their episode of homelessness. Based on the 2018-2022 Coordinated Entry and By Name List data maintained for Manatee County, we have determined the following.

- 572 total people have been assessed since 2018
- 63 were permanently housed
- 85 were moved to inactive status due to self-resolving their homeless situation or lost contact
- 424 of those people still need housing

2018-2022 HOUSED AND ACTIVELY HOMELESS

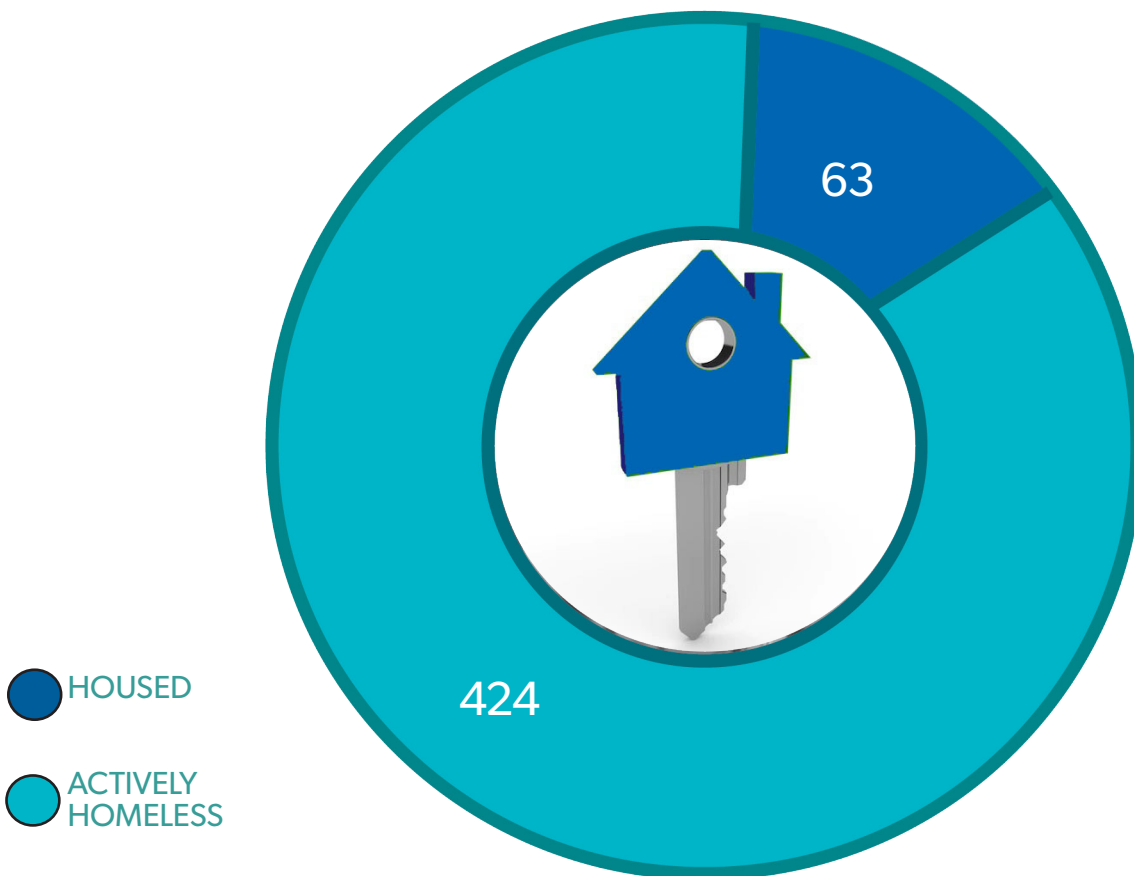


Figure 7: By-Name List Data 2018-2022 (Manatee County Only)

BNL Insights

People are self-resolving their episodes of homelessness more often than they can be assisted through the formal housing crisis response system. Typically, this is an indicator of an under-resourced system.

| Score Range | Recommended Intervention/Service based on Score | # individuals/% |
|-------------|--|-----------------|
| 0-3 | Brief stay in Emergency Shelter or Self Resolve | 0 |
| 4-7 | Rapid Rehousing and Light Case Management | 283 (67%) |
| 8+ | Permanent Supportive Housing and Intensive Case Management | 137 (33%) |

Table 7: VI-SPDAT Score Breakdown for Active/Unhoused (Manatee County Only)

Assessment Score Insights

This information was aggregated from the By-Name List (BNL), but as part of the Coordinated Entry System policies and procedure, VI-SPDAT scores of 0-3 are not placed on the BNL. Generally, a score in this range indicates a need for a short-term shelter stay. Instead, we will need to rely on the PIT data showing the number of unsheltered individuals to gain insight into the need for emergency shelter beds. The predominant need, according to the VI-SPDAT scores, shows a need for Rapid Rehousing, including financial assistance and case management for 283 (67%) individuals. There is also a high need for Permanent Supportive Housing. Currently, there is no PSH programming available in Manatee County; however, 33% of the homeless population would benefit from this intervention.

Homeless Sub-populations

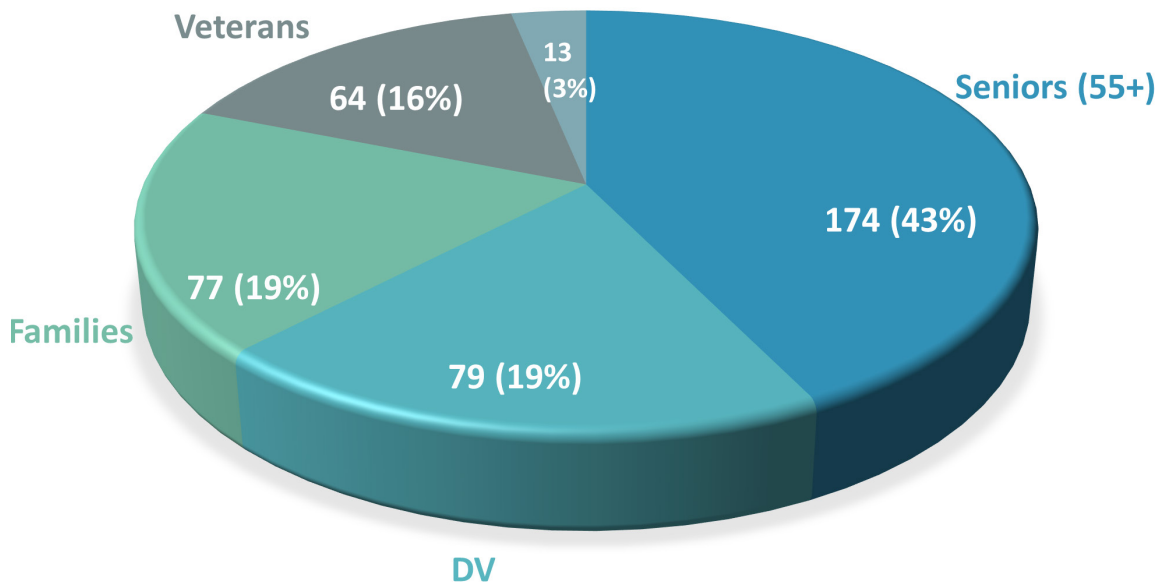


Figure 8: Sub-Population Breakdown for Active/Unhoused (Manatee County Only)

Sub-Population Insights

The largest representation on the BNL is among seniors ages 55+. This is especially important as this aging population has immediate needs for homelessness services and assistance through housing programs, but there is also a need to plan across systems of care to ensure this population has access to Assisted Living Facilities and Nursing Homes as their level of care increases over time. This also suggests a need for support services to help seniors age in place once they are placed in permanent housing. Another consideration for this population is making emergency shelters ADA-compliant and inclusive of bottom bunk beds and offering first-floor accessible hotel rooms for non-congregate shelter.

Survivors of domestic violence, as well as families in general, each make up 19% of the individuals on the BNL still needing housing. Specialized services are needed for both populations and require experienced service providers to support the complex and confidential needs of these populations.

Given that there are only 64 veterans currently experiencing homelessness on the BNL, Manatee County should consider funding projects that will end veteran homelessness. Maximum utilization of VASH vouchers and one or two small affordable housing developments (30 units each) dedicated to veterans experiencing homelessness specifically would help the County achieve this goal. The County has earmarked ARPA funding for a veterans project.

Unaccompanied youths are always underrepresented in homelessness data. Typically, these individuals are more likely to couch surf and stay hidden from the public eye more so than single adults. According to the 2021-2022 Department of Education’s homeless student count data, there were 37 homeless unaccompanied youth in Manatee County for the 12-month period. It is recommended that a youth assessment be conducted in Manatee County, utilizing school system partners and youth and young adult service agencies to fully assess the needs for youth and young adults.

| Income Range | # People/% |
|---------------------------|------------|
| No Monthly Income \$0.00 | 272/64% |
| \$1-\$1,000 per month | 69/16% |
| \$1,000-\$1,499 per month | 34/8% |
| \$1,500-\$2,000 per month | 20/5% |
| \$2,000-\$3,000 per month | 25/6% |
| \$3,000+ per month | 3/1% |

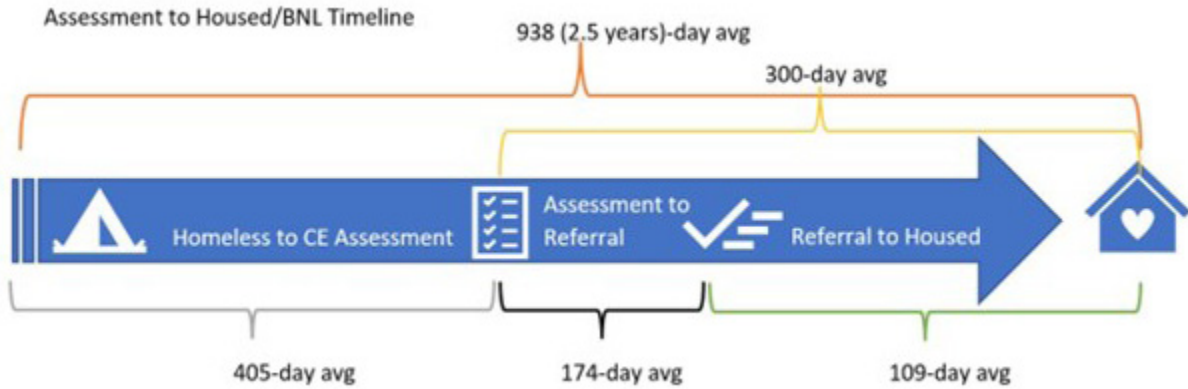
Table 9: Income Ranges for Active/Unhoused (Manatee County Only)

Income Insights

Most of the unhoused population have no current monthly income, meaning there is no clear sustainable path for them to attain affordable housing of their own. With such a significant portion of the homeless population receiving no regular income, in combination with nearly the same percentage (65%) reporting a disabling condition, support services helping individuals gain disability income would be beneficial. A few case managers are certified in a process called SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery), which assists households experiencing homelessness with disabling conditions in applying for benefits. The process can be lengthy, and having dedicated, full-time SOAR processors can ease the burden on case managers trying to provide a range of services.

C. Coordinated Entry to Housed Timeline

The diagram below illustrates the average amount of time it takes someone to move in to permanent housing once faced with homelessness, specifically within Manatee County. The illustration includes average amounts of time from the point of a Coordinated Entry assessment, assessment to referral, and from referral to housing. These averages are generated by using data from HMIS and the BNL.



Timeline Insights

This illustration tells us the most about what is happening at the system level in response to homelessness and where effort can be focused for maximum return to improve the system to ultimately shorten someone’s experience of homelessness. There are two areas of note that indicate needs at the system level: 1) the average number of days from homeless to CE assessment and 2) the average number of days from assessment to referral. Both are much higher than normal averages and indicate a lack of access points/assessors within the CES, as well as a lack of system functionality and/or referral management.

A strong indicator that there is not enough affordable housing stock dedicated to the population exiting homelessness is the 109-day average time it takes to move into housing from being referred to an agency for assistance. Most communities are seeing an average of 90 days or so here, given the limited affordable housing stock across all Florida communities.

ENDNOTES

- ⁱ US Department of Housing and Urban Development. FAQ – What is a Continuum of Care?
- ⁱⁱ Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness. Oneby1 Access Points. Available at: <https://www.suncoastpartnership.org/access-points-oneby1>.
- ⁱⁱⁱ State of Florida Council on Homelessness Annual Report. 2022. Available at: Council on Homelessness Annual Report 2022.pdf (myflfamilies.com).
- ^{iv} US Department of Housing and Urban Development. Notice CPD-17-01. Available at: <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5208/notice-establishing-additional-requirements-for-a-continuum-of-care-centralized-or-coordinated-assessment-system/>.
- ^v Shimberg Center. 2019 Rental Market Study. Available at: http://www.shimberg.ufl.edu/publications/FL_aff_hsg_2019.pdf.

Appendix A: Recommendations

1. CoC Lead Agency Recommendations

1.1. Develop the Manatee Homeless Taskforce “Taskforce” as a standing committee to the CoC committee structure.

STRATEGY

1. Leadership Council approves Manatee Homeless Taskforce as a standing committee.
2. Manatee County staff (Homeless Policy Coordinator) serves as Chair of this committee.
3. Manatee County designated staff (Homeless Policy Coordinator) also serves on the Leadership Council.
4. A leader from SPEH will hold a seat on the Taskforce to offer expertise and increase collaboration.

No additional funding is needed at this time. The County currently funds the Homeless Policy Coordinator position.

2. Outreach and Coordinated Entry Recommendations

2.1. Implement a coordinated outreach approach among all outreach providers.

STRATEGY

1. Given the wide variety of outreach providers, a standing meeting should occur, either standalone or as part of the Oneby1 list meetings, to provide outreach under a uniform, agreed-upon strategy.
2. Homeless outreach should focus on unsheltered households.
3. Utilize the data already collected and available by the outreach teams to identify a more accurate count of unsheltered households.
4. SPEH to identify unmet outreach staffing needs.

Funding

- Coordinating the current outreach teams does not require additional funding.
- Upon identification of additional SPEH outreach staffing needs, the following are common sources of funding:
 - o Emergency Solutions Grant
 - o Challenge Grant
 - o Community Development Block Grant
 - o City/County

2.2. Increase effectiveness of Coordinated Entry in Manatee County.

STRATEGY

1. Expand funding for service provider staff working to help households through the CE process. This includes funding staff at designated access points. Each agency directly and substantially serving people experiencing homelessness should have a minimum of one (1) full-time CE staff. We estimate that four additional (4) FTE staff will be needed.
2. Expand funding to support SPEH staff in tracking CE assessment data.
3. SPEH to track data for low-scoring households to understand better the need for diversion, prevention, and early intervention.
4. All outreach staff to serve as designated CE access points.

Funding (\$300,000 Annually)

- \$225,000 will cover 4 FTE positions for service providers to employ at their designated access points.
- \$75,000 will support SPEH to expand their staff and technology capability to better track CE data.
- Funding sources include:
 - HUD CoC Program – SSO and HMIS Grants
 - Challenge Grant
 - Emergency Solutions Grant
 - City/County

3. Diversion and Homelessness Prevention Recommendations

3.1. Offer flexible funding to help divert households from entering the housing crisis response system and into stable living situations.

STRATEGY

1. Create “flex funds” to either be directly awarded or accessible to agencies with formal diversion in place.
2. SPEH to provide continued training and support to agencies implementing diversion practices.
3. SPEH to provide uniform diversion tracking across participating agencies.

Funding (\$50,000 for an initial pilot program)

- A flex fund generally requires a flexible funding source because of the nature of uses for the funding. The less restrictive the funding source, the better.
- Funding sources include:
 - Emergency Solutions Grant (in limited situations)
 - Challenge Grant
 - Private/philanthropy (e.g., Season of Sharing)
 - City/County

3.2. Establish a permanent rental assistance program.

STRATEGY

1. Similar to the Treasury’s Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), communities can establish their own self-funded rental assistance program.
2. Offer prevention assistance to households with 80% AMI or below.
3. Target a portion of prevention assistance to households with 50% AMI who are at the highest risk of homelessness.

Funding (Additional \$500,000 annually)

- Continue current funding for prevention through sources like ESG and CDBG.
- Local housing trust fund or General Revenue. See the newly established City of Ft. Myers Rental Assistance Program.
- Private/philanthropy (e.g., Season of Sharing)
- City contributions (Bradenton and Palmetto)
- TANF

4. Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing Recommendations

4.1. Support low-barrier, housing-focused emergency shelter and transitional housing programs.

STRATEGY

1. Develop a scoring rubric for all County-funded emergency shelters and transitional housing, including points for low-barrier policies.
2. Develop Requests for Proposals (RFPs), deliverables, and contracts focused on reducing the length of time a household is experiencing homelessness, increasing the percentage of households exiting to permanent housing, and reducing returns to homelessness.
3. Ensure that for every dollar dedicated to short-term interventions, more is invested in permanent solutions.

Funding

We do not recommend any additional funding to shelter or transitional housing in this report. The County has recommended funding for non-congregate shelter in its HOME-ARP Allocation Plan.

5. Rapid Rehousing Recommendations

5.1. Expand the capacity of existing Rapid Rehousing programming to adequately address the needs of the current households on the Oneby1 List waiting for assistance.

STRATEGY

1. Develop a Coordinated Investment Plan between all major funders and SPEH to support a \$4.2 million investment in RRH over the next 1-3 years.
2. RRH programs should follow best practices for implementation as designated by national research and resources to ensure the highest level of success and results.
3. Create a Landlord Risk Mitigation Fund of \$250,000 total to provide incentives for landlords to rent to tenants with a perceived higher risk.

Funding (\$4.2 million over 1-3 years for RRH) and (\$250,000 for Landlord Fund)

- This recommendation is a major investment for the community because it is one of the most significant ways the County can reduce homelessness.
- Funding sources will need to vary between multiple public and private sectors. The funding sources listed below are not all inclusive of the sources with potential to fund RRH.
 - o State ESG RUSH (Rapid Unsheltered Survivors Housing), ESG
 - o HOME TBRA (State and local)
 - o Challenge Grant
 - o Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)
 - o HUD CoC Program
 - o Private/philanthropy
 - o City contributions

6. Permanent Supportive Housing Recommendations

6.1. Invest in Permanent Supportive Housing through scattered-site leasing and affordable housing development for chronically homeless households.

STRATEGY

1. Invest \$3.6 million in a scattered-site leasing program to serve 200 households. Partner with an experienced provider to implement and operate the program.
2. Use existing affordable housing resources and funding to increase a portion of set-asides for extremely low-income (ELI) and permanent supportive housing in new requests for funding.
3. Utilize available data through the PIT Count, Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and Coordinated Entry to track progress and determine ongoing needs.

Funding (\$3.6 million annually for scattered-site program)

- \$2 million in annual funding will help serve up to 100 households each year. Beyond that, the County can provide incentives for housing developers to increase the number of units dedicated specifically for PSH.
 - o Bringing in an experienced PSH developer will expedite Manatee County's ability to bring PSH online by understanding the right amount of subsidy the County should invest.

Appendix B: Glossary

Affordable Housing – In general, housing for which the tenants are paying no more than 30% of their income for housing costs, including utilities. Affordable housing may either be subsidized housing or unsubsidized market housing. A special type of affordable housing for people with disabilities who need long-term services along with affordable housing is “Permanent Supportive Housing.”

Chronically Homeless – An individual or family with a disabling condition that has been continually homeless for over a year, or one that has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years, where the combined lengths of homelessness of those episodes is at least one year.

Continuum of Care (CoC) – A local group of stakeholders required by HUD to organize and deliver housing and services to meet the needs of people who are homeless as they move to stable housing and maximum self-sufficiency. The terms “CoC Governing Body” or “CoC Board” refer to the planning body that provides oversight, policy, and evaluation of the community’s work to end homelessness. In some contexts, the term “continuum of care” is also sometimes used to refer to the system of programs addressing homelessness. Locally, the geographic area for the CoC is Marion County.

CoC Lead Agency – The local organization or entity that implements the work and policies directed by the CoC. The CoC Lead Agency typically serves as the “Collaborative Applicant,” which submits annual funding requests for HUD CoC Program funding on behalf of the CoC. The CoC Lead Agency for the Marion CoC is the Marion County Homeless Council.

Coordinated Entry System – A standardized community-wide process to outreach to and identify homeless households, enter their information into HMIS, use common tools to assess their needs, and prioritize access to housing interventions and services to end their homelessness. Sometimes referred to as a “triage system” or “coordinated intake and assessment.”

Diversion – A strategy that prevents homelessness for people seeking shelter by helping them stay housed where they currently stay or by identifying immediate alternate housing arrangements and, if necessary, connecting them with services and financial assistance to help them return to permanent housing.

Emergency Shelter – A facility or non-congregate setting operated to provide temporary shelter for people who are homeless. HUD’s guidance is that the lengths of stay in emergency shelter prior to moving into permanent housing should not exceed 30 days.

Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) – HUD funding that flows through state and certain local governments for street outreach, emergency shelters, rapid rehousing, homelessness prevention, and certain HMIS costs. HEARTH Act – Federal legislation that, in 2009, amended and reauthorized the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. The HEARTH/McKinney-Vento Act provides the conditions for federal funding for homeless programs, including the HUD Emergency Solutions Grant and the HUD CoC Grant funding. It also sets forth the requirements for how CoCs should operate, use HMIS, and plan.

HMIS Lead Agency – The local organization or entity that administers the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) on behalf of the CoC. In Marion, the HMIS Lead Agency is the Marion County Homeless Council.

Homeless – There are varied definitions of homelessness. Generally, “homeless” means lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and living in temporary accommodations (e.g., shelter or transitional housing) or in places not meant for human habitation. Households fleeing domestic violence and similar threatening conditions are also considered homeless. For purposes of certain programs and funding, families with minor children who are doubled-up with family or friends for economic reasons may also be considered homeless, as are households at imminent risk of homelessness.

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) – A web-based software solution and database tool designed to capture and analyze client-level information including the characteristics, service needs, and use of services by persons experiencing homelessness. HMIS is an important component of an effective Coordinated Entry System, CoC planning efforts, and performance evaluation based on program outcomes. Homelessness Prevention – Short-term financial assistance, sometimes with support services, for households at imminent risk of homelessness and who have no other resources to prevent homelessness. For many programs, the household must also be extremely low income, with income at or less than 30% of Area Median Income (AMI) to receive such assistance.

Housing or Permanent Housing – Any housing arrangement in which the person/tenant can live indefinitely, as long as the rent is paid and lease terms are followed. Temporary living arrangements and programs – such as emergency shelters, transitional programs, and rehabilitation or recovery programs – do not meet the definition of housing.

HUD – The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, which provides funding to states and local communities to address homelessness. In addition, HUD supports fair housing, community development, and affordable housing, among other issues.

HUD CoC Funding or CoC Program Funding – Funding administered by HUD through local CoC Collaborative Applicant (i.e., CoC Lead Agency) entities. Eligible uses for new projects include permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing, coordinated entry, HMIS, and CoC planning. In Marion, the funding application is submitted by Marion County Homeless Council on behalf of the Continuum of Care.

Outreach – A necessary homeless system component that involves interacting with unsheltered people who are homeless in whatever location they naturally stay (e.g., in campsites, on the streets), building trust, and offering access to appropriate housing interventions.

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) – Safe and affordable housing for people with disabling conditions, with legal tenancy housing rights and access to flexible support services. PSH that is funded through HUD CoC funding should prioritize people who are chronically homeless with the longest terms of homelessness and the highest level of vulnerability/acuity in terms of health issues and service needs.

Point in Time (PIT) Count – A one-night snapshot of homelessness in a specific geographic area. The PIT is required by HUD to be completed during the latter part of January each year. Various characteristics of homelessness are collected and reported.

Rapid ReHousing (RRH) – A housing intervention designed to move a household into permanent housing (e.g., a rental unit) as quickly as possible, ideally within 30 days of identification. Rapid ReHousing typically provides (1) help identifying appropriate housing; (2) financial assistance (deposits and short-term or medium-term rental assistance for 1-24 months), and (3) support services as long as needed and desired, up to a certain limit.

Services or Support Services – A wide range of services designed to address issues negatively affecting a person's quality of life, stability, and/or health. Examples include behavioral health counseling or treatment for mental health and/or substance abuse issues, assistance increasing income through employment or disability assistance, financial education, assistance with practical needs such as transportation or housekeeping, and connections to other critical resources such as primary health care.

Sheltered/Unsheltered Homelessness – People who are in temporary shelters, including emergency shelter and transitional programs, are considered "sheltered." People who are living outdoors or in places not meant for human habitation are considered "unsheltered."

Subsidized Housing – Housing that is made affordable through government-funded housing subsidies. Such housing includes housing made affordable through Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) assistance and developments funded in whole or in part by the Florida Housing Finance Corporation or similar funding mechanism.

Transitional Housing Program – A temporary shelter program that allows for moderate stays (3-24 months) and provides support services. Based on research on the efficacy and costs of this model, this type of program should be a very limited component of the housing crisis response system, due to the relative costliness of the programs in the absence of outcomes that exceed rapid rehousing outcomes. Transitional housing should be used only for specific subpopulations such as transition-age youth, where research has shown it is more effective than other interventions.

Appendix C: Affordable Housing Funding Sources

Florida Housing Finance Corporation (FHFC)

The Florida Housing Finance Corporation (Florida Housing) was created by the state Legislature 40 years ago to assist in providing a range of affordable housing opportunities for residents that help make Florida communities great places in which to live, work and do business.

- **State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP):** FHFC administers the State Housing Initiatives Partnership program (SHIP), which provides funds to local governments as an incentive to create partnerships that produce and preserve affordable homeownership and multifamily housing. The program was designed to serve very low, low- and moderate-income families. <https://www.floridahousing.org/programs/special-programs/ship---state-housing-initiatives-partnership-program>

Pertinent Legislation

- **Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act):** Economic stimulus bill passed and signed into law on March 27, 2020. Provided significant funding for federal housing programs to provide emergency rental assistance and other services necessary to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus. <https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/hr748/BILLS-116hr748enr.pdf>
- **Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021:** Federal bill passed December 31, 2020. Legislation which extended the Coronavirus Relief Fund from December 30, 2020 to December 30, 2021 and provided changes in the Continuum of Care Program for Indian tribes and tribally designated housing entities. Read more here.
- **American Rescue Plan Act:** A \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package signed into law on March 11, 2021 containing \$40 billion in essential housing and homelessness assistance, including \$27.4 billion for emergency rental assistance, housing vouchers, and tribal and rural assistance. It also provides \$5 billion to assist people who are homeless. https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/COVID-Relief-Budget_Reconciliation.pdf

HUD Definitions and Programs

- **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD):** A Federal organization aiming to increase homeownership, support community development and increase access to affordable housing free from discrimination. www.hud.gov
- **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG):** Federal HUD formula grant program providing communities with resources to address a variety of community development needs. CDBG is awarded to entitlement communities to carry out a wide range of community development activities directed toward revitalizing neighborhoods, economic development, and providing improved community facilities and services. <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/cdbg/>
- **Community Development Block Grant – Coronavirus (CDBG-CV):** Additional funding for the CDBG program made available by the CARES Act <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/cdbg-cv/>
- **Continuum of Care (CoC) Program:** The Continuum of Care (CoC) Program is designed to promote communitywide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness; provide funding for efforts by nonprofit providers, and State and local governments to quickly rehouse homeless individuals and families while minimizing the trauma and dislocation caused to homeless individuals, families, and communities by homelessness; promote access to and effect utilization of mainstream programs by homeless individuals and families; and optimize self-sufficiency among individuals and families experiencing homelessness. <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/>
- **Emergency Housing Voucher Program (EHV):** Available through the American Rescue Plan Act. Through EHV, HUD is providing 70,000 housing choice vouchers to local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) in order to assist individuals and families who are: 1) homeless, 2) at risk of homelessness, 3) fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking, or 4) were recently homeless or have a high risk of housing instability.
- **Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG):** ESG is a federal grant that is given to eligible states, cities, counties and territories. The ESG program provides funding to: (1) engage homeless individuals and families living on the

street; (2) improve the number and quality of emergency shelters for homeless individuals and families; (3) help operate these shelters; (4) provide essential services to shelter residents, (5) rapidly re-house homeless individuals and families, and (6) prevent families and individuals from becoming homeless. <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/esg/>

- **Emergency Solutions Grant – Coronavirus (ESG-CV):** Additional funding for the ESG program made available by the CARES Act. https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/homeless_esg_covid-19

- **Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA):** The only Federal program dedicated to the housing needs of people living with HIV/AIDS. Under the HOPWA program, HUD makes grants to local communities, States, and nonprofit organizations for projects that benefit low-income persons medically diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. HOPWA also received additional funding made available through the CARES Act. <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hopwa/>

Other Relevant Federal Funding

- **Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF):** Funding made available through the CARES Act to provide payments to State, Local, and Tribal governments navigating the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. Funds are not specifically for housing; however, housing is an eligible expense. <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/cares/state-and-local-governments>

- **Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds:** Funding made available through the American Rescue Plan Act. The funds provide a substantial infusion of resources to help turn the tide on the pandemic, address its economic fallout, and lay the foundation for a strong and equitable recovery.

- **Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP):** Made available through the American Rescue Plan Act, the Emergency Rental Assistance program makes available \$25 billion to assist households that are unable to pay rent and utilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The funds are provided directly to States, U.S. Territories, local governments, and Indian tribes. Grantees use the funds to provide assistance to eligible households through existing or newly created rental assistance programs. <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/cares/emergency-rental-assistance-program>

- **Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF):** A program established in 2011 to rapidly re-house homeless Veteran families and prevent homelessness for those at risk due to a housing crisis. Funded through the VA. <https://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf/>

- **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF):** Money set aside to give assistance to families in danger of becoming homeless. This money can be used for such things as back rental or utility payments, deposits, rent and utilities. This money is specific for preventing homelessness. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/programs/tanf>

Appendix D: System Performance

Measure Data Trends

A critical aspect to understanding trends in homelessness data and measuring if the available interventions are working as intended, is to look at data overtime at the system level. Through six of the seven HUD established System Performance Measures, communities can now focus on viewing the local homeless response as a coordinated system of homeless assistance options as opposed to homeless assistance programs and funding sources that operate independently in a community. HUD requires communities to measure their performance as a coordinated system, in addition to analyzing performance by specific projects or project types. The CoC Lead Agency is responsible for overseeing the data collection, analysis and report submission to HUD for System Performance Measures. Keep in mind these are System Performance Measures, so this data includes Sarasota and Manatee County data, as that is the coverage area for the CoC.

When awarding annual HUD CoC funding, HUD does consider how well a CoC is doing with improving their System Performance Measures. The intent of relying on System Performance Measures are to encourage CoCs, in coordination with ESG Program recipients and all other homeless assistance stakeholders in the community, to regularly measure their progress in meeting the needs of people experiencing homelessness in their community and to report this progress to HUD.

CoCs also play an integral role in Consolidated Plan (Con Plan) jurisdictions' planning process. They are required to provide the jurisdiction with the information necessary to complete the Con Plan(s) for homeless assistance provided to persons within the CoC's geographic area that falls within the Con Plan jurisdiction's geographic area, including data on performance measures. HUD will use the system-level performance information as a competitive element in its annual CoC Program Competition and to gauge the state of the homeless response system nationally.

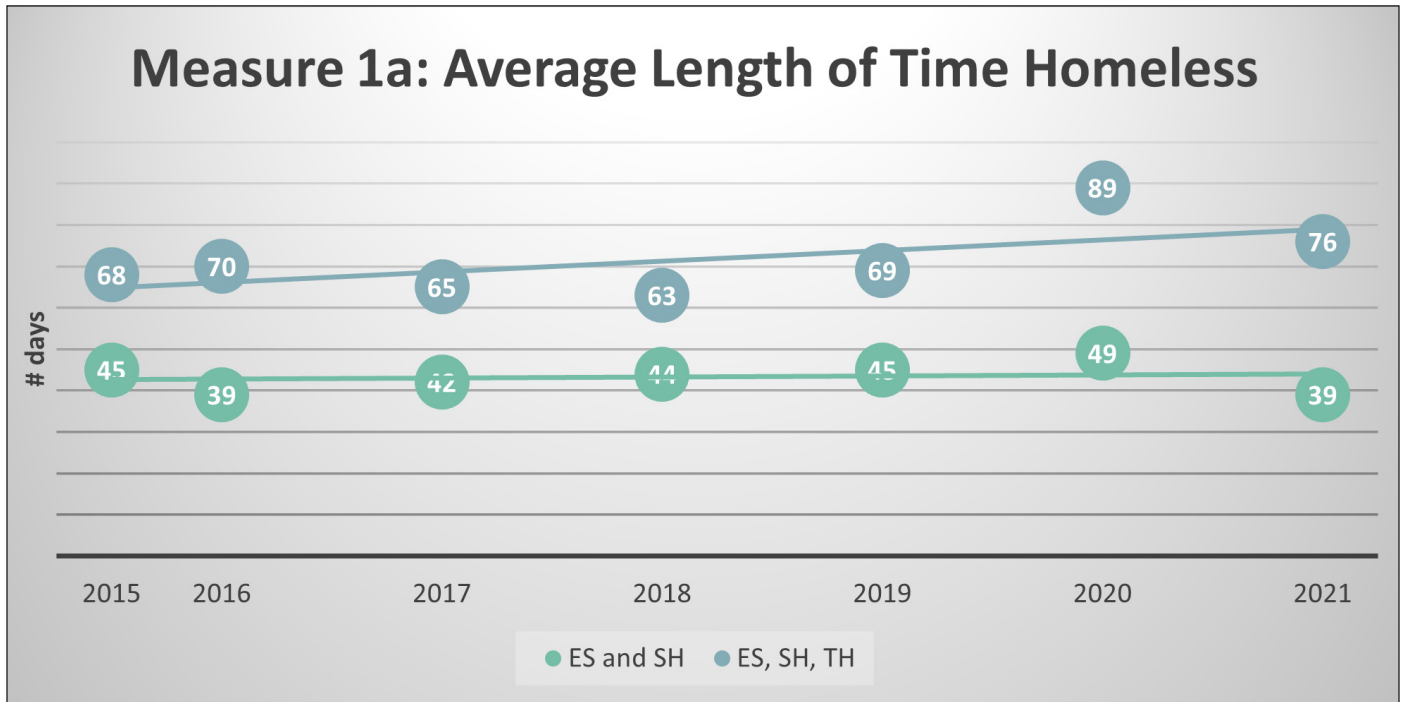
HUD formally started to mandate reporting on System Performance Measures in 2015 and as of this report we have data through 2021, totaling 7 years' worth of system data to adequately determine trends.

I. Overview of System Performance Measures

Below is a brief description of each System Performance Measure.

| |
|--|
| <p>Measure 1: Length of Stay (measures the total number of days a person is enrolled in Emergency Shelter, Safe Haven, and Transitional Housing cumulatively overtime based on HMIS project entry and exit data)</p> |
| <p>Measure 2: Returns to Homelessness (measures the percentage of those who exit the homelessness system to permanent housing and return to the homelessness system of care within 6, 12 and 24 months of their successful exit, also based on HMIS project entry and exit data)</p> |
| <p>Measure 3: HMIS Counts (looks at PIT counts and Annual HMIS counts of persons active in the HMIS system who are literally homeless in emergency shelter, safe havens, and transitional housing)</p> |
| <p>Measure 4: Increased Total Income (looks at HUD CoC funded project participants who leave and stay in programs who have increased their income)</p> |
| <p>Measure 5: First Time Homeless (looks at those presenting as homeless in HMIS in homeless specific projects who have never been served or had an entry in HMIS for the past 2 years)</p> |
| <p>Measure 6: (Not Utilized by HUD at this time)</p> |
| <p>Measure 7: Successful Exits to and Retention of Permanent Housing (looks at percentage of successful client exits from street outreach programs, emergency shelter, safe haven, transitional housing, rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing and retention of permanent housing)</p> |

II. System Performance Measure Data Trends

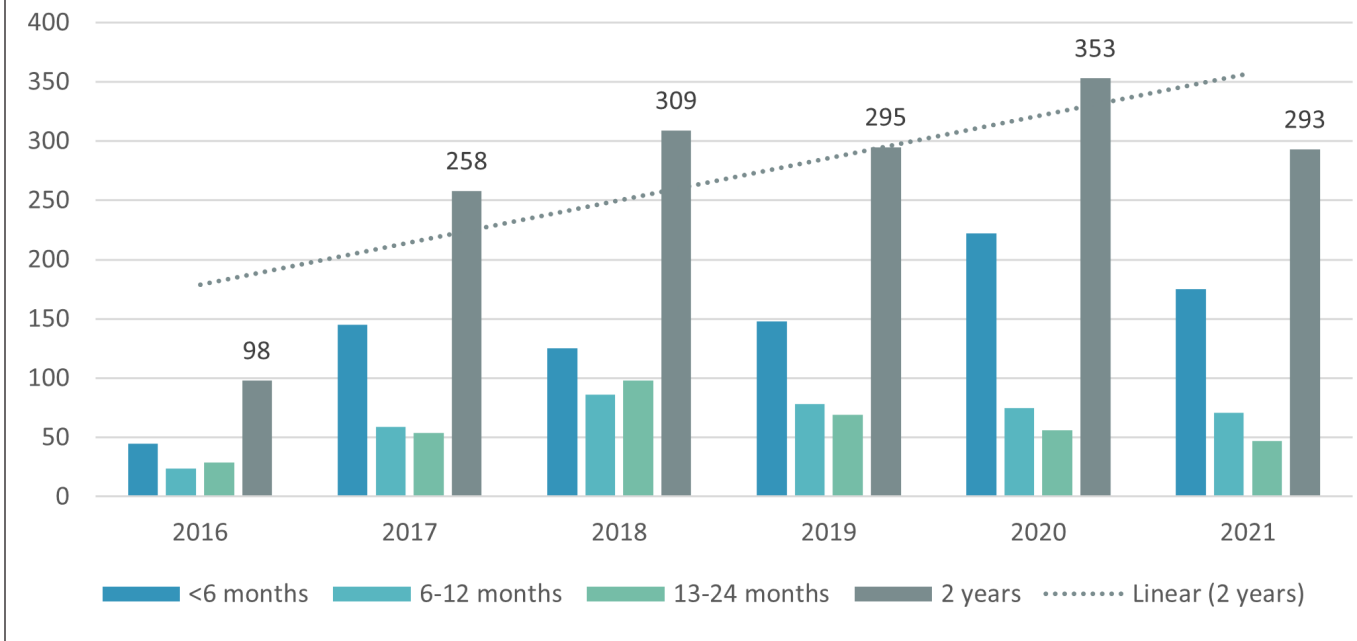


2015-2021 (Manatee and Sarasota Data)

All communities looking to improve outcomes for citizens experiencing homelessness are utilizing this measure to make sure that their investments and programming are reducing the number of days people experience homelessness on average. The CoC System Performance Measure data for this measure looks relatively good and in every year since 2015, the CoC performance as done markedly better than the national average among CoCs. In 2020 the national average for this measure was at an all-time high at 193 days, while the local CoC's was only 89 days. Factors that can drastically impact this measure include;

1. Poor data quality lacking client and program exit data showing inaccurately long stays in shelter or transitional housing programs
2. Exceptional long stays in shelter and transitional housing programs due to lack of housing focused practices
3. Lack of affordable housing and PSH programming to have clients in shelter and transitional programs move on to permanent housing
4. Lack of PSH programming and units for chronically the homeless population residing in shelters. CoCs are starting to set targets for the amount of days on average someone should experience homelessness.

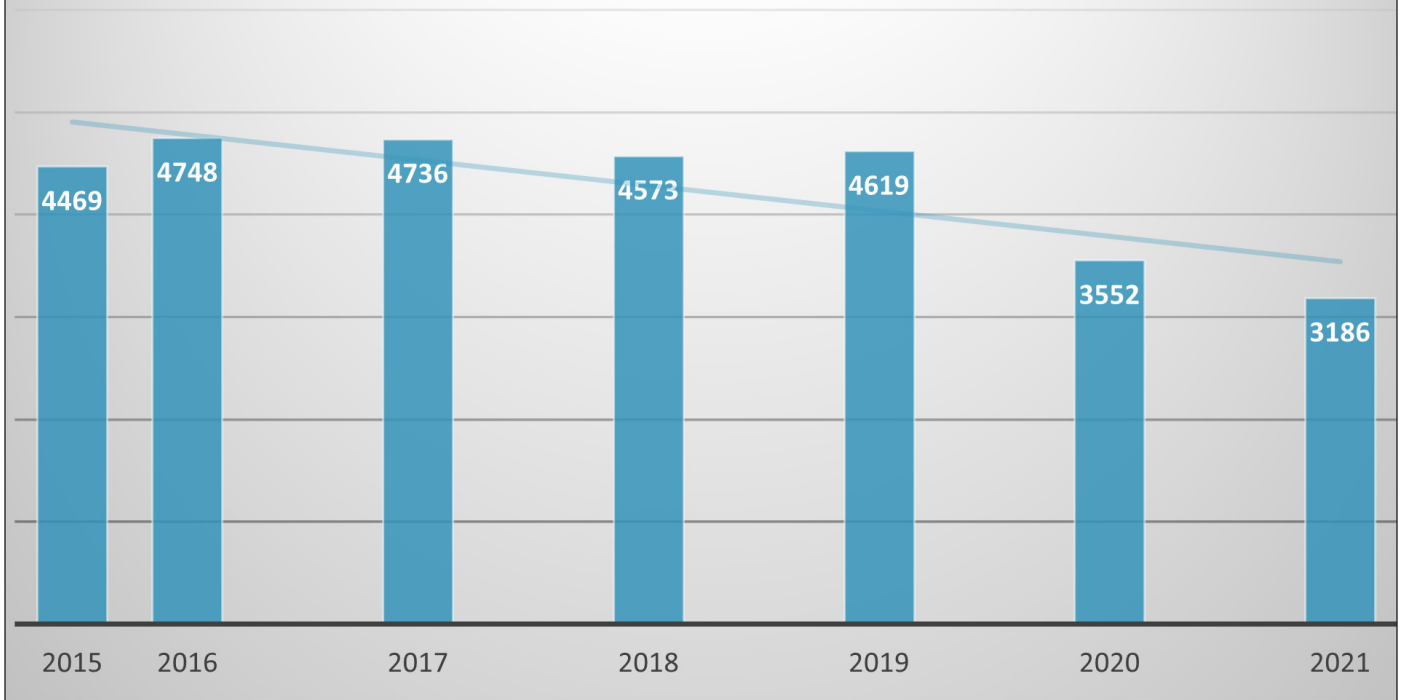
Measure 2: Returns to Homelessness



Often, despite a system's best efforts, households that struggle with poverty, underemployment and rising rental markets, face homelessness more than once in their lives. Returns to the Homelessness System of Care should be rare and action should be taken to avoid returns to homelessness through programs like diversion, prevention, eviction prevention, and long-term subsidies. In 2021 the national average for returns to homelessness within 6 months of a permanent housing exit were 9%, compared to the local rate of 15%. Similarly, looking at a longer period of time (24 month) from exit to permanent housing from homelessness we see that the local CoC has a 25% return rate, while the national average is only 18%. This is a measure most communities look at overtime to see if those exiting the homelessness system of care are able to sustain their permanent housing placements. There are a few strategies that can help improve this measure and reduce the number of returns to homelessness for the Manatee/Sarasota region, including;

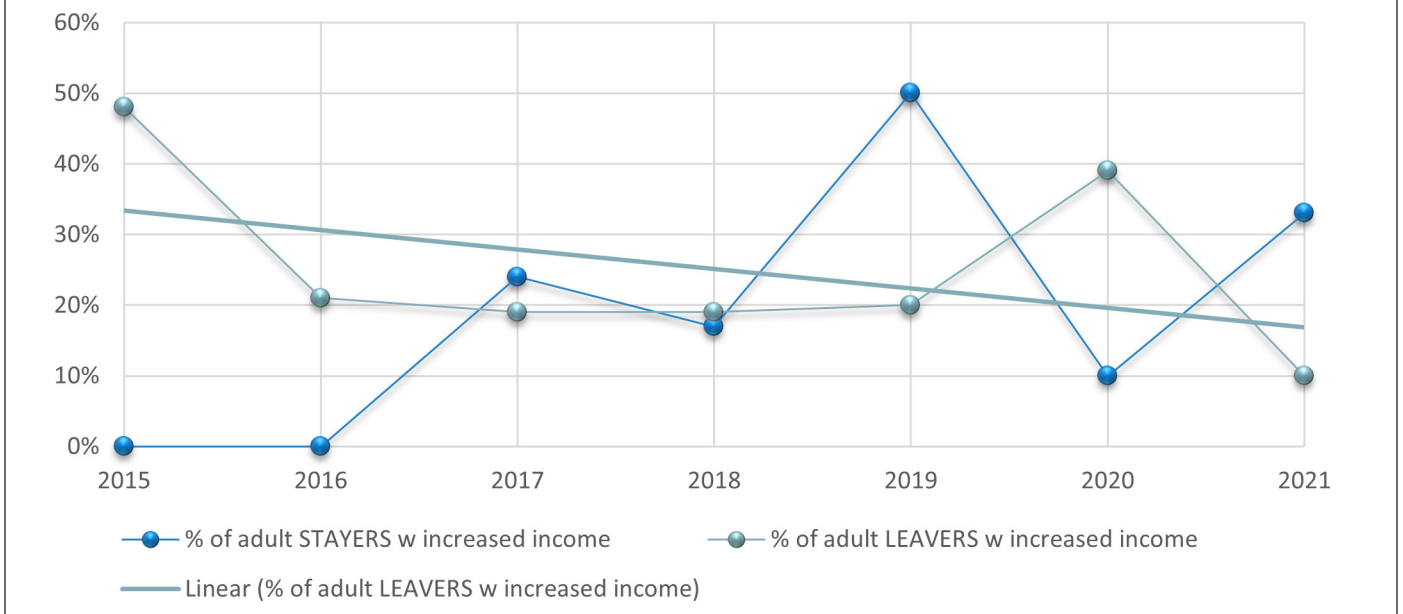
- 1) Increased sustainable income through SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) processors (more explanation is provided under analysis of Measure 4 on this recommendation)
- 2) Increased follow-up to those exiting to permanent housing every 3 months through the 2 years following their exit
- 3) Targeting prevention resources for those that have previous experience with homelessness
- 4) Increased long-term rental subsidies
- 5) Access to Permanent Supportive Housing programming and Units

Measure 3.2 Annual HMIS Count Sheltered



Measure 3.2 looks at all people who have had a minimum of one night stay in emergency shelter as well as transitional housing over a 12 month period. The trend here indicates fewer people being served through the shelter and transitional housing programs over time. This does not necessarily mean that homelessness is decreasing though.

Measure 4.3 and 4.6 Adult System LEAVERS and STAYERS with Increased Income

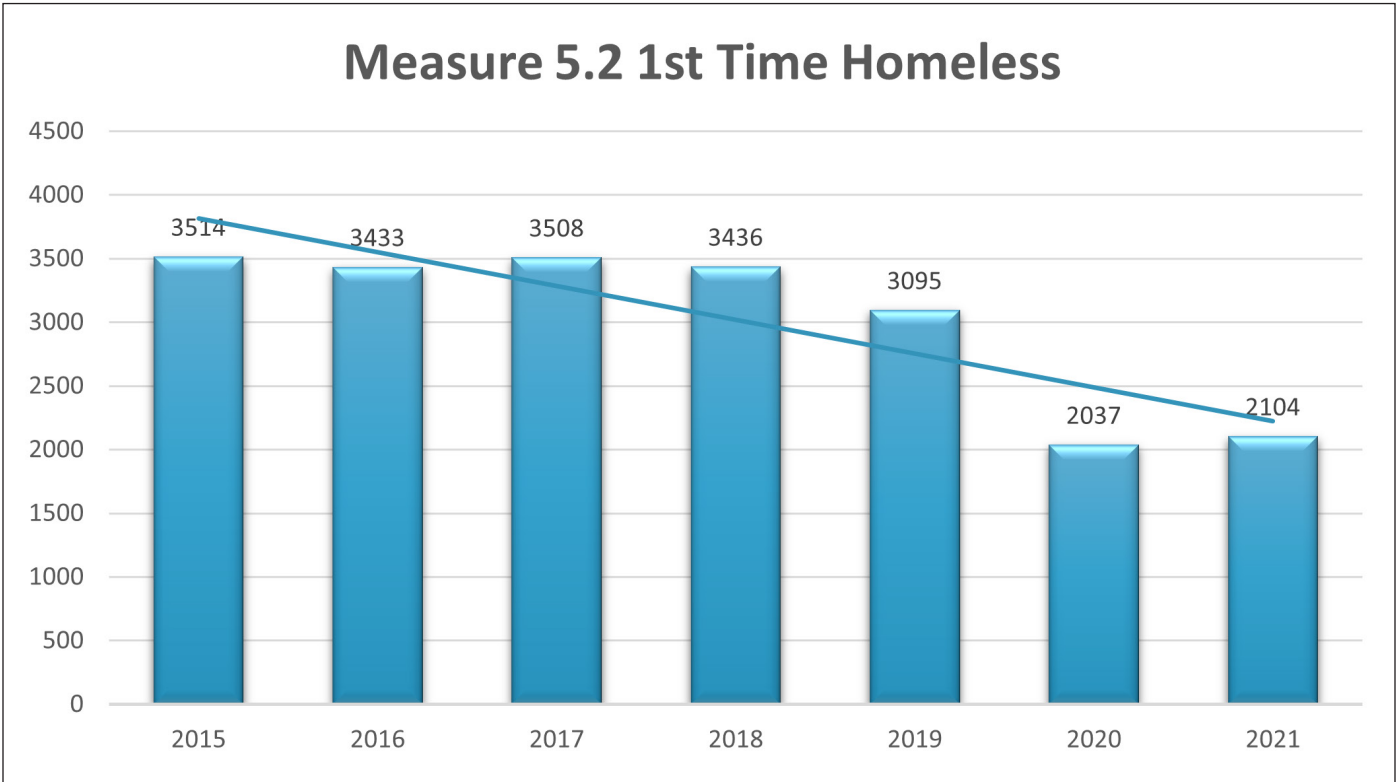


Measure 4 can be a key indicator in how successful households will be with sustaining their permanent housing long term. If households are not increasing their income while they are in the homeless system of care, their likelihood of sustaining housing in an increasing rental market, decrease. This measure looks at two groups, those leaving the system, called LEAVERS, and those staying in the system, called STAYERS. Ideally you want to see increases in income in both leavers and stayers but it is especially critical for those leaving the system and striving to make it on their own.

You can see in the graph above the general trend is declining in the percentage of households exiting CoC funded programs who also have increased income. Addressing homelessness efficiently and ensuring long term sustainability would show a trend of increasing income among most households exiting these programs. One of the most effective ways to increase this measure and improve housing sustainability outcomes long term is to adopt system wide the implementation of SOAR Processors. SOAR stands for SSI/SSID Outreach, Access, and Recovery which is a program seeking to end homelessness through increased access to SSI/SSDI income supports. As indicated throughout this report, much of the homeless population is living with a disability that may make them eligible to receive SSI/SSDI benefits so they have dependable monthly income. SOAR is a way to fast track application specifically for people facing homelessness, which means approval for benefits can happen within 3-4 months, rather than 24+ months for the regular, not homeless specific fast track.

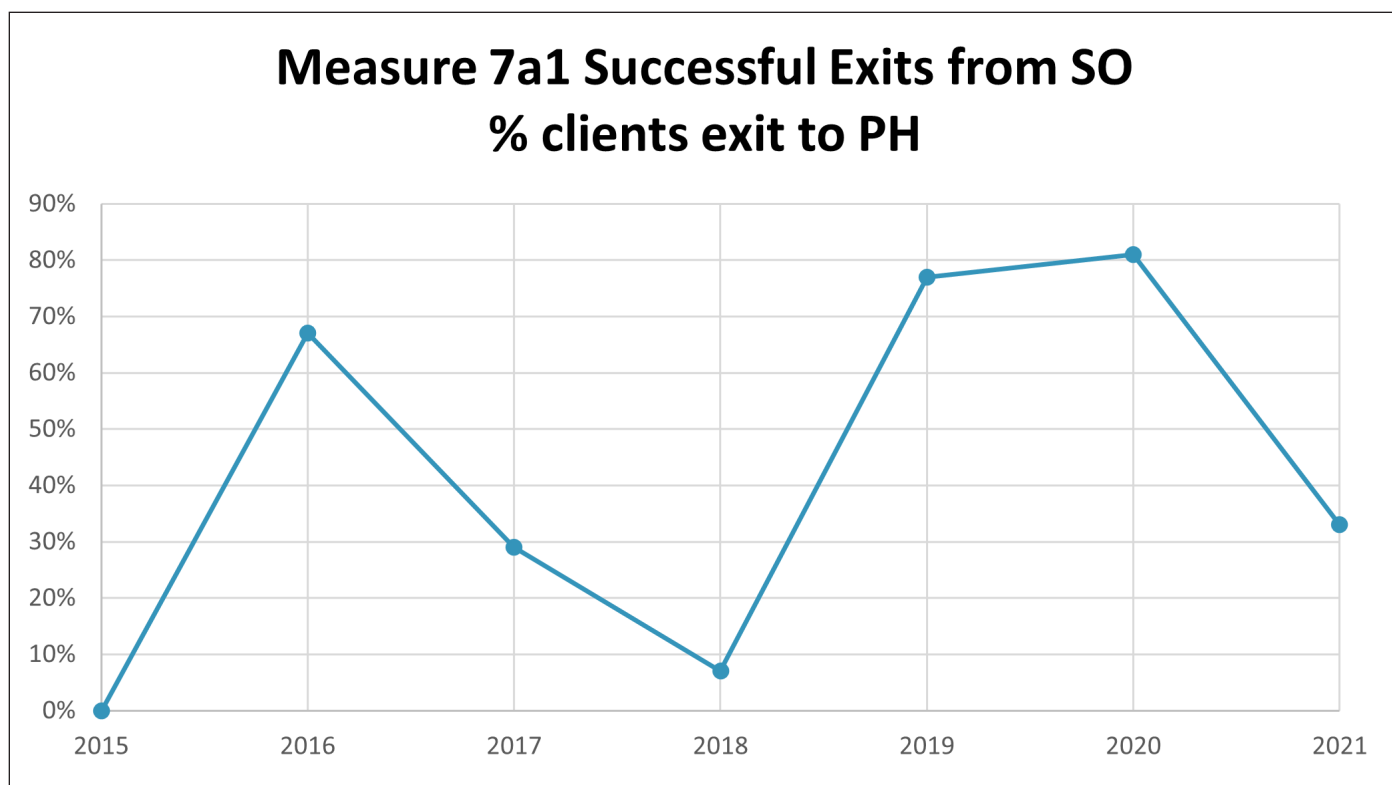
There is free online resources to train staff to be a SOAR Processor through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. There is a self-paced course inclusive of mock application feedback also available through SAMHSA Home | SOAR Works! (samhsa.gov)

As of 2021 data, only 10% of those leaving HUD CoC funded programs had recorded increases in income, while the national average among CoCs was 33%. FHC encourages communities to adopt aggressive goals for these measures in order to surpass the national average of 33% which will ensure less returns to homelessness and longer terms of independence in permanent housing.



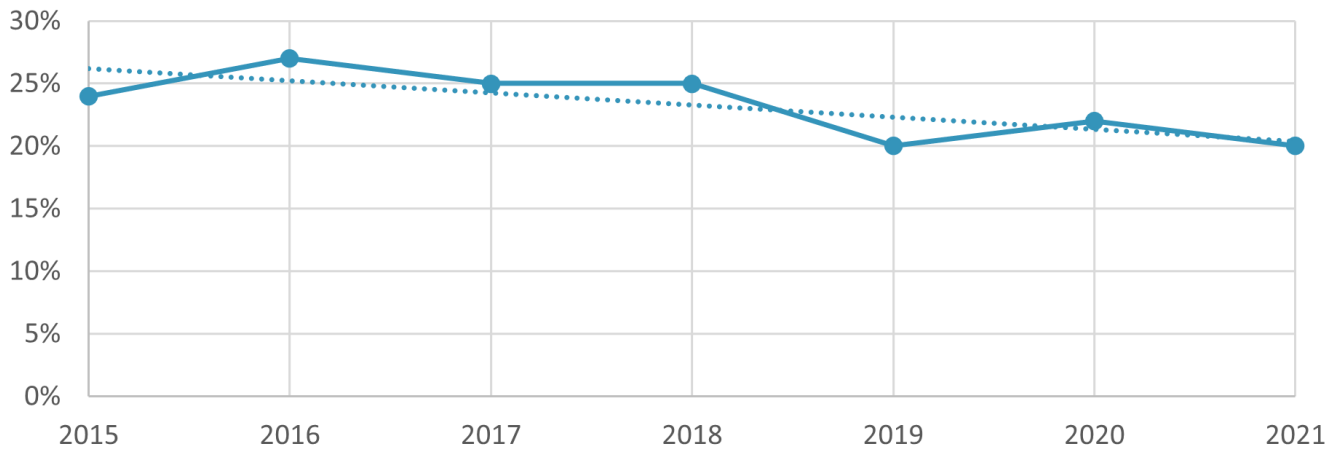
Preventing homelessness is the most effective intervention when addressing homelessness, it is the most economical option and does not include the additional trauma associated with the experience of homelessness. We must first solve homelessness for our citizens currently in this experience and then focus our efforts to preventing homelessness however and whenever possible to manage the inflow of people utilizing homelessness services and assistance. During 2020 and 2021 many CoCs saw a drop in rates of first-time homelessness because there were so many eviction prevention policies and assistance programs available as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The concern here is that for 2022 forward we predict an increase in 1st time homelessness because many of the Covid-19 prevention resources and eviction moratoria are no longer available and rental markets are higher than ever. The best way to continue with the decreasing trend of 1st time homelessness is through heavy investments in the following;

- 1) Eviction Prevention and Homeless Prevention Programing
- 2) Legal Assistance for Eviction and Right to Council Tenant Protections
- 3) Long term rental subsidies like voucher programs



CoC Systems that are truly housing focused across all programing see very high rates of permanent housing placement directly from programs like street outreach. Based on the data provided through Measure 7a1, it does not look as though there have been targeted approaches to expanding outreach with a focus on housing, if this were the case a trend in an upward direction would be illustrated. In Manatee County specifically, there are very few outreach programs and they do not seem to be well coordinated and share common goals of housing. Low performance in this area can also be an indicator that service providers need to improve coordination between project types, for example there should be close collaboration between outreach programs and housing programs like rapid rehousing. One of the program types that have the biggest impact on this measure is access to permanent supportive housing programing and units, of which currently, Manatee County has none. Using a Housing First approach with access to permanent supportive housing combined with housing focused outreach is what is needed to improve this measure.

Measure 7b.1 Exits to PH from ES, TH, RRH



Measure 7b1 shows us what percentage of the clientele participating in Emergency Shelter, Transitional and Rapid Rehousing programming are exiting to permanent housing. You will notice there is a declining trend here which can be attributed to a few factors specific to the dynamic in Manatee County. The number one factor impacting this measure is access to affordable housing and having designated units for people exiting the homeless service system. Those exiting homelessness are competing for housing with the rest of the community members at large, but often have additional and multiple barriers like past evictions and low incomes that prevent them from attaining the minimal affordable housing units that might be available. Increasing the affordable housing stock in general would improve this measure, but making sure there are reserved set aside homeless specific units for shelter, transitional housing and rapid rehousing providers to access directly for their clientele would make the most significant impact.

A support that can be beneficial after there is significant investment in production of affordable housing is the funding of a system level rental unit identification and landlord liaison role to help identify properties and landlords willing to accept vouchers, subsidies and clients exiting homelessness with affordable units. A key tool for a successful Landlord Liaison will be simultaneously setting up an Landlord Risk Mitigation Pool of funds that landlords can access in case of damage to their unit. This program for landlords could also fund sign-on bonuses for the landlord if they are willing to accept a tenant with homeless, criminal, eviction, and/or low-income histories. Through the pandemic landlord incentives were introduced into the homeless service system and sign-on bonuses as well as triple deposits were common occurrences in getting landlords to agree wot work with this population.

III. Aligning Outcome and Performance Goals

It is common for each funder to have their own set of outcomes and performance goals for activities that are funded across many partners. This should change. Funders need to align their outcome and performance goals so they can accurately measure meaningful impact and return on investment. Fortunately, homeless services and assistance programs can easily be aligned with CoC and HUD system performance measures. Focusing on permanent housing outcomes for all programming is incredibly important since that is the end goal to have most people move from their experience of homelessness to permanent housing. FHC recommends that local governments funding homelessness services work closely with their CoC to see what goals the CoC has set for Length of Time Homeless, Returns to Homelessness, Increased Total Income, First Time Homeless, and most importantly, Successful Exits to and Retention of Permanent Housing. Together, the CoC network of providers, funders and administrators should set shared goals for system performances measures and enforce progress towards the goals through measurement and contract language. One of the added benefits to adopting the System Performance Measures as outcomes is that the CoC HMIS system is already set up to capture and report this data, making this an excellent place to start in every community.



1311 N. Paul Russell Road, B-201
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Phone | 850.878.4219
Website | FLHousing.org

