Public Policy Associates

Findings from the System Evaluation of Homeless Solutions for Boulder County

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Public Policy Associates

Public Policy Associates is a public policy research, development, and evaluation firm headquartered in Lansing, Michigan. We serve clients in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors at the national, state, and local levels by conducting research, analysis, and evaluation that supports informed strategic decision-making.

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Background

In 2024 Public Policy Associates (PPA) was contracted by Homeless Solutions for Boulder County (HSBC) to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the HSBC service system. The goal of the evaluation was to gain a holistic understanding of the system's assets and challenges. This evaluation used a mixed methods approach to achieve a rich understanding of both the snapshot of quantitative homelessness data, as well as the qualitative and contextual reality of people experiencing homelessness in Boulder County and the organizations that serve them. This document summarizes the findings of that evaluation and offers recommendations for strengthening HSBC and homeless services in the county.

HSBC is an innovative approach to homelessness that involves multiple government entities (including Boulder County, the City of Boulder, the City of Longmont), the nonprofits working to impact homelessness, and other external partners. The system employs a Housing First approach to ensure that efforts are low barrier and housing is accessed quickly. HSBC efforts are coordinated by two primary governing bodies: (1) an *Executive Board* consisting of government officials whose organizations invest in the homeless services system; and (2) a *Policy Implementation Group* that is comprised of government leaders responsible for ongoing administration of the larger effort. In addition, a set of workgroups collaborate on focused work and include service providers and other stakeholders to further support broad-based collaboration. Finally, an internally-managed evaluation with ongoing data collection and public facing dashboard help support data-driven decision making.

CONTEXT

The 2022 United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) *All In* plan (Interagency Council, 2022) provided a helpful framing for this evaluation. The plan is built around six pillars: three foundations (equity, data and evidence, and collaboration) and three solutions (housing and support, crisis response, and prevention). The foundations are reflected in the set of research questions (Table 1) pursued in this evaluation through both the qualitative and quantitative analyses, and the solutions shaped which HSBC programs and services to include in the evaluation.

TABLE 1. EVALUATION RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.	What are key outcome findings related to service efforts? Which services appear to be most important for producing outcomes?
2.	What are strengths and challenges of the structure and approach of the HSBC service system and collaborative management?
3.	What are characteristics of an effective systems approach that mitigates the risk that partners will make resource and programming decisions not aligned with system priorities?
4.	What service capacity needs or gaps are identified and how might these be addressed?

5. What barriers prevent or decrease the likelihood that individuals experiencing homelessness will engage in system services. What are effective solutions that have been used to remove such barriers or increase the likelihood of engagement?

6. What are recommendations for strengthening the overall effort to improve outcomes including the addition of other best practices?

Through collaboration with representatives of HSBC, it was determined that this evaluation should focus primarily on housing and support, and crisis response. Prevention efforts go well beyond the scope of the homeless service system but are a critical to actually addressing homelessness. In addition, HSBC is tasked with supporting only single adults in moving out of homelessness and into housing in the most efficient ways possible. Therefore, this evaluation will be focused on programs for single adults only, but where relevant we will consider the ways that this focus may create barriers to reducing homelessness overall or the functioning of the broader homeless service system.

HSBC is also unique in that it was created to support coordination at a more granular level than the Metro Denver Homelessness Initiative continuum of care (CoC) within which Boulder County sits. As a regional service system that functions at a sub-CoC level, it is nimbler and more adaptable to local needs. However, the approach has limitations given that CoCs are the unit of governance and focus at the Federal level. First, the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) used in the county is managed at the CoC level. HSBC has little control over the data collected, data quality, or how data collection partners are trained. Hence, a patchwork of data systems with limited interoperability are used throughout the HSBC service system. Second, HSBC is not subject to the federal statutory requirements for its governance structure in the same way as a CoC. This can provide flexibility and adaptability but also severely limits its pool of potential peers.

PROCESS

This evaluation included the following three key activities: (1) quantitative analysis of at least two years of homelessness data, including an analysis of funding data from those years; (2) gathering qualitative data from key stakeholders and analyzing it for themes and insights; and (3) literature review to identify best practices, evaluate evidence for proposed interventions, and attempt to compare HSBC to like entities.

The quantitative analysis included data from 2022 and 2023 drawn from the patchwork of data systems within Boulder County, including CommunityConnects, BTHERE, diversion tracking data, and HMIS findings. These analyses not only provided a snapshot of the population experiencing homelessness but also provided insights into the gaps and limitations of HSBC's current data systems. A detailed summary of the quantitative findings can be found in Appendix A.

Qualitative data was gathered using three different modes of collection from three key stakeholder groups: (1) interviews with governing bodies; (2) roundtables with system partners and service

providers; and (3) focus groups with people experiencing homelessness. The governing body interviews provided insights into the dynamics of the HSBC collaborative at a systems level. The roundtables informed evaluators' understanding of the dynamics of HSBC's collaborative efforts with regard to service provision and system function. Finally, the focus groups gathered perspectives and insights from people with lived experience of homelessness in Boulder County. A detailed summary of the qualitative findings can be found in Appendix B.

Finally, the evaluation consulted the existing literature to identify relevant best practices and evaluate the evidence for a range of potential interventions. These findings are particularly informative for the recommendations provided. The research team also sought like organizations or peers to use in providing context, benchmarks, or relevant comparisons to better evaluate HSBC. Unfortunately, given that HSBC functions at the sub-CoC level, the evaluation was unable to identify any true peers to inform this evaluation or inspire recommendations. In addition, existing roadmaps and best practices are focused at the CoC level as is the research in this field. A summary of the literature that was originally provided as an interim report to HSBC during the course of this evaluation and has been finalized for this report can be found in Appendix C.

Key Findings and Recommendations

The findings of this evaluation affirm HSBC's approach, specifically the housing first orientation, collaboration focus, commitment to data-driven decision making, and appreciation for the importance of addressing equity barriers. All of these were endorsed by feedback received during qualitative data collection and confirmed by best-practices in the literature. However, despite this finding and the evident commitment by the HSBC collaborative to end homelessness in the county, the quantitative analysis revealed that it remains a critical issue.

From 2022-2023 homelessness increased more rapidly at the state, CoC, and Boulder County levels than nationwide.[1] The significant growth in homelessness observed across Point-In-Time (PIT), HMIS, and Connects data indicates an urgent need to expand support services for people at risk of homelessness, as well as to increase permanent housing solutions. Inflows into homelessness highlight broader systemic challenges, including unaffordable housing, job market volatility, and regional migration patterns. Understanding these inflows is critical for designing preventive strategies and ensuring that local services can adequately respond to the growing demand.

The rising number of people experiencing homelessness in Boulder County is fueled by two primary factors, the significant growth in first-time homelessness and the continued influx of individuals from outside the county. The large proportion of people accessing Connects who are experiencing homelessness for the first time highlights the need for targeted prevention efforts, including early intervention and support services. Specific subpopulations, such as older adults, have seen growth, suggesting the need for interventions tailored to their specific needs. In addition, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) people are overrepresented in the population of people experiencing homelessness, raising questions about potential gaps in service access or unmet needs.

HSBC's crisis services—including emergency shelter, coordinated entry, and the BTHERE outreach program—appear to have been able to adapt and serve the growing population. However, the growth in permanent housing did not keep pace with the rapid increase in people experiencing homelessness between 2022 and 2023. This is corroborated by the findings from the funding analysis, which saw an overall increase of 22% in funding from 2022-2023, but the increase was greater for crisis response than housing and support (27% and 17% respectively). The rest of this document focuses on those recommendations identified by this evaluation for HSBC to consider as it sets its strategy for the future.

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[1] Publicly released Point-In-Time data from 2024 indicate this may have changed, at least for Boulder County. However, because the PIT is only a snapshot of homelessness on a single night with numerous variables that could result in an inaccurate count, and this evaluation only had access to complete data for the years 2022-2023 that cannot be explored further in this report.

OPTIMIZE DATA SYSTEMS

Recommendation: Establish interoperability between HMIS and Connects data systems, while ensuring that the quality of data in both systems is reliable.

HSBC's commitment to data-driven decision-making is a cornerstone of its approach, setting it apart as a leader in the region. However, while HSBC's data collection efforts have evolved to meet system needs through a focus on the Connects data system, this system does not currently connect with the larger HMIS data system that is managed through the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI), the CoC within which HSBC sits. The reason for this disconnect appears to be two-fold. First, when HSBC was created in 2017 there was a desire to be able to tailor its data collection efforts to include fields most locally relevant. Second, the quality and cleanliness of the data coming from the Connects and HMIS systems are not the same.

Regardless of the cause, the disconnect between data systems makes tracking an individual's experience with homelessness over time and across geographic shifts nearly impossible. The ability to follow a client's trajectory and service utilization is critical to inform efforts to prevent first-time homelessness and address chronic homelessness. For instance, data on the length of time individuals spend in various stages of homelessness, the types of services they access, and the factors contributing to their housing instability can provide valuable insights for program development and resource allocation. This is especially relevant in Boulder County, where a significant proportion of homeless in the county is driven by inflows from other geographic regions. Effective data integration would enable HSBC to:

- Track a client's progress over time and across geographical boundaries and identify patterns of service utilization.
- Identify and address gaps in service provision emerging trends in homelessness.
- Measure the effectiveness of different interventions and tailor programs to specific needs.
- Allocate resources more strategically based on data-driven insights.

Without the connection to high quality HMIS data, HSBC is limited in its ability to identify, or (even better) predict, inflows, and outflows to the unhoused population. Improving data sharing between the Connects and HMIS systems is also essential for developing a comprehensive view of individual needs and service utilization. A comprehensive data system that connects these crucial data points will enable HSBC to more effectively target interventions, evaluate program effectiveness and nimbly allocate resources where they are most impactful.

PRIORITIZE EQUITY AND ADDRESS DISPARITIES

Recommendation: Conduct a racial disparity analysis on a quarterly basis to inform strategies.

Recommendation: Meaningfully engage people with lived experience of homelessness in decision-making processes.

> **Recommendation:** Review current data systems with an equity lens to incorporate more inclusive demographic options.
>
> **Recommendation:** Consider how overlapping populations (e.g., transition-aged youth, parents who lose or regain custody, domestic violence survivors without children, etc.) could best be served in the currently siloed system.

The research consistently highlights the overrepresentation of marginalized communities, specifically BIPOC individuals, within the homeless population, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions and culturally competent services. This disparity reflects the systemic inequities and discriminatory practices that disproportionately impact these communities, contributing to their vulnerability to homelessness. Roundtable participants, focus groups, and federal guidance all stress the need to develop programs tailored to the unique needs of diverse communities. This includes:

- Culturally relevant services that respect and respond to the specific cultural values and beliefs of different communities. For example, providing services in multiple languages, incorporating traditional healing practices, or collaborating with community leaders to ensure that programs are accessible and appropriate for diverse cultural groups.
- Trauma-informed care that recognizes the prevalence of trauma among individuals experiencing homelessness, particularly those from marginalized communities. This approach emphasizes creating a safe and supportive environment that minimizes re-traumatization and promotes healing.
- Addressing the specific barriers and needs of subpopulations within marginalized communities, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and questioning (LGBTIQ) identified people; youth; individuals with disabilities; or veterans. Recognizing that intersectionality plays a significant role in shaping experiences of homelessness and tailoring services accordingly is essential.
- Ensuring equitable distribution of resources to address disparities in service provision.

There was a general sense from all the groups included in the qualitative analysis (governing bodies, service providers and people experiencing or with lived experience of homelessness) that services are provided equitably. However, they struggled to point to actual evidence of equity. This suggests that an added focus on measuring for equity specifically would be beneficial. Regular racial disparity analyses would help ensure that inequities linked to changing trends in system-wide performance are quickly addressed. These could include a comparison of the demographic composition of people experiencing homelessness with the county's population overall, an analysis of disparities in accessing services, and an analysis of homeless system outcomes across demographic groups. It may also be helpful to collect and monitor data on the demographics of homeless service staff including lived experience of homelessness. Meaningful engagement of people with lived experience of homelessness in decision-making processes is critical for ensuring that services are tailored to community needs. This involves:

- Including individuals with lived experience on HSBC's board of directors, advisory committees, and workgroups.
- Creating opportunities for individuals experiencing homelessness to provide feedback on services and programs.
- Supporting the development of peer-led initiatives.

A key recommendation arising from the qualitative analysis is the need to review and enhance HSBC's data systems to incorporate more inclusive demographic options. This improvement will enable a deeper understanding of the diverse needs within the homeless population and support more targeted and equitable resource allocation. For example, collecting data on sexual orientation, gender identity, disability status, and language proficiency can provide valuable insights into the needs of specific groups and inform the development of tailored services.

Finally, many focus group participants felt the system's processes for prioritization within the unhoused population was biased. This appears to at least in part be driven by arbitrary silos between the populations served by HSBC versus those served by another system. Reassessment of the vulnerability criteria and prioritization processes used by HSBC could uncover potential biases that may disadvantage certain populations and increase equitable access to services. It is also worth revisiting whether the homeless service system would be more effective if all of the populations, including single adults, could be served by one holistic system.

INCREASE COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT

Recommendation: Work to shift the currently hostile community climate to people experiencing homelessness through public education.

Public education campaigns are essential to combating the stigma surrounding homelessness and promoting broader community support for effective solutions. Negative perceptions and stereotypes about individuals experiencing homelessness can create barriers to accessing services and housing. The existing literature and findings from this evaluation research emphasize the need to:

- **Dispel myths about homelessness.** This involves educating the public about the complex factors contributing to homelessness, challenging stereotypes about laziness or personal failings, and highlighting the systemic issues that contribute to housing instability.
- **Foster empathy and understanding**. Sharing the stories of individuals experiencing homelessness can humanize the issue and foster greater understanding and compassion. Providing opportunities for community members to interact with and learn from individuals with lived experience can help break down barriers and promote a more inclusive and supportive community.
- **Highlight the human stories behind the statistics**. Homelessness is not just a statistic; it represents real individuals with unique stories and challenges. By sharing these stories, HSBC can connect with the community on a human level, fostering empathy and understanding.

Providing platforms for individuals experiencing homelessness to share their stories and advocate for their needs at public forums can raise awareness, humanize the issue, and empower those with lived experience to shape solutions. This may involve:

- Hosting community forums where individuals experiencing homelessness can share their stories and perspectives.
- Supporting the development of storytelling projects, such as documentaries or photo exhibitions, that showcase the realities of homelessness.
- Encouraging individuals with lived experience to speak at city council meetings, community events, and other public forums.

HOUSING AND SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Expand Housing Options: A Multi-Pronged Approach

Recommendation: Continue to prioritize affordable housing in service of the housing first approach.

Recommendation: Ensure funding for permanent supportive housing is sustainable and seek out opportunities to leverage the collaborative to operate efficiently.

Recommendation: HSBC should be cautious when considering non-traditional alternatives, which frequently have significant drawbacks.

Increasing the supply of affordable housing is fundamental to mitigating the homelessness crisis in Boulder County. The current housing market, characterized by high costs and low vacancy rates, exacerbates the challenges of addressing homelessness. For many the best chance at exiting homelessness long term includes long-lasting support services. Permanent supportive housing (PSH) is an effective model for addressing homelessness, but its success relies heavily on sufficient and sustained funding. Securing these funds can be challenging due to the complex and fragmented nature of the housing finance system. Sustained investments in the daily operating costs of PSH and the provision of high-quality supportive services are crucial for the long-term success of these programs. Without adequate funding, PSH programs face negative consequences such as increased rent arrears, move-outs, and a higher risk of residents returning to homelessness.

The cost of operating a PSH program can vary depending on several factors, including location and the specific populations served. Properties situated in urban areas and those accommodating diverse homeless populations, such as transitional age youth, veterans, and domestic violence survivors, typically incur higher costs compared to those in suburban areas or those serving a more homogenous population. This disparity underscores the fact that the level of care provided is a major determinant of overall program cost. However, even with these variations, larger PSH buildings have the potential to achieve cost efficiencies, while setting aside units within a property for specific populations can lead to increased expenses.

Ensuring that residents are placed in housing that meets their needs is paramount, but the reliance on coordinated entry systems can present significant challenges. When units remain vacant for extended periods because of difficulties in matching residents to suitable housing, valuable resources are wasted. Furthermore, results from the qualitative portion of this evaluation indicate that residents are more inclined to engage with support services when they are housed in buildings with a greater presence of on-site staff and readily available resources. This finding emphasizes the importance of investing in both adequate staffing and physical resources to optimize the effectiveness of PSH programs.

Focus group participants recommended utilizing unused land around Boulder and Longmont to develop affordable housing and highlighted the opportunity for innovative solutions. Respondents suggested a range of non-traditional housing models to expand access to safe, stable, and affordable housing options. The research team reviewed existing evidence in the literature to evaluate the viability of two commonly cited non-traditional solutions to expanding affordable housing stock: conversion of existing structures and tiny home villages. Boulder County has a number of vacant buildings—including former schools, hospitals, and office spaces—that could be repurposed into affordable housing units. Adaptive reuse projects can revitalize underutilized properties while creating much-needed housing. The majority of existing literature on repurposing strategies is focused on hotel/motel conversions.

Hotel or motel conversions involve developing former guest rooms into small, private apartments. These apartments offer tenants a place to safely keep their belongings and more permanence than a shelter or encampment. Of the approaches reviewed, the viability of hotel/motel conversions is the most context dependent. It relies heavily on the number of vacant structures in the community and the ability to fund conversions, cited by the National Association of Realtors Research group as costing between $25,000-$50,000 per converted room at a full-service hotel (Realtors, 2021). During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, this strategy was seen as incredibly effective in the city at reducing shelter intensity and providing a safe, clean space for residents. Albuquerque approached the topic by first developing "efficiency apartments" for single people and childless couples (Albuquerque, 2024). It is recommended that HSBC review the individual case studies cited throughout this literature before pursuing this approach. The stock of viable properties in the county is also an important factor when weighing the potential cost-effectiveness of this type of program and therefore it may not be suitable for HSBC due to an already tight property market and property destruction due to wildfire.

In recent years the concept of tiny homes as a solution to homelessness has gained popularity, especially in areas with limited affordable housing. However, it is important to approach this idea with caution and ensure that it aligns with the ultimate goal of ending homelessness through permanent, stable housing and appropriate support (Interagency Council, 2016). Tiny home villages are clusters of small (400 or fewer square feet) dwellings intended to provide those experiencing homelessness temporary shelter in a place that provides privacy and storage. Local units of government may choose to establish tiny home villages in partnership with local nonprofits or other service organizations. While tiny homes may seem like a quick fix, they should not be considered a replacement for permanent housing solutions.

Communities exploring tiny homes should prioritize creating environments that allow individuals to establish long-term connections and thrive, rather than simply providing temporary shelter. USICH recommends embedding studies of the appropriateness of tiny home villages within a broader community plan and approaching the solution with caution (Interagency Council, 2016). The limited published information on tiny home villages suggested that they offer a housing solution that is generally well received by the people living there as well as their neighbors, with one study finding reports of neighborhood concerns reducing over time. This careful planning is especially warranted in more diverse communities, as the Portland-based peer-reviewed study suggested racial disparities in the success of the intervention regarding both participation and reported feelings of belonging (Ferry, 2022).

The literature reviewed also emphasizes the importance of incentivizing landlord participation in housing voucher programs through strategies like tax breaks, direct compensation, or streamlined application processes. Landlord engagement is crucial for expanding access to housing for individuals using vouchers. Current challenges, such as lengthy background checks, low reimbursement rates, and concerns about property damage, often deter landlords from participating in these programs. By addressing these barriers and providing incentives, HSBC can encourage more landlords to accept vouchers, increasing housing options for individuals experiencing homelessness (Sacramento, 2022) . The funding analysis indicates that HSBC does invest in this work, though the total investment fell between 2022 and 2023, indicating the need for renewed attention to this work.

Ensure Long-Term Stability Through Effective Retention

Recommendation: Continue to fund evidence-based housing retention services and regularly evaluate them for efficacy and to adapt them to changing local needs.

The goal is not simply to move people into housing but to provide the support an individual needs to maintain housing stability and prevent a return to homelessness. The funding analysis found that HSBC increased its focus on retention and peer supports between 2022 and 2023. This is a trend worth continuing as rental and utility assistance, counseling, and wraparound services are essential to prevent evictions and support long-term housing success.

Retention efforts focused on financial assistance include providing short-term rental subsidies, utility assistance, or security deposit assistance that can help individuals overcome financial barriers to housing stability. These may also include life skills training in areas such as budgeting, cooking, and household management to equip individuals with the skills they need to successfully manage their housing (Substance Abuse, 2010). Peer support programs, such as Tenant Councils, have also demonstrated effectiveness in supporting individuals who have exited homelessness. Tenant Councils are resident-led groups that provide a forum for residents of affordable housing to voice their concerns, share information, and advocate for their needs. Tenant Councils can empower residents, improve communication with management, and promote a sense of community. These programs offer peer-to-

peer support and advocacy, fostering a sense of community and belonging while reducing reliance on paid staff (Arnold, n.d.).

The literature also provided evidence-based examples of enhanced case management and mental health management approaches, such as Critical Time Intervention (CTI) and Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), in supporting individuals exiting homelessness. These approaches provide intensive, individualized support to address complex needs and facilitate successful transitions to permanent housing.

- CTI is a time-limited, evidence-based model that provides intensive case management support to individuals during periods of transition, such as moving out of homelessness into housing. CTI helps individuals build social support networks, connect to resources, and develop skills for independent living.
- ACT is an evidence-based model that provides comprehensive, community-based mental health services to individuals with serious mental illness. ACT teams, composed of mental health professionals, provide a range of services, including medication management, therapy, and support with daily living activities (Ponka, 2020).

CRISIS RESPONSE RECOMMENDATIONS

Alternate Sheltering Arrangements

Recommendation: Consider alternate shelter options cautiously to ensure they are the most appropriate option available and do not draw focus or resources away from long-term solutions.

Input from the qualitative data gathering expressed an interest in exploring alternate options, such as sanctioned camping communities and safe parking lots, to provide temporary shelter while reducing the risks associated with unsheltered homelessness. Sanctioned encampments provide designated areas where individuals can camp legally and safely, often with access to basic services, such as restrooms, showers, and trash disposal. Safe parking programs provide individuals living in their vehicles with a safe and legal place to park overnight, often with access to restrooms and other amenities. These initiatives may serve as a bridge to more permanent housing while addressing basic safety and hygiene needs. However, the evidence found in the literature raises questions as to whether they are viable options or distractions from HSBC's Housing First principles.

The safe outdoor spaces model aims to eliminate pop-up or organically formed communities of unhoused people by establishing government-sanctioned spaces. The literature suggests that while this method may be effective in providing immediate or temporary shelter, it should not be seen as a solution to homelessness. Even in communities committed to Housing First principles, resource limitations might lead cities to consider "sanctioning encampments" or "tacitly accepting encampments" as temporary solutions. It is important to recognize the factors that make shelters an

unsuitable option for many individuals and consider the implications for policies regarding encampments (DeCarmine, 2023).

Creating and operating such settings often requires significant funding, staff time, and energy. It is crucial to consider if these resources could be better used for permanent housing and services that could more effectively reduce homelessness. The priority should be improving existing emergency shelter programs and creating more effective indoor shelter options, if needed. Communities should focus on providing access to stable, affordable housing with the appropriate support services, as this is what ultimately ends homelessness. The criminalization of homelessness, often seen in the clearing of encampments, is ineffective and can exacerbate public health concerns. Dispersing individuals without providing alternative housing or services fails to address the root causes of homelessness and can disrupt social connections established within encampments, hindering their transition to permanent housing. Further, localities should carefully consider where spaces are sanctioned and whether existing indoor spaces or potential shelters have been adequately utilized before considering this option (Interagency Council, 2018).

If localities within HSBC choose to pursue this model, broad collaboration—including local nonprofits, faith-based organizations, public health offices, and local universities—is essential in developing a comprehensive, compassionate, and effective approach to serving individuals living in encampments. Examples such as the "Compassionate Communities" and "Cabin Communities" programs in Oakland, California, and "Camp Hope" in Las Cruces, New Mexico, demonstrate that positive outcomes can be achieved by treating individuals with dignity, providing autonomy, and partnering with local stakeholders. These programs continue to emphasize a "housing first" approach to effectively address and end homelessness. Factors that support participants who use these spaces to exit homelessness include: the availability of onsite services and case management, partnerships with local networks, a governance structure that includes resident input, and potential strategic locations of the encampment (League of Cities, 2022).

Safe parking programs offer people—particularly those sheltering in a vehicle—a place to park their car overnight without fear of ticketing or towing. These established spaces may also provide security or other supportive services. The research indicates that safe parking programs may be an effective pathway to rehousing people, particularly when paired with additional supports such as housing and employment services. The Price School report offers six best practices echoed in other reports:

- **"Intentional Design.** Programs should plan, operate, and structure their organizations intentionally to meet local needs and align with local resources.
- **Strategic Locations.** Safe parking programs should organize lots and services according to geography, population needs, and local social services.
- **Fostering Trust.** Safe parking programs should focus on fostering trust with and among parkers. Trust can help build community and dignity for parkers and increase their ability to engage with social services.

- **Focused Social Services.** Case management services are essential for rehousing, but programs do not need to fund case management independently; programs can integrate with third-party social services.
- **Engaging Stakeholders.** Safe parking programs should anticipate initial opposition to safe parking. Opposition can be prevented or overcome by engagement and planning efforts.
- **Implementing Benchmarks.** Programs should develop benchmarks for rehousing rates, lengths of stay, and service engagement with internal and external stakeholders." (McElwain, 2021)

However, it's essential to recognize that safe parking (like sanctioned encampments) is a temporary solution and should not be seen as a replacement for permanent housing. Research suggests that safe parking programs can be effective in helping individuals transition into housing. A study of the Jewish Family Service of San Diego Safe Parking Program found a 40% positive exit rate, with younger clients, women, veterans, and families more likely to exit into housing. This rate is significantly higher than the 9% positive exit rate observed in some of San Diego's larger shelters. However, the success of safe parking programs is heavily reliant on their integration with a robust social support system (Lewis, 2024).

While safe parking can be a valuable step towards exiting homelessness, it is not an end in itself. Before committing resources, HSBC should carefully evaluate the specific safe parking program they are considering supporting. HSBC should also assess the long-term sustainability of the safe parking program. This includes considering the availability of funding, the program's capacity to meet the needs of its participants, and the potential for growth and expansion. Ultimately, HSBC should approach supporting safe parking programs with the same careful consideration given to any other homelessness intervention. It is a complex issue with no easy solutions. Prioritizing programs that provide pathways to permanent housing, while offering support and resources to meet the immediate needs of individuals experiencing homelessness, will contribute to a more comprehensive and effective approach to addressing this challenge.

Maintain and Strengthen Crisis Services

Recommendation: Focus crisis response services on those most important to those experiencing homelessness.

Beyond housing, strengthening support services is essential to addressing the diverse needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. Findings from the literature and input from focus groups with people with lived experience with homelessness in Boulder County highlight the need for intensified case management services, expanded outreach and engagement efforts, and increased availability of essential service to meet basic needs.

Case management is a critical component of effective homelessness interventions. By increasing the intensity of case management services, HSBC can provide more individualized support, connect individuals to resources, and help them navigate the complex system of services. This may involve

reducing caseloads, increasing the frequency of contact, and providing more comprehensive support in areas such as housing search, employment, healthcare, and mental health.

Many individuals experiencing homelessness are disconnected from the system of services, particularly those living unsheltered. Expanding outreach efforts, particularly in areas with high concentrations of unsheltered homelessness, can help connect these individuals to resources and support. This may involve:

- **Street outreach**. Sending trained outreach workers to engage with individuals living on the streets, in encampments, or in other public spaces.
- **Mobile services**. Providing mobile services, such as medical care, mental health counseling, or benefit enrollment assistance, directly to individuals where they are.
- **Peer outreach**. Utilizing individuals with lived experience of homelessness to connect with and support others.

Access to basic necessities is essential for individuals experiencing homelessness, promoting hygiene, health, and overall well-being. HSBC should expand the availability of these services including accessible restrooms, showers, laundry facilities, and secure storage options, and work to ensure they are accessible, safe, and welcoming.

COLLABORATION STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

HSBC's collaborative model, which brings together government entities, nonprofits, and other partners, is a significant strength. This model embodies the USICH All In plan's emphasis on collaboration at all levels, recognizing that effectively addressing homelessness requires a collective effort. Participants in the qualitative data gathering activities highlighted that the HSBC collaborative management structure brings regional service providers and officials together, enabling them to:

- **Collaborate around service provision and funding opportunities.** This collaborative approach allows HSBC to leverage the diverse expertise and resources of its partners, maximizing its reach and impact. For example, partnerships with organizations specializing in mental health, substance use treatment, or legal aid can enhance HSBC's ability to provide comprehensive support to individuals experiencing homelessness.
- **Ensure programs do not conflict or duplicate services.** By coordinating efforts and sharing information, HSBC can avoid redundancies and ensure that resources are used efficiently to meet the most pressing needs in the community. This coordinated approach is essential for preventing service gaps and ensuring that individuals can access the support they need without navigating a fragmented system.
- **Overcome silos and address regional problems.** Homelessness is a complex issue that transcends municipal boundaries. By working collaboratively across city and county lines, HSBC can develop regionwide solutions that address the systemic factors contributing to homelessness and provide a more comprehensive and coordinated response.

Despite these strengths, navigating the diverse priorities of various stakeholders is a persistent challenge. The qualitative data suggests that conflicting priorities in policies, funding allocation, and programmatic approaches across geographic areas and partner organizations hinder effective collaboration. This misalignment can lead to inefficiencies, service gaps, and inconsistent support for individuals experiencing homelessness. For instance, differences in eligibility criteria, program models, or funding priorities between municipalities can create barriers for individuals seeking assistance.

It can also limit the effectiveness of the overall HSBC system. One of the most frequently noted challenges to the collaborative approach taken by HSBC is the lack of cohesion across the elected officials and policymakers within Boulder County and the City of Boulder and the City of Longmont. This directly affects how each entity makes funding decisions, sets priorities and chooses programmatic approaches, which in turn complicates collaboration and hinders effective service provision. As a result, it can be challenging for HSBC to maintain common collaborative goals and ensure that programmatic decisions and resource allocations are aligned with systemwide priorities. A more formalized and clearly articulated region-wide purpose is necessary to foster a unified approach and maximize HSBC's potential impact.

Ensure Transparency in Governance to Enhance Collaboration

Recommendation: Revisit the collective impact (CI) model that was adopted at HSBC's founding to identify areas that need to be updated based on more recent research and to ensure shared understanding of the HSBC governance structure.
- Review the roles, responsibilities and expectations of the steering committee, work groups and work group co-chairs, and the backbone organization. Recruit for any roles not currently filled.
- Document the HSBC governance structure so it is clear to all members of the collaborative and can be operationalized.
- Create and circulate a framework for collaboration and collective decision making among all HSBC partners that includes processes for resolving differences in priorities and other potential conflicts among HSBC members.

Recommendation: Prioritize creation of a shared vision for HSBC that is shared with all HSBC partners so it can be used to guide efforts throughout the system.

Findings from the service provider roundtables and governing body interviews indicate that there is significant confusion about the governance structure of HSBC, which was initially formed around the CI model. Confusion seems to have grown since the HSBC system and governance structure was revised in 2021. While a brief description of HSBC's governance and system structure's teams is available through the website, there is not sufficient detail to make it an effective governing document. The body of research on the CI model and its limitations has also matured since 2017 and should be reviewed in the process of revisiting HSBC's governance structure (Uribe, 2017).

To achieve a shared governance structure, a revisiting is recommended of the CI model across all levels of the HSBC collaborative to identify areas that need further refinement and ensure all members have shared understanding. This includes:

- Reviewing and updating the Boulder County Homeless Systems Collaborative Executive Board Responsibilities to ensure they aligns with best-practices.
- Educating all partners on what the policy implementation group does and does not do as the backbone organization (Samari, 2024).
- Ensuring all working groups have designated co-chairs to guide their work with support from backbone staff to facilitate.

With input from collaborative members, HSBC should create written documentation of the roles and responsibilities for the executive boards, policy implementation group and working group members and co-chairs. This document should also clearly define how decisions are made and a process for navigating differing priorities among member organizations and transparent conflict resolution.

Once the governance structure has been revisited and documented, the HSBC policy implementation group should work with the executive board to set a strategic vision for HSBC that outlines:

- A set of shared overarching goals and objectives.
- Strategies for achieving these goals.
- Mechanisms for accountability and evaluation.

The vision should also include plans to regularly revisit goals, objectives and strategies to measure progress. It should also be time-limited with the goal of conducting an updated visioning process in a three to five years to ensure it remains up to date with local needs.

CONCLUSION: A COLLECTIVE EFFORT FOR LASTING IMPACT

Recommendation: Though largely outside the scope of the activities evaluated here, a continued focus on addressing the root-causes and prevention are the long-term solutions to homelessness and should not be neglected.

While immediate interventions are critical, addressing the underlying issues that contribute to homelessness is crucial for achieving long-term and sustainable solutions. Homelessness is a complex issue with multiple contributing factors, including poverty, lack of affordable housing, lack of affordable healthcare, mental health challenges, substance use disorders, and domestic violence. A comprehensive approach to ending homelessness requires addressing these root causes. By working together, pooling resources, and sharing expertise, HSBC is building a strong foundation for mitigating the homelessness crisis and creating a community where everyone has access to safe, stable, and affordable housing.

Appendix A. Findings from Quantitative and Funding Analyses

This appendix details the findings from PPA's analyses of HSBC's Connects, HMIS, Coordinated Entry (CE) Exit/Diversion Tracking, and BTHERE Outreach data for 2022 and 2023. The analysis aims to identify key trends, disparities, and areas for improvement within the County's homeless service system.

HOMELESSNESS IN BOULDER COUNTY

Between 2022 and 2023, there was a significant increase in homelessness in Boulder County, reflecting a growing demand for services amid challenging economic and housing conditions. During this time, the annual point-in-time (PIT) count for Boulder County, which measures the number of people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January, rose by 84%, from 457 in 2022 (Metro Denver, 2022) to 839 in 2023 (Metro Denver, 2023). The national Point-in-Time (PIT) count recorded an 11% increase during this period, while Boulder County saw a 33% increase, illustrating the severity of the housing crisis in the region. Similarly, Colorado experienced a 39% increase in homelessness statewide. Of the 51 states and territories (including the District of Columbia), only seven reported decreases in homelessness during this period (De Sousa et al, 2023).

According to the 2023 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report to congress, the State of Colorado also experienced the fourth largest total increase in homelessness from 2022 to 2023 (behind New York, California and Florida) despite only being the 21st most populous state (Colorado Coalition, 2023). Drilling further down to the local level, the Metropolitan Denver Continuum of Care reported 6,884 individuals experiencing homelessness in 2022. This figure jumped by 46% in 2023, with 10,054 individuals counted. Across the 386 Continuums of Care nationwide, only 112 reported decreases in homelessness from 2022 to 2023 (De Sousa et al, 2023). Finally, organizations within the HSBC Connect system, which include Boulder Shelter for the Homeless and HOPE (Homeless Outreach Providing Encouragement), also saw an increase in the number of people reached, rising from 1,097 in 2022 to 1,212 in 2023.

DATA SYSTEMS

HSBC is tasked with supporting single adults in moving out of homelessness and into housing in the most efficient ways possible. This appendix, therefore, presents characteristics of only single adults experiencing homelessness through Boulder County's different data systems. HSBC has consistently invested in data systems and in August 2022, HSBC became the first sub-region in the Denver Metropolitan area to be certified by a third-party entity, Community Solutions for Quality Data, a process in which a third party validates data collection and data integrity. HSBC's data collection efforts

and related systems have evolved to meet system evaluation and planning needs with much of the focus on the Connects data system, which was designed by and for HSBC. Connects offers coordinated entry, outreach, and housing-focused shelter, in addition to connecting people experiencing homelessness to needed resources and support services

The tradeoff to this approach is that it does not natively connect to the CoC HMIS data system, meaning that it is essentially impossible to track individuals' experiences with homelessness effectively across time and geographical shifts. Being able to follow an individual's trajectory and service utilization can better inform efforts to prevent first-time homelessness and address chronic homelessness. Though HSBC is actively in the process of creating a data interface with the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative's Homeless Management System that connection did not exist for the data analyzed here, thus researchers will examine each system separately.

COMMUNITYCONNECTS

PPA received combined, unduplicated Connects data for 2022 and 2023, totaling 2,309 records. Of these, approximately 1,097 assessments were completed in 2022, and 1,212 were completed in 2023. Due to differences in system identifiers, individuals in Connects cannot be matched with individuals in HMIS, as both systems use distinct Unique Identifiers or identification numbers. However, the separate Connects dataset provided to researchers recorded 33 deduplicated exits in 2022 and 52 deduplicated exits in 2023.

Inflows to Homelessness

The rising number of people experiencing homelessness in Boulder County is not only a result of local economic pressures but is also fueled by two primary factors: the significant growth in first-time homelessness and the continued influx of individuals from outside the county. These inflows into homelessness highlight the broader systemic challenges, including unaffordable housing, job market volatility, and regional migration patterns. Understanding these inflows is critical for designing preventive strategies and ensuring that local services can adequately respond to the growing demand.

People Experiencing First-Time Homelessness

Over half of the people served by Connects reported that this was their first time being unhoused, with the number growing by 23% between 2022 and 2023. In 2022, 598 people (or 55%) were experiencing homelessness for the first time, which increased to 733 people (or 60%) in 2023. Given the large share of people in this group, the demographic profile of individuals experiencing first-time homelessness largely mirrored that of all people served by Connects. People from historically marginalized groups experiencing first-time homelessness seemed to be most affected by changes between the two years, with significant growth in the number of American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous individuals (from 22 in 2022 to 38 in 2023), Black individuals (from 61 in 2022 to 94 in 2023), and Hispanic/Latina/e/o individuals (from 100 in 2022 to 149 in 2023).

Inflows from Other Geographic Areas

Boulder continues to draw people from outside the county. In 2023, 30% of people experiencing homelessness had lived in Boulder County for two years or more, up from 27% in 2022. However, the majority had been in the area for less than a month. The share of individuals experiencing homelessness that had been in Boulder less than one month rose to 50% in 2023, compared to 48% in 2022.

These patterns are consistent with migration trends seen in other high-cost areas such as San Francisco and Seattle, where individuals move in search of better economic prospects or family support networks but often end up homeless due to unaffordable housing markets and a lack of job opportunities. The influx of individuals into Boulder seeking opportunities mirrors the broader regional trends of migration to cities with perceived economic potential, despite the ongoing housing shortages in these areas.

Implications

The increasing proportion of first-time homeless individuals and the ongoing inflows from outside Boulder point to broader systemic issues related to housing affordability, employment opportunities, and regional migration. The rise in first-time homelessness underscores the vulnerability of more people to housing loss, even those who have never experienced homelessness before. This trend suggests that preventive measures, such as rental assistance and eviction prevention programs, will be crucial to curbing future inflows.

Similarly, the continuous inflow of people from outside the county, often with unrealistic expectations of the local housing market, calls for better coordination between regional and local service providers. Expanding affordable housing options and ensuring that individuals arriving in Boulder have access to services upon arrival will be critical in addressing these inflows.

Demographic Shifts

Gender

As is true in communities across the country, the majority of people experiencing homelessness in HSBC's Connects system are male (70% in 2022 and 67% in 2023). However, there was a slight increase in the share of women, from 25% in 2022 to 30% in 2023. The proportion of people who identify as gender non-conforming or transgender remained steady.

Age

People served by Connects span every age group, although they tend to be younger than the overall population of Boulder County. This dynamic is shifting, however, with the share of older adults, particularly those over the age of 55, growing between 2022 and 2023. The number of adults aged 45 to 54 increased by 19%, from 232 in 2022 to 277 in 2023, and the number of adults aged 55+ grew by 25%, from 215 in 2022 to 269 in 2023. Consequently, the proportion of individuals over the age of 55 increased from 20% in 2022 to 22% in 2023.

Older Adults (55+)

Although adults over the age of 55 comprise just 22% of the population served by Connects in 2023, this group was the fastest-growing subpopulation among those analyzed. In 2022 191 people served by Connects fell into this age group and that number grew to 252 in 2023, representing a 32% growth in people over 55 in the system. Compared to other subpopulations, women comprised a larger proportion of those over age 55, and this group was more likely to be non-Hispanic white.

Race and Ethnicity

Despite changes in gender and age, the racial composition of people served by HSBC's Connects system remained relatively stable, with the share of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC individuals) increasing slightly from 38% in 2022 to 39% in 2023, primarily due to slight increases in the number of Black, Indigenous and Latinx people accessing the system. Even with these changes, the majority of people served by Connects were non-Hispanic white (62% in 2022 and 61% in 2023), which is consistent with trends seen in the Boulder County PIT and HMIS annual count data.

BIPOC Individuals

The estimated number of BIPOC individuals who accessed Connects increased from 510 or 38% in 2022 to 590 or 39% in 2023, representing a 16% growth. The gender and age composition for BIPOC individuals mirrored that of the total population served by Connects, with a slightly larger share of women and a slightly higher proportion of people under 45.

Veterans

Between 2022 and 2023, the estimated number of veterans accessing Connects fell by 38% from 2022 to 2023. Between these years, although the majority of Veterans were male (93% in 2022 and 76% in 2023), the share of Veterans who were female increased from 4% to 30%. It is important to note that the total number of female Veterans is quite small, meaning that an increase by a handful of individuals results in a significant proportional increase. Finally, Veterans accessing the system tend to be older and were more likely to be non-Hispanic white.

DV Survivors

Between 2022 and 2023, the number of DV Survivors accessing Connects fell slightly from 166 to 165. As a result, the share of DV survivors fell from 15% in 2022 to 14% in 2023. Between 2022 and 2023, the share of DV survivors who were women increased from 51% to 53%. During this same time period, while the share of older DV survivors fell (37% were over age 45 in 2022, falling to 30% in 2023), the share of DV survivors under age 35 grew from 37% in 2022 to 41% in 2023.

Insights

- The significant growth in homelessness observed across the PIT, HMIS, and Connects data indicates an urgent need to expand support services for people at risk of homelessness, as well as to increase permanent housing solutions.
- The large proportion of people accessing Connects who are experiencing homelessness for the first time highlights the need for targeted prevention efforts, including early intervention and support services.
- While some subpopulations, such as older adults and BIPOC individuals, have seen growth, the representation of these groups raises questions about potential gaps in service access or unmet needs.
- The decrease in the number of veterans accessing services could indicate barriers to access, which should be explored further to ensure veterans receive adequate support.

Other Data Fields of Interest

Connects collects information on employment status and access to identification documents and vehicles. The percentage of individuals with a license or state ID increased from 67% in 2022 to 71% in 2023. Additionally, possession of a Social Security card rose from 47% to 53%, and possession of a birth certificate increased from 33% to 37%. The percentage of individuals who owned any type of vehicle decreased from 23% in 2022 to 20% in 2023. The type of vehicle owned was overwhelmingly cars across both years (96%) with a very small percent of individuals owning RVs and campers.

The Connects data system also collects data on self-reported causes of homelessness (Figure 1). The percentage of individuals reporting unemployment or underemployment as a key issue rose from 27% in 2022 to 31% in 2023. Mental health as a reported issue dropped from 10% in 2022 to 6% in 2023. Additionally, homelessness causes, such as intimate relationship problems (9%), jail/prison stay (6%), and substance use/addiction (4%) remained stable across both years.

FIGURE 1. HOMELESSNESS CAUSES REPORTED BY INDIVIDUALS
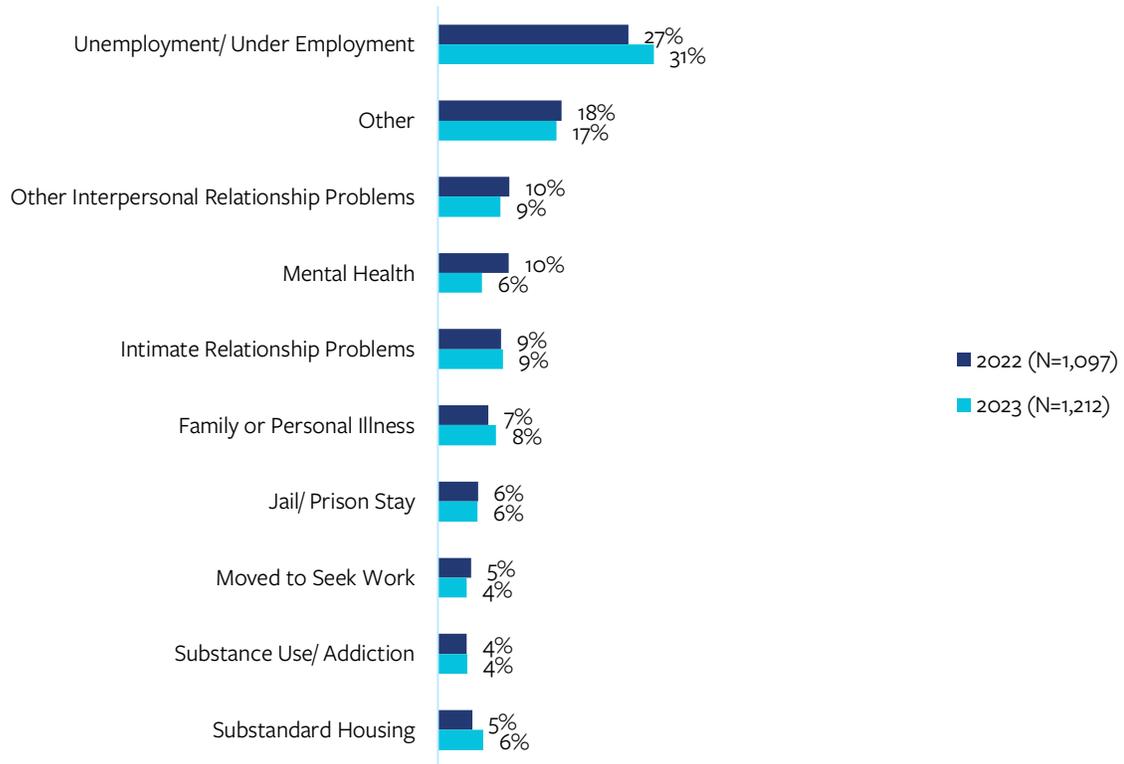
Looking at the time between individuals last screening and last touchpoint date, the proportion of individuals with less than one month between their last screening and touchpoint date doubled, increasing from 6% in 2022 to 12% in 2023 (Figure 2). Additionally, the proportion with three to six months between their last screening and touchpoint also more than doubled, rising from 6% in 2022 to 13% in 2023. The most notable shift was among individuals with a gap of 7 months to 1 year, which increased dramatically from 10% in 2022 to 46% in 2023. While the proportion of individuals with a gap of 1 to 2 years dropped sharply, from 53% in 2022 to 23% in 2023.

FIGURE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF TIME BETWEEN LAST SCREENING AND LAST TOUCHPOINT AMONG INDIVIDUALS IN CONNECTS
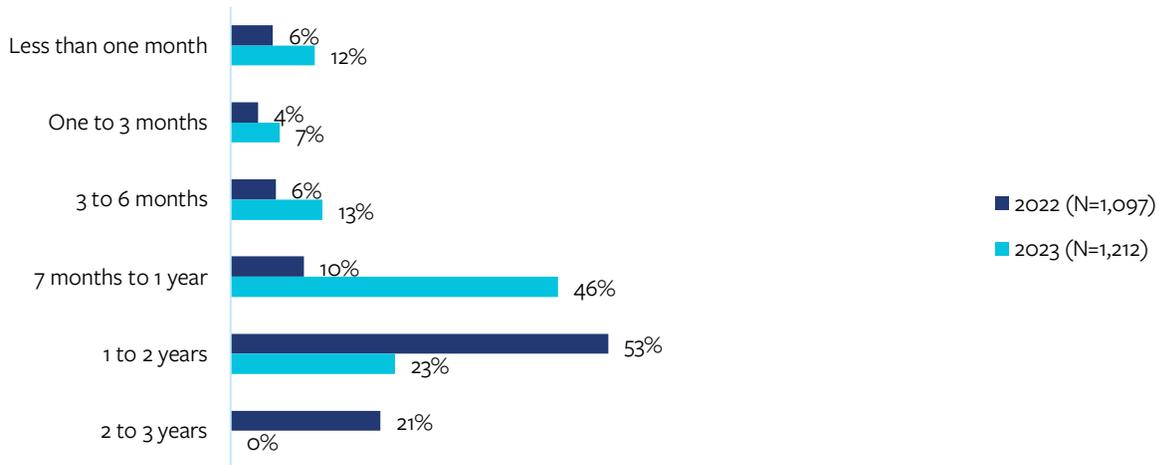
HMIS

PPA received two snapshots of HMIS data from Boulder for 2022 and 2023, representing a total of 17,357 records (2022: 7,579 and 2023: 9,778). After merging the datasets and retaining only individuals with unique identifiers, ages, gender, race and ethnicity, and project start date responses, the dataset was reduced to 6,240 observations. Many individuals in the 2022 dataset had project start dates prior to 2022. Researchers retained these individuals in the dataset because they either lacked project exit dates or had exit dates in 2022 or 2023. See Table 2 for a detailed breakdown by year.

TABLE 2. COUNT OF RECORDS BY PROJECT START YEAR (N=6,240)

Year Ranges	Duplicated County
2004 to 2010	6
2011 to 2021	2362
2022	2017
2023	1855
TOTAL	6240

Even after filtering for unique characteristics, duplicate records persisted due to individuals experiencing multiple periods of homelessness, having multiple project start dates, completing more than one assessment, or changes in other fields such as survivor of domestic violence status. Approximately 20% (n=967) of individuals had multiple records in HMIS. The unduplicated count across both years was 4,816. Of these, 2,670 individuals were only present in the 2022 dataset, 1,186 were only present in the 2023 dataset, and 960 were present in both years.

Inflows/Outflows

It is challenging to identify individuals experiencing homelessness for the first time because answers were given across multiple questions. PPA used the following three fields to identify individuals: chronically homeless, times homeless in the past three years and if it is their first time experiencing homelessness. However, responses were often conflicting; for example, individuals responding to not being chronically homeless yet had experienced multiple times of homelessness in the past three years. Similarly, individuals reporting that it was their first time experiencing homeless yet, reported multiple periods homelessness in the past three years.

As stated earlier many individuals have multiple records, looking at their most recent Project Start Date, most individuals (85%) have been in HMIS for over a year, with 31% in 1 to 2 years, 24% in 2 to 3 years, and 30% in more than 3 years. This does not mean that individuals may be experiencing homelessness through their entire duration in the HMIS system, it simply means that their records have not been updated with a Project Exit Date.

Looking only at individuals with Project Exit Dates, 33% of individuals never received an exit interview, highlighting inconsistent data collection within HMIS. The "Other" category represents 11% of exits, which includes cases where the client did not know or did not provide an answer, that data was not collected for another reason, or the individual was deceased (Figure 3). Nearly a quarter of participants (24%) exited to homeless situations, emphasizing ongoing housing instability for a significant portion of the population. Only 18% of participants exited to permanent housing situations, suggesting a need for more resources or interventions to support long-term housing stability.

FIGURE 3. DISTRIBUTION OF EXIT DESTINATION AMONG HMIS PARTICIPANTS (N=1,177)

- No Exit Interview (n=394)
- Other (n=126)
- Homeless Situations (n=277)
- Permanent Housing Situations (n=208)
- Temporary Housing Situations (n=128)
- Institutional Situations (n=44)
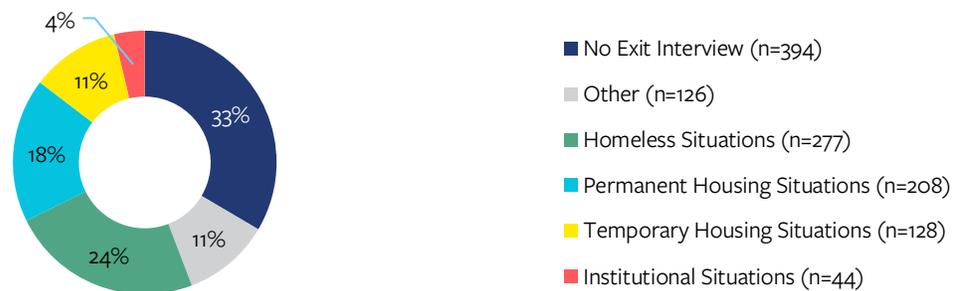
Comparing Demographics Observed in HMIS and Connects

While the data sets cannot be analyzed together it is helpful to confirm consistency between the two and ensure there are no major inconsistencies across data systems. In fact, there is significant similarity between the demographics of people experiencing homelessness in Boulder County. In both data systems, the largest group of individuals were aged 35–44 and identified as male, though HMIS data skewed slightly older and male.

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FIGURE 4. AGE DISTRIBUTION IN CONNECTS AND HMIS

Age groups: 55+, 45-54, 35-44, 25-34, 18-24

Legend: ■ HMIS (n=4,816) ■ Connects 2023 (n=1,210) ■ Connects 2022 (n=1,095)
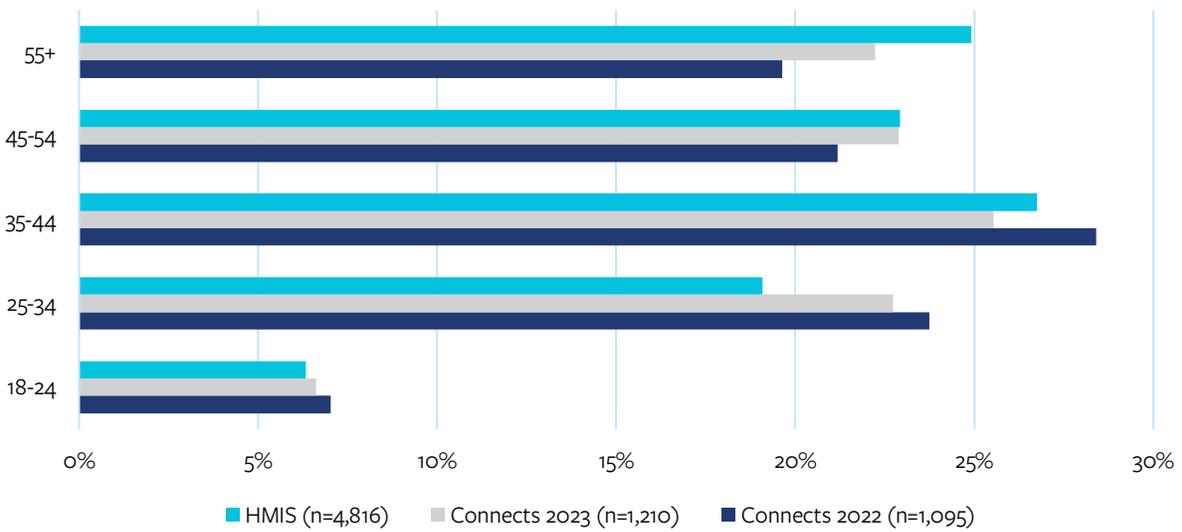
Additionally, the majority in both systems identified as White. However, HMIS showed a slightly more diverse racial composition.

FIGURE 5. RACIAL DISTRIBUTION IN CONNECTS AND HMIS

Categories: Other / Uknown, Multiracial, American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous, Black, African American, or African, White

Legend: ■ HMIS (n=4816) ■ Connects 2023 (N=1,212) ■ Connects 2022 (N=1,097)
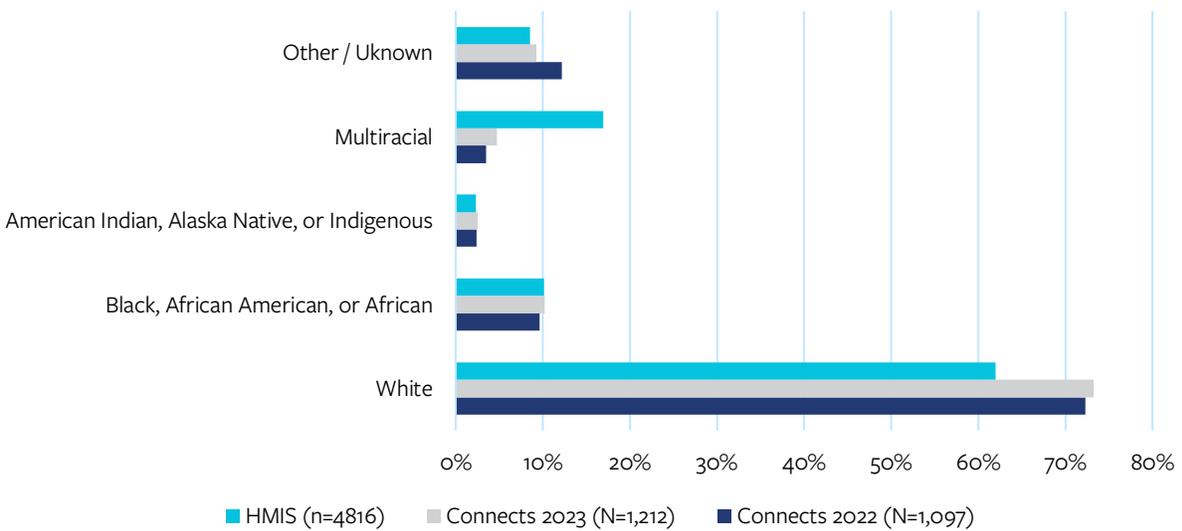
In the combined 2022 and 2023 HMIS datasets, 13% (n=636) of individuals reported being survivors of intimate partner violence. Additionally, 6% (n=292) reported being veterans. This confirms that the proportion of survivors of intimate partner violence and veterans was similar across the two data systems. Other differences stem from the type of data collected in the two data systems, from the types of data collected in the two systems. Connects offers insights into the causes of homelessness, individuals' employment status, and their access to identification documents. Additionally, it tracks the types of assistance individuals are needing.

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ADDITIONAL DATA SOURCES

Boulder County also utilizes two additional data systems: BTHERE and Diversion Tracking. BTHERE, a dashboard managed by the City of Boulder's Housing and Human Services Department, provides detailed information on individuals' entry into Boulder's Coordinated Entry system, shelter and service utilization, housing outcomes, and performance metrics. Diversion Tracking, managed by HSBC, captures data on individuals exiting Connects and being diverted to locations better suited to serve them or reunified with family and friends outside Boulder County.

BTHERE Data

In 2022, there were 653 Coordinated Entry Screenings, with an average of 147 regular shelter beds used per night and 9 beds remaining unused. Outreach efforts resulted in an average of 78 unique individual interactions per month in the field, totaling 971 interactions. Additionally, there were 24 exits from homelessness, with most individuals successfully housed.

In 2023, the number of Coordinated Entry Screenings increased to 815, with an average of 153 regular shelter beds used per night and 8 beds remaining unused. Field outreach remained steady, with an average of 78 unique individual interactions per month, but total interactions rose significantly to 1,759. There were 25 exits from homelessness, again with most individuals successfully housed.

Diversion

Turning to the Diversion data system, the percentage of cases resolved through diversion increased from 77% in 2022 to 86% in 2023, while the percentage of cases resulting in reunification decreased from 23% in 2022 to 14% in 2023.

FUNDING ANALYSIS

As with the quantitative analysis of people experiencing homelessness, this analysis will include two years of data from 2022 and 2023. The programs and services included in this analysis were informed by the three solutions pillars of the 2022 United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) *All In* plan: crisis response, housing and support, prevention. Through collaboration with representatives of HSBC, the City of Boulder and the City of Longmont it was determined that funding data would only be included for services in the housing and support, and crisis response categories. Prevention efforts, though vital to actually ending homelessness, go beyond the scope of the HSBC service system.

During this two-year period overall funding for homeless services increased by 22% overall, as you can see in Table 3, below.

TABLE 3. FUNDING ALLOCATED TO EVALUATED SOLUTION PILLARS

	2022	2023	Difference	% Change[2]
Crisis Response	$3,136,184	$3,987,985	$851,801	27%
Housing and Support	$3,186,876	$3,729,253	$542,377	17%
Total	$6,323,060	$7,717,238	$1,394,178	22%

Growth in crisis response funding outpaced that of housing and supports, growing from 50% of the total in 2022 to 52% in 2023. Much of this difference is likely explained by the addition in 2023 of a respite shelter designed for people transitioning out of a medical setting (Table 4).

TABLE 4. FUNDING DETAILS FOR CRISIS RESPONSE AND HOUSING AND SUPPORT

	2022	2023
Crisis Response	$3,136,184	$3,987,985
CE, Street Outreach & Diversion	$723,931	$632,562
Shelter	$1,267,467	$1,741,642
Shelter (severe weather)	$770,000	$584,081
Shelter (special population)	$134,786	$789,700
Transitional Housing	$240,000	$240,000
Housing and Support	$3,186,876	$3,729,253
Rental Subsidy / Voucher	$1,122,875	$1,122,875
Case Management	$1,263,217	$1,230,150
Health Support	$295,973	$84,560
Landlord Services	$205,886	$155,000
Other Support	$228,925	$600,425
Retention	$50,000	$344,713
Peer Support	$20,000	$191,530
Total	$6,323,060	$7,717,238

Also of note, HSBC received expanded grant funding for peer-support and retention services in 2023, which is promising in light of the qualitative analysis finding that these remain important to facilitating outcomes and in high demand.

HSBC was also interested in understanding whether there were any obvious shifts due to changing priorities among local elected officials. To evaluate this PPA took a deeper look at local funding alone for the two years (Table 5, below). The findings indicate close alignment with overall funding decisions, suggesting that this is not a significant issue at least in these two years of data.

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[2] This is a measure of relative change over time that is calculated by dividing the absolute change (the difference column, which equals the 2023 value minus the 2022 value) by the reference value, which is 2022.

TABLE 5. LOCAL FUNDING ONLY ACROSS SOLUTIONS PILLARS

	2022	2023	Difference	% Change
Crisis Response	**$2,725,184.00**	**$3,521,716.00**	**$796,532.00**	**29%**
Shelter	$1,267,467.00	$1,741,642.00	$474,175.00	37%
Transitional Housing	$240,000.00	$240,000.00	$0.00	0%
Shelter (severe weather)	$510,000.00	$148,812.00	-$361,188.00	-71%
Shelter (special population)	$134,786.00	$789,700.00	$654,914.00	486%
CE, Street Outreach & Diversion	$572,931.00	$601,562.00	$28,631.00	5%
Housing and Support	**$1,894,348.00**	**$2,253,136.00**	**$358,788.00**	**19%**
Case Management	$479,221.00	$485,276.00	$6,055.00	1%
Health Support	$63,327.00	$64,560.00	$1,233.00	2%
Other Support	$228,925.00	$580,425.00	$351,500.00	154%
Rental Subsidy / Voucher	$1,122,875.00	$1,122,875.00	$0.00	0%
Total	**$4,619,532.00**	**$5,774,852.00**	**$1,155,320.00**	**25%**

This analysis also explored the source of HSBC funding with the goal of exploring diversity and sustainability of funding streams. Individual funding lines were organized into three categories: local, state and federal pass-throughs, and one-time funding (Table 6). Significant recovery funding was available during these years as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and while those are federal funds they are included in the one-time category to make it easier to tease out sustainability.

TABLE 6. FUNDING BY SOURCE

	2022	2023	Total
Local	**$4,619,532**	**$5,774,852**	**$10,394,384**
General Funds	$3,553,486	$4,704,492	$8,257,978
Human Services Funds	$764,946	$737,760	$1,502,706
Health Equity Funds	$101,100	$132,600	$233,700
Affordable Housing Funds	$200,000	$200,000	$400,000
Pass through	**$1,253,528**	**$920,874**	**$2,174,402**
Federal	$1,102,528	$889,874	$1,992,402
State	$151,000	$31,000	$182,000
One Time Grant	**$450,000**	**$1,021,512**	**$1,471,512**
ARPA	$450,000	$971,512	$1,421,512
McArthur Foundation		$50,000	$50,000
Total	**$6,323,060**	**$7,717,238**	**$14,040,298**

To explore shifts in the proportion of total funding coming from a given source Table 7 (below) shows the proportion of total funding coming from each source as well as the percent change for each source from 2022 to 2023. The largest shift during this period was a significant increase in non-recurring grant funding. The majority of this change was due to increases in ARPA funds, which were equal to 37% of the total funding increase from 2022 to 2023, though it is laudable that during that time HSBC also

secured external grant funding from the McArthur Foundation. The second largest change was in state pass-through funding, which was temporarily reduced due to a lost grant that was restored in future years. Federal pass-through dollars also fell between 2022 and 2023.

TABLE 7. PROPORTION OF TOTAL FUNDING BY SOURCE

	% of total in 2022	% of total in 2023	% Change
Local	**73.1%**	**74.8%**	**2.4%**
General Funds	56.2%	61.0%	8.5%
Human Services Funds	12.1%	9.6%	-21.0%
Health Equity Funds	1.6%	1.7%	7.5%
Affordable Housing Funds	3.2%	2.6%	-18.1%
Pass through	**19.8%**	**11.9%**	**-39.8%**
Federal	17.4%	11.5%	-33.9%
State	2.4%	0.4%	-83.2%
One Time Grant	**7.1%**	**13.2%**	**86.0%**
ARPA	7.1%	12.6%	76.9%
McArthur Foundation	0.0%	0.6%	-

On balance it appears that as a system HSBC was successful in adapting to demand and increasing funding in keeping with increasing levels of homelessness in 2022 and 2023. There were no drastic shifts in funding priorities, though a subtle shift towards crisis services was observed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create integration between HMIS and Connects to enable a more comprehensive understanding of individuals' homelessness experiences and service utilization.
- Specific to the Connects analysis:
  - More understanding of the reasons behind the increase in the time gap between last screening and last touchpoint, particularly the shift in individuals experiencing 7 months to 1 year without a follow-up.
  - More integration between Connects exit data and the rest of the Connects dataset to better understand the characteristics of individuals exiting the program compared to those who remain.
  - More understanding of chronic homelessness. While the proportion reporting multiple experiences of homelessness decreased in 2023, it still remains high
- Specific to the HMIS analysis:
  - More complete and accurate data needs to be collected. Efforts should be made to collect more complete and accurate data. As noted, many individuals are missing project exit dates, and several fields have data that is either not collected, missing, or inconsistent.

- More follow up with individuals. Increased follow-up is necessary to understand individuals' post-program destinations. A significant number of individuals have no recorded destination category, limiting insights into their outcomes.
- More understanding of why so many people remain in the HMIS system. Further exploration is needed to determine why so many individuals remain in the HMIS system for extended periods. This could be due to delays in updating records or may reflect a more systemic issue that warrants attention.
- Develop targeted prevention initiatives aimed at individuals at risk of first-time homelessness, focusing on outreach, early intervention, and support services to prevent homelessness before it occurs.
- Expand age-specific services, particularly for older adults, to address their unique healthcare and support needs, and ensure that they can transition to stable housing effectively.
- Boulder must prioritize the development of affordable housing units and work closely with housing developers to increase supply.
- PSH programs are proven to be effective for people with disabilities and chronic homelessness. Expanding these options will help address the needs of the most vulnerable.
- Boulder should foster partnerships with the private sector to increase housing availability and create more opportunities for people transitioning out of homelessness.
- Ensuring individuals who exit homelessness can remain stably housed is essential. Expanding rental assistance programs and providing case management services will reduce the likelihood of people returning to homelessness.

Appendix B: Findings from the Qualitative Analysis

INTRODUCTION

The qualitative phase of the evaluation included three different modes of data collection to gather input from three different stakeholder groups: (1) interviews with governing bodies, (2) roundtables with service providers, and (3) focus groups with people experiencing homelessness. Where appropriate data is synthesized across sources, but in several places the responses from the focus groups are described separately because of their distinct perspective.

The Lived Experience of Homelessness in Boulder County

Across all focus group types, participants described an overall, sometimes overwhelming, sense of hopelessness that they have experienced while being unhoused.

- "Yeah, there's times that I'd like to just give up. I've done time before… it might be easier to go back, you know? I don't want to really do that, but I've been thinking about it."
- "Worthless, hopeless, overlooked…"
- "It's hard to live, you know? Because I have to not forget what I want. Every moment."
- "Can you relate to your bosses that the hopelessness that people feel is real?"

While participants noted serious gaps in and suggested improvements for services in Boulder County, **across most focus groups, particularly those with City of Boulder residents, participants described the services that were available and that they received as notably better** than what they had experienced in other cities and states across the country.

METHODOLOGY

Roundtables

The service provider/system partner roundtables were designed to gain insights on the dynamics of HSBC's collaborative efforts with regard to service provision and system function. The goal of the roundtable was to inform recommendations for enhancing system and program effectiveness, ultimately benefiting those served by HSBC. The participant body consisted of HSBC service providers and system partners whose systems of care interacted with homeless services in Boulder County. All four roundtables were conducted virtually via Zoom and lasted roughly 1.5 hours each. They were designed to coincide with regular meetings of the following four HSBC work groups:

- Outreach collaborative (a large group consisting mostly of frontline staff)
- Systems meeting (leadership-level personnel, including Boulder shelter and HOPE but not MHP)

- Housing exits
- Housing navigation and retention

The roundtables were facilitated by PPA research staff. To drive the discussion, PPA created a roundtable discussion guide that sought to gather information on the following:

- Identify local factors that impact inflows to homelessness, exits to permanent housing, and the effectiveness of existing interventions in the greater Boulder area.
- Identify and gather feedback on ways to address any unmet service needs, barriers to access, and service capacity.
- Identify the strengths and challenges of the HSBC collaborative management structure and approach.
- Gather ideas on how to improve service outcomes and collaboration with HSBC, homeless service providers, and systems of care that touch homeless services.

The roundtables were recorded to facilitate accurate transcription. Participants were informed that the roundtables would be recorded, and their consent was obtained prior to recording. The roundtable transcripts were analyzed by PPA research staff using Dedoose qualitative data analysis software. The coding scheme for analysis followed pre-constructed and emergent themes based on the topics outlined above and the research questions that the topics were designed to address.

Interviews

The purpose of the governing bodies interviews was to gain insights into the dynamics of the HSBC collaborative at a systems level and identify areas needing improvement. Five small-group interviews were conducted with members of the governing bodies within the HSBC system of care, including the Executive Board and Policy Implementation Group. Interviewees were identified by HSBC and included representatives of each of the following entities:

- Boulder County
- City of Builder
- City of Longmont
- HSBC Policy Team
- Metro Denver Homeless Initiative

The interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom and lasted approximately one hour each. The interviews were conducted by a PPA facilitator using an interview guide drafted by PPA and vetted by HSBC. Interview questions were designed to gather information and insights on the following:

- Strengths and challenges of the HSBC service system and collaborative management structure
- Service capacity needs
- Barriers to service access in the community

- Opportunities for innovation
- Effective alignment of investments with system priorities
- Insights on how to improve service outcomes and the collaborative structure of HSBC

The interviews were recorded to facilitate accurate transcription. Participants were informed that the interviews would be recorded, and their consent was obtained prior to recording. The interview transcripts were analyzed by PPA research staff using Dedoose qualitative data analysis software. The coding scheme for analysis followed pre-constructed and emergent themes based on the topics outlined above and the research questions that the topics were designed to address.

Focus Groups

The purpose of the focus groups was to gather perspectives and stories from people with lived experience of homelessness in Boulder County. Six focus groups were conducted in person at six different locations in Boulder and Longmont. To maximize accessibility for participants, all focus groups were hosted by agencies that provide services to the target populations. The focus groups represented the following categories of single adults with lived experience of homelessness (i.e., currently or formerly unhoused):

- Unsheltered individuals (two groups)
- Individuals in temporary shelter (two groups)
- Individuals in permanent housing (two groups)

Participants were selected via convenience sample. Focus groups were timed to coincide with or work around activities for which the target audience was likely to already be present (e.g., meal distributions). Service providers distributed print flyers before the focus groups. At the start time, service providers directly reminded individuals to encourage their participation. As a result of these efforts, the focus groups were well attended, with a total of 48 individuals, averaging eight per group. Each focus group lasted roughly 1.5 hours. Light refreshments were provided. On completing the focus group, each participant received a $40 Visa gift card.

Focus groups were facilitated by a PPA researcher. A second PPA researcher was present to assist with logistics, recording, and incentive distribution. The facilitator used a discussion guide that was drafted by PPA and reviewed by HSBC. The discussion guide was designed to address the following research questions:

- Which services appear to be most important for producing outcomes?
- What service capacity needs or gaps are identified and how might these be addressed?
- What barriers prevent or decrease the likelihood that individuals experiencing homelessness will engage in system services?
- What are effective solutions that have been used to remove such barriers or increase the likelihood of engagement?

- What are recommendations for strengthening the overall effort to improve outcomes including the addition of other best practices?

The focus groups were recorded to facilitate accurate transcription. Participants were informed that the focus groups would be recorded, and their consent was obtained prior to recording. The focus group transcripts were analyzed by PPA research staff using Dedoose qualitative data analysis software. The coding scheme for analysis followed pre-constructed and emergent themes based on the topics outlined above and the research questions that the topics were designed to address.

The following sections summarize the findings from all of the qualitative data collection and analysis efforts organized by research question.

STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES OF HSBC SYSTEM AND COLLABORATION

"What are strengths and challenges of the HSBC service system and collaborative management structures and approaches?"[3]

Responses to questions about strengths and challenges of the HSBC service system and collaborative management structure were frequently in direct conflict across participants and data collection efforts (i.e., roundtables and interviews), suggesting experiences, perspectives, and perceptions may vary widely among and between HSBC providers and governing bodies. These conflicts are discussed below before turning to the strengths and challenges that surfaced.[4]

Across roundtables and interviews, one of the most frequently noted strengths of the HSBC is the ability to collaborate effectively across multiple agencies in a geographic service area. Participants described how HSBC helps partners collaborate around service provision and funding opportunities, ensures programs do not operate at odds with or duplicate one another, and overcomes silos and parochial mindsets to address problems that the region has in common.

However, one of the most frequently noted challenges to the HSBC system is the lack of cohesion across the elected officials and policymakers that represent Boulder County, the City of Boulder and the City of Longmont. This directly affects how each entity makes funding decisions, sets priorities and chooses programmatic approaches, which in turn complicates collaboration and hinders effective service provision. As a result, it can be challenging for HSBC to maintain common collaborative goals and ensure that programmatic decisions and resource allocations are aligned with systemwide priorities.

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[3] This summary is based on responses from both the governing body interviews and the service provider roundtables.
[4] For both the interviews and roundtables, individuals/sessions as well as across data collection types had conflicting views about what were strengths vs challenges.

Strengths

The knowledge that HSBC partners bring and share with the collaborative is a notable strength of the collaborative management structure. The collaborative structure allows partners to build relationships and a shared knowledge base so that they know each other and the services they provide better, are better equipped to make referrals, and can utilize ideas others have had success with.

Participants also noted that HSBC and its service providers are able to observe changing needs and service gaps in communities and take action to try to address them. Some interview participants credit this to perceived efficient communication between direct service providers and leadership and the ability to get both perspectives.

The large array of services that the HSBC service system provides and that partner agencies have access to when they come together to support common clients is a strength, per both groups. One roundtable participant specifically identified "recovery circles" providing peer support to help people become or stay housed as one of the impactful services the HSBC system provides.

HSBC service provision and collaboration benefit when partners have connections to additional external partners. For example, HSBC service providers' connections with non-HSBC organizations are a strength, as they help to fill service gaps the HSBC currently cannot (e.g., Spanish-speaking providers). HSBC leadership's efforts to connect partners to external entities at the state and larger local level (e.g., chamber of commerce, business community) are also a strength. At the same time, interview participants value HSBC partners' autonomy to pursue funding individually and their ability to build relationships and coordinate without governing bodies' guidance.

Challenges

Rules, restrictions, and obstructions at the programmatic, local, state, and federal levels often create barriers to getting and keeping people housed and are a significant challenge to service provision. For example, programs and landlords often have conditions and restrictions around eligibility and sobriety, sometimes governed by state- or federal-level rules. Further, even when individuals meet requirements for service provision, they are not always able to access services due to the geographic separation of services in Boulder County.[5] For example, multiple interview participants pointed to shelters and services being located in separate communities, making some clients reluctant to leave their community to shelter.

Further, participants shared that local agencies are constrained by rules and policies (often imposed at the federal level) that make it difficult to take actions that benefit the region, even if the partners involved have a regional mindset. Additionally, both groups pointed to strains on collaboration due to

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[5] This finding was shared by focus group participants as well.

conflicts between HSBC partners (especially those representing different geographic areas) regarding how funding resources are or should be allocated, with some feeling that allocations are inequitable. Perhaps reflective of this, roundtable and interview participants repeatedly explained that the limited resources and funding available for homelessness services is a crucial barrier to effective service provision in Boulder County.

Challenges around data/information sharing were repeatedly noted, with participants pointing to partners' different data systems which do not always collect standardized information, different interpretations of policies governing release of personal identifying information, and inconsistent and inefficient access to client data through partners. Additionally, there is confusion stemming from a notable lack of defined policies and procedures around the HSBC's leadership roles and structure (e.g., bylaws). Also, there are not standardized expectations for partners' reporting on how allocated funding is being used to support HSBC priorities.

A small number of interview participants expressed frustration, feeling that funders, elected officials, and programs are not focused enough on the larger, nationwide context of the systemic and complex issues that drive homelessness. Similarly, some interview participants described frustration that although HSBC partners are ambitious and driven, they may not have large enough players at the table or the resources to make the desired level of impact. Some providers also expressed frustration around the HSBC's focus, feeling that too much time and effort is spent on administrative activities such as training, and not enough on providing (or seeking additional resources for) supportive services.

Finally, the local context itself is a major challenge to HSBC. Community opposition and prejudice against unhoused people is a significant challenge hindering effective service provision, per roundtable and interview participants. Local community members are opposed to low-income housing, the "not in my backyard" (NIMBY) mentality is prevalent, there is political opposition to supporting unhoused people, and community members' perceptions of the homelessness issue led them to distrust any positive data around the impacts of programmatic efforts. Also at the systemic level, the lack of affordable housing in Boulder County is a significant issue leading to increased homelessness, including after people become newly housed, and making it very difficult to exit people from homelessness.

Ensuring Alignment in Resource and Programmatic Decision Making

"What are characteristics of an effective systems approach that mitigates the risk that partners will make resource and programming decisions not aligned with system priorities?"[6]

Maintaining alignment is critical to an effective systems approach. However, this is challenging when resource allocations or programmatic decisions are impacted by the political environment with

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[6] This question was only asked in the governing body interviews. Thus, all findings in the following section reflect interview participant perspectives.

frequent risk of turnover in political positions. This can mean that support of HSBC priorities is undermined when those in power have other priorities or have conflicting requirements or expectations. Further, because funding opportunities are finite, partners/entities may pursue opportunities that appear or are less aligned with the broader HSBC system priorities.

Sometimes even when efforts are largely aligned with system priorities, HSBC partners/entities face challenges implementing them with fidelity, including when funding is insufficient, or other policies prevent aligned decision making. For example, the current coordinated entry requires clients to provide vital documents even though doing so is not aligned with the HSBC's housing first approach. Participants provided input on what opportunities they see to make sure that future resource allocations and program decisions are aligned with HSBC system priorities and recommended the following:

1. Remaining data-driven
2. Avoiding duplicative and/or conflicting work
3. Being transparent about partners' priorities and agendas
4. Increasing transparency around funding use
5. Seeking executive approval
6. Balancing alignment and responsivity
7. Focusing on alignment with the HSBC rather than funders

To expand, participants felt that consistently using data and evaluation to guide programmatic decision making and resource allocation is important to ensuring alignment with the HSBC system's priorities. Several recommendations emphasized the importance of HSBC partners being communicative and on the same page. For example, ensuring that individual partners' priorities, policy directions, and programming decisions do not conflict with or unnecessarily duplicate the work of other partners; something that could be supported by a strong strategic plan. Relatedly, participants described the importance of acknowledging that all partners also have their own agendas and ensuring that there is an expectation and environment for transparent communication regarding partners' agendas and any concerns around them. Having increased transparency around HSBC partners' investments in programs and the outcomes related to those investments may also support aligned resource allocation. Multiple participants also identified the need to bring more significant programmatic and resource use decisions for HSBC executive board or leadership level approval.

In addition to maintaining alignment among HSBC partners and their respective priorities, it is important for HSBC to be mindful of how external factors may impact the system's and partners' priorities, per participants. For example, it is important that partners be able to intentionally discuss how to navigate maintaining program fidelity and alignment with HSBC priorities while also being responsive to changing situations and service provision needs on the ground. At the same time, participants suggested that the HSBC and its partners should work to ensure that funding opportunities or priorities set by funders do not influence resource allocation or programmatic decision making in ways that meaningfully conflict with or undermine HSBC's priorities.

SERVICES MOST IMPORTANT FOR OUTCOMES

"Which services appear to be most important for producing outcomes?"[7]

Case managers/workers are crucial in connecting unhoused people to a wide range of services, resources, and information and assisting people in applying for housing or getting on lists. Focus group participants also discussed the positive impact of case workers conducting street outreach, advocating for them, helping them secure vital documents, and being able to have one-on-one time and daily contact with them to keep moving efforts forward. Currently housed participants also described the importance of continued case management, expressing deep appreciation for their genuine effort and desire to help as well as being able to work with the same case manager.

State and federal assistance programs were the most helpful supports for people experiencing homelessness (e.g., Medicaid, SNAP, SSI, Social Security, Aid to the Needy Disabled). Two participants who are currently housed described how eligibility expansion several years ago allowed them to receive SSI benefits, which they credited as the reason they were able to secure housing. Unfortunately, this policy is no longer in place. Rental assistance, capped affordable rent, continued food and other basic needs supports, and mental health services were described as key factors in housing retention. Additional factors that contributed to well-being included peer support/peer communities, transportation assistance, entertainment opportunities (e.g., music, YouTube, television), and allowing pets.

Services that meet basic needs were identified in all focus groups as being among the most helpful while unhoused (e.g., services providing or connecting people with food, showers/hygiene products, shelter/a place to sleep, clothing, mental and physical health care, and laundry). Reliable mail access through service providers is important for unhoused individuals who do not have personal addresses. Participants described how this service allows them to receive the communications and vital documents needed to secure housing and benefits as well as keep up with things like medical appointments. Lockers and other secured storage spaces are highly valued, as they reduce the amount that needs to be carried and protect against theft. However, participants noted that these lockers are quite small and that there is typically a long wait to get one due to limited supply. Transportation assistance (e.g., bus tickets and gas cards) helps people maintain employment and engage in system services. Comments regarding youth services in Boulder were positive; however, further research, targeted toward youth, is needed to provide a clear impression.

SERVICE CAPACITY NEEDS OR GAPS

"What service capacity needs or gaps are identified and how might these be addressed?"

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[7] This question was asked of focus group participants.

Table 2 provides a description of each service capacity gap identified during the governing body interviews and service provider roundtables. The columns indicate the number of interviews and roundtables in which each gap was mentioned by at least one participant, and whether each gap was also identified in at least one of the focus groups with individuals with lived experience of homelessness.

TABLE 8. SERVICE CAPACITY GAPS

SERVICE GAP	# INTERVIEWS MENTIONED	# ROUND TABLES MENTIONED	MENTIONED IN FOCUS GROUPS
Housing retention: Lack of services and supports to help people remain housed.	3	5	Yes
Families: Lack of services or facilities targeted to families, including emergency shelter.	4	4	Yes*
Affordable housing/units: Lack of affordable housing and units, including for transitional and bridge housing, permanent supportive housing, and rapid rehousing.	4	2	Yes
Services by geography: Lack of some services in certain communities, forcing people to seek services in unfamiliar communities.	3	3	Yes
Case management: Lack of funding, providers for case management. Lack of types or intensities of case management for certain needs.	4	1	Yes
Seniors: Gaps in housing and related services for seniors (e.g., fixed incomes, physical/mental health, dementia, etc.)	1	2	No
Domestic violence: Lack of domestic violence shelters and space in those shelters.	2	1	Yes
Pets: Few or no accommodations for animal companions of unhoused people.	1	1	Yes
Mental/behavioral health: Lack of mental health supports, housing/sheltering opportunities; and lack of funding for services.	3	0	Yes
Substance use: Lack of sufficient services and housing opportunities for people struggling with substance use.	3	0	Yes
Seasonal sheltering: Lack of resources, space to shelter volume of people inside during inclement weather/winter across HSBC service area.	2	0	Yes
Insufficient shelter space: Overall, shelter space is insufficient to meet current needs.	2	0	Yes

SERVICE GAP	# INTERVIEWS MENTIONED	# ROUND TABLES MENTIONED	MENTIONED IN FOCUS GROUPS
Transportation: Lack of available options or funding for transportation people can readily use to access services.	1	0	Yes
Living in cars: Lack of safe lot programs or other resources (e.g., vehicle repairs, gas cards) for people living in their vehicles.	0	2	Yes
Street medicine: Lack of medical and mental health services provided where unhoused people are located.	0	1	Yes
Employment services: Insufficient services to help prepare for or obtain employment.	0	1	Yes

*Though participants in one focus group described instances of families not receiving sufficient services, several focus groups also suggested that families had exclusive or more access to some services.

Basic Needs and Support Services for the Unsheltered

Basic needs services were identified as a key service capacity gap in Boulder County. Participants from both Boulder and Longmont described a severe lack of functional, free public restrooms they could access and few affordable options for showering, with Longmont participants noting places they had previously been able to use the restroom or shower for free are no longer accessible to them due to changes in policy.

Local and state-level policies are making it difficult for unhoused people to exist in public spaces in Boulder County. The laws and enforcement related to camping bans, social engineering, and arrests and issuances of trespassing tickets for sitting or having belongings in public spaces are causing significant challenges for participants and the unhoused people they know. There are pervasive issues of prejudice against unhoused people, "Not In My Backyard" (NIMBY) sentiment, and a lack of empathy for unhoused people in Boulder County. This has led to participants' harassment by the public in the form of frequently calling the police when they are peacefully existing in public spaces, swearing and rude gesturing, and even throwing objects at them. Participants described a clear sense of dehumanization, and that unhoused people were unwanted by the housed community and business owners in Boulder County.

Insufficient shelter space and hours also pose challenges, especially during inclement weather, as many are unable to get in or must leave on weekends when other indoor spaces may be closed. Further, it appears motel vouchers are no longer offered regularly when shelters reach capacity. Participants in Longmont explained there are fewer locations that provide food and clothing now than in the past. Unsheltered participants also cited challenges in accessing medical care, noting that hospitals often attempt to turn them away. Finally, one participant noted that services in Longmont are not currently

centralized, forcing people to spend large amounts of time traveling to different locations to receive different basic needs supports. Access to affordable laundry is also very limited.

As previously noted, participants described direct street outreach by case workers and outreach teams as key opportunities for service system engagement and receiving support. However, participants observed a need for more street outreach and direct case management to be conducted, some pointing to an observed reduction in the amount of these services being conducted as well as the type of services offered during outreach, especially in Longmont. Turnover was also noted. In Boulder participants described a sense that even when outreach is conducted, caseworkers/staff sometimes prioritize individuals who have someone to vouch for them, their sobriety, and lack of criminal record, leaving others without that support and opportunity.

Suggestions to address some of these gaps included providing more locations and opportunities for unhoused people to access services to meet their needs for food, showers, bathrooms, and laundry at little or no cost; continuing to assist people in signing up for food, medical, and other assistance through government programs; and attempting to provide multiple basic needs services at locations to reduce clients' travel time and distance. To help address these gaps and increase system engagement, participants suggested increasing the number of case managers/workers and increasing their boots on the ground outreach efforts.

Housing Affordability, Accessibility and Retention

The lack of affordable housing in Boulder County was consistently identified as one of the most significant barriers to becoming housed and maintaining housing across all focus groups. Participants pointed to incredibly high, out of reach housing costs compared to the income of a working person, even for a one-bedroom apartment; gentrification; companies buying up housing; landlords expecting the first and last month's rent up front; and observations that while new housing is being built, much of it is luxury apartments. Regardless of price, housing units are generally full, and while some appreciated that new affordable housing is being built, they recognized it will not be sufficient to meet Boulder County's needs.

The high cost of living in Boulder County makes it difficult for unhoused people to save money, even if they are working; and to maintain housing if they become housed. Participants described seeing other homeless people being housed in apartments only to once again lose their housing because they are unable to pay rent, despite being employed. Participants described a larger issue around reduced/insufficient government assistance and eligibility issues, noting the lengthy application process, restrictive eligibility, and issues securing owed assistance.

There was a sense of frustration among some sheltered and unsheltered participants based on their experience that sometimes individuals with the highest needs or most disruptive behaviors seem to be given the most attention by service providers and are prioritized in getting housing, which does not feel fair to those who do not have addictions and are working very hard to get back on their feet. To help

address this, participants asked for more transparency and accountability from service providers around how services are provided, to whom, and why any changes in services occur.

Suggestions for addressing some of these concerns included taking the length of time people have been waiting on lists to receive housing into account when awarding vouchers, providing greater transparency regarding how people are selected for the housing lottery, and increasing accountability for notifying people of their responsibilities when awarded a voucher and if there are changes to their position in the lottery, particularly if they can no longer expect housing.

The governing bodies interview, service provider roundtable, and focus group participants all highlighted the issue of insufficient housing retention services and supports in Boulder County. Focus group participants noted insufficiencies including housing vouchers only covering a portion of rent for one year for individuals who are not disabled, a lack of rental/utility assistance for single adults facing evictions, and the extent of assistance for some being $500 towards a security deposit. To help address this issue, focus group participants suggested providing more housing retention services overall, rental/utility assistance to single adults facing eviction, rental assistance for a longer duration, to create a safety net and incentivizing landlords to be more flexible with late payments. Provide more housing retention services/supports.

Mental Health, Employment and Legal Supports

There are not enough mental health workers and supports to meet the different levels of need people have in the shelters and HSBC apartments. Focus group participants described individuals in these settings whose needs are at a higher level than can be met in those settings with current supports as well as turnover of mental health professionals. To help address this issue, efforts should be made to attract and retain additional mental health professionals.[8]

One participant suggested that there is a gap in the employment services currently provided, noting that many unhoused people are highly educated or skilled and thus many of the current courses are not helpful to them. The competitive job market in Boulder County and the young and highly educated workforce were described as challenges, with some citing ageism as a barrier to securing employment that could support becoming housed. To help address this gap, the service system could expand the employment services to include support for securing higher-skill opportunities. One participant suggested supporting unhoused people waiting for vouchers by paying or housing them temporarily as they train and work as peer mentors.

Multiple participants pointed to the need for legal representation and consultation services for unhoused people in Boulder County to help them contest tickets, secure due benefits, and fight illegal evictions. Providing more of these services, including through individuals with expertise in specialized

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[8] This was also a recommendation from the service provider roundtables.

areas such as disability law, senior law, and eviction law could help address this gap and help people keep their benefits and housing.

Finally, while advocacy by providers is appreciated, unhoused participants in both Boulder and Longmont described generally feeling unheard, that they are being given "lip service," that promises made to them are empty, and a sense that no action will be taken based on their voiced needs.

Equity

Service providers and governing bodies felt that the HSBC provides services equitably, overall; however, participants acknowledge gaps in services and underrepresentation in the service system for vulnerable populations. Multiple interview and roundtable participants described HSBC services as being provided equitably overall but noted that services may be constrained by other factors that are beyond service providers' control (e.g., the limited availability of housing or supportive services). Focus group participants had mixed views on whether they were treated with fairness, dignity, and respect by service providers. They felt that case managers tend to treat participants with more empathy and respect than the public, the authorities, and shelter staff. Some service provider staff, particularly shelter staff, have not received proper support or training on organizational policies/procedures or how to engage with diverse clients, including those with complex needs and histories, in a trauma-informed, respectful, professional, fair, and safe manner. Participants felt this has contributed to instances of unnecessary escalation, favoritism, disrespect, infantilization, bullying, and outbursts by some shelter staff.

To address this gap, participants suggested developing a standardized training program for staff across all shelters to define standards for treating clients with dignity and respect, ensure all staff are aware of policies and procedures, as well as equip staff to work effectively with individuals who have trauma, mental health, addiction, and violence histories. Other suggestions included regularly administering surveys of shelter residents and staff through an external company and acting upon the findings and creating more opportunities for staff to seek support from their employers or peers, such as through a helpline.

Families face a lack of shelter and service options, and many services are geared towards single adults (though this finding is in conflict with the findings from some of the focus groups). People with criminal records are overrepresented in the unhoused population and there is a lack of the services, supports, and accepting landlords needed to get them housed. LGBTQIA+[9] people are underserved by the system and face a lack inclusive demographic options (e.g., for gender and sexual orientation) captured by the system and tailored services. BIPOC people are overrepresented in the unhoused population and underrepresented among those served by the system. Latinx clients face equity issues

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[9] LGBTQIA+ is an acronym that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual. The "+" represents all other identities that are not included in the acronym. It is an umbrella term that is often used to refer to the entire LGBTQIA+ community.

related to language barriers and immigration obstacles. Older adults/seniors are a growing and vulnerable subpopulation among homeless adults and there is a lack of tailored services to meet their needs. Youth, especially young women, are vulnerable to trafficking and other exploitation, and the HSBC service system has struggled to engage this population in a systematic way.

Additionally, both interview and roundtable participants noted equity concerns around how individuals are prioritized to receive services, including based on severity of disability. The severe lack of affordable housing in the HSBC service area has resulted in housing services being prioritized for individuals with the most vulnerabilities, leaving many without access (including those with vulnerabilities). One participant pointed to the need to revisit the system's vulnerability index to ensure that services are prioritized for those who need them most, suggesting that the current index may not be prioritizing services equitably and reinforcing the bottom-line need for additional affordable housing and housing resources to meet the community's needs.

Participants suggested establishing a dedicated shelter in Longmont. They also see opportunities to increase and improve housing and shelter services for vulnerable populations including unhoused families (though as mentioned above the input from focus groups calls into question whether this is a need), older adults, and people with physical disabilities, as well as to work collaboratively to explore how to focus in on meeting the needs of specific populations such as young women, people who are Indigenous, and people who are undocumented. Similarly, participants felt that the HSBC has an opportunity to increase outreach and relationship-building efforts to unhoused youth, especially youth of color and youth in the LGBTQIA+ community.

Finally, participants once again identified the need to intentionally evaluate and discuss the equity of HSBC programs and services. One interview participant suggested that ongoing and increasing use of program data could help the system understand equity in outcomes as well as guide efforts to address equity gaps in real-time.

BARRIERS TO SYSTEM ENGAGEMENT AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

What barriers prevent or decrease the likelihood that individuals experiencing homelessness will engage in system services. What are effective solutions that have been used to remove such barriers or increase the likelihood of engagement?

Unhoused individuals in Boulder County face numerous barriers to accessing and engaging with homelessness services, stemming from systemic, environmental, and personal challenges. One major issue is the difficulty housing providers face in securing liability insurance for individuals perceived as "high risk." Insurance companies often deny coverage or charge exorbitant premiums due to risks like meth remediation, which forces providers to prioritize housing individuals deemed "lower risk." This creates significant barriers for the most vulnerable individuals, particularly those with histories of substance use or higher needs.

Rigid sobriety policies further exclude individuals with addiction issues from the system. Many providers enforce zero-tolerance policies, meaning even a single relapse can result in losing housing. These strict requirements deter individuals from seeking help or services, particularly if they fear judgment or eviction after a relapse. Similarly, bureaucratic hurdles, such as tight timelines for completing paperwork, repetitive background checks, and navigating the coordinated entry process, discourage engagement with services. Background checks are especially problematic for individuals with felony records, who are often disqualified from affordable housing or program units without further consideration.

Service accessibility is another significant barrier. Many services are unavailable outside traditional business hours, leaving individuals without critical support during emergencies. Transportation challenges further limit access, as public transit often fails to connect unhoused individuals to service locations. Additionally, unreliable access to phones, the internet, and mailing addresses makes it difficult for individuals to communicate with service providers, follow up on housing opportunities, and navigate the system effectively.

The physical environment and policies of shelters also deter many individuals from using these facilities. Participants described poor shelter conditions, including cleanliness issues, theft, and disruptive behaviors, which make staying there unappealing. Strict rules, such as mandatory check-ins and counseling appointments, add to the difficulty, as missing a single requirement can result in losing shelter access. For those in subsidized housing, restrictive visitation policies, limited personal freedoms, and inadequate mental health support negatively affect their experience, with some residents feeling re-traumatized by the behaviors of neighbors dealing with mental health challenges.

Interactions with law enforcement present another significant challenge. Many unhoused individuals reported harassment, including raids, confiscation of belongings, and conflicting information about where they are allowed to be. These experiences disrupt their efforts to stabilize and secure housing, though some participants noted positive interactions with empathetic officers and outreach teams.

Health and personal challenges also play a role in disengagement. Physical disabilities, mental health conditions, trauma, and societal stigma prevent some individuals from seeking services. Young people and individuals with anxiety or pride, particularly men who may fear appearing weak, often struggle to ask for help or engage with providers. Meanwhile, the theft of personal belongings, including vital documents, creates recurring barriers to accessing benefits, housing, and employment.

To address these barriers, participants proposed a range of solutions. Improving communication and outreach is crucial. Suggestions included posting physical signs and flyers in public areas frequented by unhoused individuals, distributing updated resource pamphlets, and expanding direct street outreach. Reforming sobriety policies to adopt harm reduction approaches would make services more accessible to individuals with addiction issues, while simplifying service eligibility requirements, such as removing proof of residency mandates, could open the system to more people in need.

Participants emphasized the importance of improving shelter and housing conditions. Proposed changes included hiring additional sanitation staff, instituting quiet hours, creating sober dorms, and enhancing ventilation in shelters. In subsidized housing, residents would benefit from more relaxed visitation policies, improved accessibility for individuals with disabilities, and expanded mental health and psychiatric support tailored to their needs.

Expanding access to services also requires reducing systemic barriers. Participants recommended providing 24/7 service availability, particularly for mental health support, and offering transportation assistance to connect individuals to providers. Secure storage options, such as lockers for personal belongings, would help prevent theft and the resulting disruptions. Addressing gaps in technology access by providing phones, internet, and mailing addresses would further enable unhoused individuals to navigate the system effectively.

Finally, participants called for police reform and increased empathy from law enforcement when engaging with unhoused individuals. By reducing punitive measures like ticketing and raids and fostering more compassionate interactions, law enforcement could help build trust and support individuals' efforts to access services and secure housing.

Overall, these recommendations highlight the need for a more inclusive and flexible system that addresses both the systemic and personal challenges faced by unhoused individuals in Boulder County. By implementing these changes, service providers, policymakers, and community stakeholders can create a more supportive and effective path toward stability and housing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

What are recommendations for strengthening the overall effort to improve outcomes including the addition of other best practices?

Participants across data gathering approaches provided numerous recommendations to strengthen the overall impact of the HSBC system and improve collaboration among its partners. Central to these suggestions was the importance of educating the housed community, politicians, and local leaders about the realities of homelessness. To promote community empathy and engagement, participants suggested raising awareness about the lived experiences of unhoused individuals. This could include encouraging public donations to meet basic needs and challenging misconceptions that such support enables substance use. Providing opportunities for unhoused individuals to be heard at city council meetings or other official platforms was also recommended.

By building empathy and goodwill, HSBC could combat NIMBY attitudes, which often create barriers to service provision. Efforts to shift public opinion could include expanding data collection and dissemination to highlight progress and program outcomes, as well as fostering community champions in influential leadership and funding positions. For example, participants praised HSBC's recently

launched public dashboard for enhancing transparency and suggested similar efforts to guide real-time decision-making.

Improving data sharing practices was another major recommendation. Participants called for standardized agreements and universal expectations for sharing client information among partner agencies, which could enhance coordinated service provision. For instance, better data sharing could enable timely alerts about clients who pose risks to others and improve the accuracy of by-name lists. Additionally, participants suggested exploring joint funding opportunities, such as shared grants and braided funding, to foster collaboration and transparency among organizations.

Participants also recommended that the HSBC engage in policy advocacy at multiple levels—federal, state, local, and programmatic—to improve service delivery and address barriers. Policies informed by harm reduction and a deeper understanding of addiction were particularly emphasized, with calls for alternatives to evictions for individuals who relapse, such as counseling or referrals. Broader advocacy efforts should address root causes of homelessness, including the affordable housing crisis and cost-of-living disparities.

Service improvements were another key focus. Participants stressed the need for expanded housing retention supports, such as counseling and wraparound services, as well as increasing shelter capacity to meet immediate needs. Creative housing solutions, like container housing for individuals who are difficult to house or barred from traditional housing, were also suggested. Additionally, participants highlighted the importance of rental support programs, including renter insurance, additional vouchers, landlord compensation, and meth remediation funding.

Collaboration with additional partners was seen as critical to the HSBC's success. Participants recommended involving individuals with lived experience of homelessness in decision-making processes to ensure programs are responsive and aligned with community needs. Expanding partnerships with external organizations and municipalities was also suggested to enhance the system's reach and expertise. To improve equity, clarity, and effectiveness within the HSBC, participants proposed structural adjustments, such as leadership term limits, role rotation, and greater inclusion of smaller provider partners in leadership roles. They also emphasized the need for clear policies, procedures, and unified goals across the collaborative.

Streamlining services and reducing barriers to access were also common themes. While consolidating services geographically into one-stop locations can improve efficiency, participants noted that this approach should consider accessibility for clients outside central service areas, potentially requiring additional locations in Boulder and Longmont. To foster a more collaborative environment, participants recommended creating space during meetings for open dialogue and conflict resolution and ensuring that all voices, including smaller providers, are heard in decision-making processes.

Participants made several additional recommendations to address immediate needs and systemic gaps. For example, they advocated for sanctioned camping communities and safe parking lots to provide stability without fear of harassment or arrest, while recognizing housing as the ultimate goal. Expanding shelter space for vulnerable populations, such as older adults, and opening additional warming and cooling centers were seen as essential. Some participants also suggested offering survival skills information or classes for individuals who cannot or will not use shelters during inclement weather.

Finally, participants highlighted the importance of manageable caseloads for case managers to ensure consistent, high-quality support. Structuring case management to allow for daily contact with clients and smaller caseloads—ideally five to ten clients per worker—was seen as a way to provide more intensive services and better follow-through. Together, these recommendations reflect a comprehensive approach to strengthening the HSBC's impact and improving outcomes for individuals experiencing homelessness in Boulder County.

Appendix C. Literature Review Summary

Two of the research questions for this project were "What barriers prevent or decrease the likelihood that individuals experiencing homelessness will engage in system services?" and "What are effective solutions that have been used to remove such barriers or increase the likelihood of engagement?" To start to address these questions, PPA conducted a review of select reports and literature on emerging practices in the following categories:

- Hotel/motel conversions
- Enhanced case management
- Peer-support programs
- Safe outdoor spaces
- Safe parking programs
- Tiny home villages
- Progressive engagement
- Equity-focused approaches

This appendix summarizes the findings from the literature review and offers insights and recommendations for future work. PPA has also compiled tables with additional detail for use as a reference, including descriptions and key lessons from each document included in the review. The results shared should not be seen as a comprehensive assessment of best practices for reducing homelessness, but rather a small sampling of key research literature and government publications that offer relevant and potentially useful insights on the topic.

KEY INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Homelessness is a problem with many drivers, including social determinants of health such as economic stability and the social and community contexts in which it occurs. As such, there is no one best strategy when it comes to reducing homelessness. However, the 30 reviewed documents provide insights into best practices within and across individual strategies, with individual program findings discussed below. Some broad factors to keep in mind include:

- Homelessness prevention does not happen in a vacuum. Regardless of the approach selected, effective program design includes bringing in supportive services and community partners including public safety, employment, and health care.
- Homelessness programming is costly. Many of the most effective programs require significant investments into locations, staff, and wraparound services.

- Individuals should have agency in service provision. Some of the most successful programs include strong supportive services that recognize the recipient's independent value and let them drive service provision.
- Some programs are designed to address the negative impacts of homelessness, such as safe outdoor spaces. These may be seen as easy first steps to undertake, but the costs of funding staff and services to effectively implement them may be similar to programs designed to place residents in permanent housing. Communities should carefully evaluate the costs and benefits of any approach before deciding on the most effective low-barrier programming for their area.

Beyond this, context plays a heavy role in the success or failure of homelessness-reduction programs. The summary tables that follow each discussion include suggestions for reviewing individual case studies found in several of the reviewed documents, which provide in-depth analyses of the outcomes of these methods at individual locations. While these case studies are not generalizable, they may provide interesting insights into best practices or key contextual factors for success.

Although several programs and services have been around for decades, many states' homelessness responses and supports ramped up during the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, there may be new data yet unpublished by states and communities regarding their programming outcomes. The authors recommend regular, ongoing searches for new research and grey literature on the topic to keep up to date on emerging findings.

FINDINGS BY TOPIC

Summaries of findings are included below by topic area of interest. Following each summary paragraph is a reference table with the key insights from each resource used to inform that summary.

Hotel/Motel Conversions

Hotel or motel conversions involve developing former guest rooms into small, private apartments. These apartments offer tenants a place to safely keep their belongings and more permanence than a shelter or encampment.

Of the approaches reviewed, the viability of hotel/motel conversions is the most context dependent. It relies heavily on the number of vacant structures in the community and the ability to fund conversions, cited by the National Association of Realtors Research group as costing between $25,000-$50,000 per converted room at a full-service hotel. This topic had the most diverse available literature. The four sources reviewed included the paper referenced, a report from the Terner Center at UC Berkeley, a peer-reviewed paper, and an FAQ from the City of Albuquerque (Albuquerque, 2024) which is currently undertaking conversion projects. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, this strategy was seen as incredibly effective at reducing shelter intensity and providing a safe, clean space for residents. Albuquerque is approaching the topic by first developing "efficiency apartments" for single people and childless couples. It is recommended that HSBC review the individual case studies cited throughout this

literature when weighing the potential cost-effectiveness of this type of program for Boulder. Table 2 below includes the content abstracted from each resource that informed this summary of findings.

TABLE 9. HOTEL / MOTEL CONVERSIONS

Reid, C., Manji, S., & Rosenberg, H. (2021). *Addressing Homelessness Through Hotel Conversions*. The University of California Berkeley Terner Center for Housing Innovation.
Describes the results of 13 hotel/motel acquisitions across the country, including one in Denver, CO, that were designed to address homelessness. Notes that significant challenges with these conversions include a lack of sufficient funding, fragmented housing and health systems, and community opposition to new projects.
• Acquisition and conversion projects can progress more quickly and cost less money than new builds; however, these conversions still cost a significant amount of money that may not be available without increased, ongoing state and federal appropriations. • There is a current lack of technical and site selection expertise, combined with zoning challenges, community opposition, fragmented service provision, and insufficient personnel that contribute to the difficulties of scaling up these types of projects. • In addition to addressing these challenges through federal and state policy interventions and private technical assistance, Continuums of Care are critical partners in conversion work to better integrate these new options into comprehensive homelessness response strategies. (p. 3)
National Association of REALTORS® Research Group. Copyright ©2021. "Case Studies on Repurposing Hotels/Motels into Multifamily Housing." *National Association of REALTORS®*. All rights reserved.
This report describes the location, frequency, and type of hotel/motel conversions that occurred in the U.S. prior to 2020. Situated in the middle of the COVID-19 Pandemic, this information is intended to be used for those considering a purchase of a hotel for conversion into multi-family housing or other residential supports.

• This report describes the increasing popularity of AirBnBs as travel lodging, leading to a slow decline of the hotel industry. As hotels consider closures and selling to those who would repurpose them for housing, financing will play a major role in the feasibility of their use for housing.
• Key considerations and data from this report include:
  o "53% of hotel/motel conversions were converted into multifamily housing at a cost of less than $25,000 per room. Most limited-service hotels were converted into multifamily housing at less than $25,000 per room, while most full-service hotels were converted into multifamily housing at $25,000 to $50,000 per room." (p. 17)
  o "55% of hotel/motel conversions required rezoning, which can be a challenge for developers and constituent communities." (p. 17)
  o Exploring all private/equity, Lending, LIHTC, Tax Abatement, and other tax incentives can help create innovative funding structures for conversions. (p. 20)
• It may be beneficial to review the individual case studies at the end of this report when considering how to finance hotel conversions.

City of Albuquerque. (2024). *Converting Hotels/Motels to Housing: Information about the City of Albuquerque's plan to covert hotel and motels to permanent housing*.
This brief from the City of Albuquerque describes the city's plan to convert motels and hotels into permanent housing. It responds to frequently asked questions about the program including zoning and building requirements, residents and affordability, supportive services, amenities, transparency and accountability, and program next steps. Work began on conversions in 2023.
• The city's principles for this program include: o Apartments will be basic but safe, with efficiency apartments for single people and childless couples being the first stage of development. These apartments would be designed to have safe food storage and

cleaning amenities but may rely on things like hot plates or microwaves for food preparation rather than full ranges or ovens.

o   Apartments must be professionally managed by a property management company.

o   Mixed-income communities will be developed to provide for both at- and below-market-rate housing.

o   Conversions will be located in geographically diverse areas rather than clustered downtown.

o   Public-private partnerships will be key to the program's success. Conversion projects funded by the city will include onsite services coordinators to assess the needs of tenants and connect them to the proper, relevant resources. The coordinators will additionally be responsible for other supportive efforts including things like food boxes, vaccine clinics, financial literacy workshops, and other community-based activities, along with leading conversations to build trust with tenants and address problems on the front end.

- Note: the city does not intend for these conversions to be considered permanent supportive housing, here defined as rental assistance plus intensive case management.

Colburn, G. et al. (2022). Hotels as Noncongregate Emergency Shelters: An Analysis of Investments in Hotels as Emergency Shelter in King County, Washington During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Housing Policy Debate, 32*(6), 853–875.

The study highlights a new approach to shelter delivery that not only responded to the public health imperatives of COVID-19 but also indicated positive health and social outcomes compared to traditional congregate settings.

- This intervention was seen as extremely successful and well-supported by residents and local leaders, leading to its extension from a brief three-month pilot to a program lasting over a year and a half. De-intensifying the shelter system through group hotels was successful in reducing the spread of COVID-19. However, this study does not provide a cost-benefit analysis to the intervention.

- Program highlights for participants include stable spaces to sleep, wash, and leave belongings; increased opportunities for high-quality engagement with staff; improved health and well-being; reduced interpersonal conflict; and a greater focus on future goals.

- Researchers additionally described features of the hoteling program that contributed significantly to its success: designated personal space for residents, personal safety, secure storage for personal belongings, unrestricted access (entry and exit times), and predictable access to food.

Enhanced Case Management

Enhanced case management expands on traditional services to those at risk of or experiencing homelessness through additional supports around other social determinants of health, such as transportation, health care, or employment services.

Six documents, ranging from government toolkits to peer-reviewed studies, were included in this review. Taken together, these findings show that not all case management is created equal. The most thorough report, a meta-analysis spanning 43 randomized controlled trials, found that high-intensity case management was unlikely to reduce the possibility of a person becoming homeless. However, it likely does lead to fewer days experiencing homelessness. With a caveat that program success relies heavily on context, the review finds that non-abstinence-contingent housing, particularly the Housing First model, is likely to reduce homelessness. It also suggests that housing vouchers supplemented with case management, along with residential treatment paired with case management, likely produce better outcomes than vouchers or residential treatment alone.

Other papers found enhanced case management, which may also include support around other basic necessities in addition to housing, more effective than general case management. Further, the literature notes the high expense of this intervention due to the intensity of services provided. If a community is going to undertake this approach, it should ensure there is an adequate source of long-term funding and enough community-centered providers to successfully implement the program. Table 10 below includes the content abstracted from each resource that informed this summary of findings.

TABLE 10. ENHANCED CASE MANAGEMENT

Munthe-Kaas, H. M., Berg, R. C., & Blaasvær, N. (2018). Effectiveness of interventions to reduce homelessness: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Campbell Systematic Reviews, 14*(1), 1–281.
Meta-analysis of 43 randomized controlled trials including ~10,570 participants. Findings suggest that case management and housing programs are consistently more effective than usual services in reducing homelessness and increasing the amount of time spent in stable housing. It is difficult to conclude whether interventions that combine housing with case management are more effective than case management only since only one study included that comparison, and this evidence was assessed as having very low certainty.

• High-intensity case management is not likely to decrease the possibility of a person becoming homeless, but overall, typically leads to fewer days total experiencing homelessness relative to traditional, lower intensity supports. This study is careful to note the differences in context across geographic areas that may impact outcomes, along with differences in outcome by local definitions of homelessness.
• Abstinence-contingent housing has uncertain effects on housing stability with case management.
  o Non-abstinence-contingent housing, particularly Housing First approaches, probably reduces homelessness and may as much as double the number of participants placed in permanent housing within two years. Other non-abstinence-contingent models may be less effective, but evidence is uncertain.
  o Housing Vouchers combined with case management are probably more effective in reducing homelessness and improving stable housing than usual services or case management alone.
  o Residential treatment with case management may be more effective for adults with mental health or substance use concerns at reducing time spent homeless after leaving treatment (p. 85-88)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2010). *Permanent Supportive Housing – Training Frontline Staff* (No. HHS Pub. No. SMA-10-4509). Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
This workbook is for staff who deliver permanent supportive housing and contains program outlines, elements of PSH, and theories behind PSH. It highlights the importance of the role of case managers and offers insights into best practices (p. 5).

• Successful programs meet tenants' needs by doing the following:
  1. Employing evidence-based practices;
  2. Tailoring services toward recovery, improved functioning, and life satisfaction rather than symptom reduction; and
  3. Providing services in natural settings, such as at tenants' homes or workplaces, rather than at an office to which they must travel.
  4. Actively engage people;
  5. Develop a positive helping relationship;
  6. Create an alliance between case managers and program participants to support their success; and
  7. Uphold tenants' legal rights and consumer housing preferences
• Case managers in permanent supportive housing programs should consider using this document as a reference when building and implementing their permanent supportive housing programs.

Bethany Dominik Consulting LLC. (2023). *Marin County Proposition 47 Services Cohort 2 Final Local Evaluation Report*. Prepared for the Marin County Behavioral Health & Recovery Services.
This report is the summary of the second cohort of the Marin County Proposition 47 grant aimed to serve residents who had histories of arrests, charges, or detention by the criminal justice system and a history of repeat, low-level offenses due to homelessness, substance use disorders, and mental health issues. Within this population of focus, Cohort 2 aimed to engage transitional aged youth, Spanish speakers, and unhoused individuals. Two bilingual (English/Spanish) case managers were hired to assist this population in enrollment, transportation, system navigation, and housing. (p. 3)
• Participants in this program responded well to housing supports, supporting the idea that stable housing has to happen before people are able to fully engage in mental health and substance use treatment. (p. 4) • As part of this cohort, case managers provided substantial assistance for housing, shelter, and other basic necessities, which helped to meet immediate needs and pave the way for many clients to substantially improve their housing situation, engage in substance use recovery, and reduce criminal justice involvement. • These low-barrier services have been adopted by Marin County Recovery Coaches and the Probation Department and will continue in a similar form even though Cohort 2 funding has ended. • "Additionally, through Prop 47 Cohort 3 Marin County will be expanding access to transitional housing for individuals involved in Marin's collaborative courts. By continuing to provide low-barrier services to clients experiencing homelessness and through expanding transitional housing resources, Marin aims to support individuals' substance use recovery and successful exit from the criminal justice system and provide steppingstones to a healthier future." (p. 4)
Reid, C. (2023). *Permanent Supportive Housing as a Solution to Homelessness: The Critical Role of Long-Term Operating Subsidies*. The University of California Berkeley Terner Center for Housing Innovation.
This report highlights the costs of permanent supportive housing and the relative value they provide to program outcomes.
• "Sustained investments in the day-to-day costs of operating PSH and providing high-quality supportive services are critical to the long-term success of the PSH model…. A lack of sustainable funds raises concerns over the viability of developing and financing PSH programs, and future considerations should include assisting developers in accessing health care funding for support services." (p. 2) • "Properties located in urban areas, as well as those who serve multiple distinct homeless populations (for example, properties that serve transitional age youth, veterans, and survivors of domestic violence at one site), have higher costs than those who are focused on one population, or that are located in more suburban places." Care is a driver of cost. (p. 3) • Failing to adequately fund PSH has negative program outcomes: properties with lower resources have higher rates of rent arrears and moveouts, increasing the risk of returns to homelessness. (p. 4) • Successful PSH programs are effective programs for assisting people in exiting homelessness and staying housed long term. (p. 10) • Larger PSH buildings can derive cost efficiencies, whereas distinct PSH set-aside populations at a given property increases costs. (p. 12-13) • "The reliance on coordinated entry systems to lease up units was identified as a major challenge in successfully placing residents in buildings suited to their needs, and has the effect of lowering resources when units sit vacant for several months." (p. 15) • "The data suggest that residents engage more with services in buildings with more resources and a greater presence of on-site staff." (p. 20) • Overall, there is also the need to reduce fragmentation and complexity in the housing finance system, as well as to boost resources. (p. 23)
Ponka, D., Agbata, E., Kendall, C., Stergiopoulos, V., Mendonca, O., Magwood, O., Saad, A., Larson, B., Sun, A. H., Arya, N., Hannigan, T., Thavorn, K., Andermann, A., Tugwell, P., & Pottie, K. (2020). The effectiveness of case

management interventions for the homeless, vulnerably housed and persons with lived experience: A systematic review. *PLOS ONE, 15*(4), e0230896.
Meta-analysis of 56 primary studies. Standard case management had both limited and short-term effects on substance use and housing outcomes and showed potential to increase hostility and depression. Intensive case management substantially reduced the number of days spent homeless, as well as substance and alcohol use. Critical time interventions and assertive community treatment were found to have a protective effect in terms of rehospitalizations and a promising effect on housing stability. Assertive community treatment was found to be cost-effective compared to standard case management.
• "Case management approaches were found to improve some if not all of the health and social outcomes that were examined in this study. The important factors were likely delivery intensity, the number and type of caseloads, hospital versus community programs and varying levels of participant needs. More research is needed to fully understand how to continue to obtain the increased benefits inherent in intensive case management, even in community settings where feasibility considerations lead to larger caseloads and less-intensive follow-up" (p. 2). • Specifically, intensive case management, critical time interventions, and assertive community treatment were found to be more impactful than standard case management. Case management needs to be continuous, community-based, and intensive so as to maintain and/or increase the gains achieved.

Peer Support Programs

Peer support programs offer those who have experienced homelessness or difficulty with housing a chance to work with newer service recipients directly, offering a path to foster trust and service uptake. Peer support can happen through tenant councils or other affinity groups.

Two of the documents in this review discussed peer support programs, one written by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the other by CSH, with authors including tenants of permanent supportive housing. The HUD report describes peer support as a core principle of Housing First, an approach to ending homelessness that centers the idea that the best way to get a person out of homelessness is to give them a home. Peer support programs, such as Tenant Councils, can be effective ways to support ongoing housing for those who have exited homelessness. A key benefit of this strategy is that fellow tenants or community members in a similar situation are providing support. This reduces (but does not eliminate) the need for funding staff and administration while improving tenant independence, health, and overall success. A list of key considerations and resource needs deemed essential for success is included in table 4 below along with the content abstracted from each resource that informed this summary of findings.

TABLE 11. PEER-SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Arnold, L., Patton, T., Oliver, C., Rhoden, A., Sparks, H., & Winter, C. (n.d.). *Creating Tenant Councils in Supportive Housing: A guidebook for tenants and partners*. CSH
Outlines the definition, purpose, and role of a Tenant Council. Provides information for Tenant Council members on how to structure their body and meetings.
• Examples of Tenant Council roles include: o Discussing safety concerns and present solutions and recommendations to Property Management and the building owner

- o Creating unity between PSH partners while centering tenants
- o Improving sense of community in the building and neighborhood
- o Developing relationships with council members, churches, local police and businesses
- o Improving access to resources such as SSI, Section 8, Moving On, educational services, social services, legal rights, employment services, senior centers, Boys and Girls Clubs, and health centers
- o Social event planning such as game nights, outings, and workshops
- o Implementing a welcoming committee to greet new tenants and provide support during move in
- o Accompanying a tenant or support a tenant in talking to property management about a concern (p. 11).
- The paper is careful to note that Tenant Councils are not security teams or police, nor are they responsible for property management or landlords, and they are not meant to replace paid service providers. Paid peer mentors are a separate role that should also garner investment. Further, Tenant Councils are not legal aid and should not be expected to argue or threaten partners (p. 12).
- Key considerations and supplies for Tenant Councils include:
- o Elected Tenant Council Leaders (by tenants)
- o Guarantee of no retribution or punishment for airing grievances
- o Safe spaces to meet, with and without property managers
- o Budgets for food, flyers, and leadership stipends
- o Childcare services for meetings
- o Support from property managers, service providers, and the property owner to receive and respond to feedback from tenants with solutions within a specified timeline
- o Agendas for each meeting
- o Group rules
- o Meeting accessibility
- o Voluntary attendance
- o Consistency
- o Interpreters as needed
- o Office supplies, food, and other administrative materials necessary for meetings (pp. 14-16).

United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2022). *COVID-19 Homeless System Response: Peer Support.*
Describes Peer Support as one of the Housing First model's core elements, "...based on the belief that people who have faced, endured, and overcome adversity can offer useful support, encouragement, hope, and perhaps mentorship to others facing similar situations" (p. 1). Peer support is also noted as a vital support for recovery-oriented approaches. This report includes links to additional case studies regarding peer supports.

- Benefits of peer supports include:
- o Reduces strain on staff who do not have lived expertise
- o Assists with harm reduction
- o Decreases cultural barriers
- o Builds trust and meaningful relationships
- o Increases participants' sense of hope and control
- o Positively impacts participants' ability to effect changes in their lives
- o Increases participants' self-care awareness
- o Increases participants' sense of belonging in the community
- o Helps to reduce, alleviate, or manage mental health illnesses
- o Helps to produce confidence in capability
- o Helps to reduce hospital admissions and relapses
- o Increases positive and productive coping skills
- o Improves participants' physical health
- o Produces positive outcomes related to homelessness
- o Increases rates of employment and satisfaction with finances

- Potential Challenges to the peer support model include:
  - Adequate compensation
  - Support for peer workers
  - Confidentiality
  - Vulnerability that may lead to relapse for peer supporters
  - Lack of employee benefits (health benefits and paid leave) for peer supporters
  - Providing additional ad hoc training to complement lived experience
  - Peer supporters may have difficulties establishing boundaries between themselves and their clients
  - Stigmatization of peer supporters (p. 1)

Safe Outdoor Spaces

The safe outdoor spaces model aims to eliminate pop-up or organically formed communities of people that are homeless by establishing government-sanctioned spaces. These communities may have caseworkers or other supportive staff onsite.

Three documents were reviewed regarding safe outdoor spaces as a homelessness prevention method, all coming from government or nonprofit sources. Taken together, the findings suggest that while this method may be effective in providing immediate or temporary shelter, it should not be seen as a solution to homelessness. Further, localities should carefully consider where spaces are sanctioned and whether existing indoor spaces or potential shelters have been adequately utilized before considering this option.

Factors that support participants who use these spaces to exit homelessness include: the availability of onsite services and case management, partnerships with local networks, a governance structure that includes resident input, and potential strategic locations of the encampment.

TABLE 12. SAFE OUTDOOR SPACES

Jon DeCarmine & Joseph S. Jackson. (2023). A Tale of Two Tent Cities: The Critical Role of Housing Engagement in Addressing Homeless Encampments. *Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law and Policy, 30*(3), 371–404.
Compared to law enforcement or "out of sight, out of mind" approaches, housing engagement approaches to homeless encampments offer a pro-social, highly regulated path to reducing homelessness in local communities.
- Treating housing encampments as "out of sight, out of mind" does not provide any long-term solution for unhoused people, who often have no place to go when encampments are eventually shut down or cleared out.   - By contrast, offering the GRACECamp model transitions these villages into effective outdoor, low-barrier emergency shelters.   - To utilize this model, camps need the following controls: - A single point of entry and exit   - Behavioral expectations for everyone's safety   - Appropriate oversight and staffing--including housing-focused case management to assist residents in transitions to permanent housing   - Best practices for housing engagement used in this study include: - Utilizing the Continuum of Care's dynamic prioritization model

- o Providing one-time supports as needed (such as first and last month's rent; security deposit) for those exiting homelessness into more permanent housing like apartments
  - o Focusing on helping people resolve relationship challenges with friends and family
- High collaboration between staff, including weekly reviews of rosters and shifting cases among staff as needed, and working with residents to determine the type of support and housing sought contributed to the success of the program.
- This plan was cost-effective for Gainesville, largely due to the existing supportive infrastructure surrounding the low-barrier shelter.

National League of Cities. (2022). *An Overview of Homeless Encampments for City Leaders* (Ending Housing Instability and Homelessness).

Describes encampments, reasons people live in encampments, community responses to encampments and relevant considerations (including sanctioned encampments), and the impact of these different responses on unhoused people and the issue of homelessness as a whole. Provides two city case studies of successes with sanctioned encampments, and recommendations.

- "Sanctioning encampments is not an alternative to providing services and permanent housing, but can ameliorate the conditions of living on the streets" (p. 1).
- "By providing individuals experiencing homelessness with connections to services, individuals living in encampments can experience improved access to support services and transitional or permanent housing options. Municipal support and involvement with encampments can also create the opportunity for the relationship and trust-building that is often key to ushering individuals living in encampments into other housing options" (p. 1).
- Cities who were able to utilize sanctioned encampment programs from which at least some individuals moved to permanent housing did the following:
  - o Partnered with service providers, neighboring regions, police, etc.
  - o Strategically selected location (1 of the 2 cities)
  - o Provided access on-location to services, case management, sanitation services, etc.
  - o Governance structure established including input from residents

Cohen, R., Yetvin, W., & Khadduri, J. (2019). *Understanding Encampments of People Experiencing Homelessness and Community Responses: Emerging Evidence as of Late 2018*. United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Describes encampments, reasons people live in encampments, community responses related to encampments and relevant considerations (including sanctioned encampments), what is known about effectiveness of responses, current evidence limitations, and additional research suggestions.

- "Sanctioned encampments are best understood as an interim solution to address the immediate conditions of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Such encampments are not themselves a solution to homelessness, and cities will need to invest in permanent solutions, such as housing that is affordable to extremely low-income people, permanent supportive housing, mental health services, affordable healthcare, and perhaps also supervised drug consumption sites and low-barrier employment opportunities (Junejo, Skinner, and Rankin, 2016; Loftus-Farren, 2011; Parr, 2018). Currently, very limited evidence suggests that sanctioned encampments help to reduce homelessness; we also do not know whether certain types of sanctioned encampments are more effective than others" (p. 16).
- Data on effectiveness of this strategy is not generalizable at this time due to different programmatic, environmental, geographic, and/or demographic contexts; lack of data collection by programs; lack of rigorous studies; and the wide variation in outcomes observed thus far. Additional studies and data collection are needed.
- "In a city-sponsored evaluation (City of Seattle, 2017) that attempted to assess the effectiveness of formal sanctioning, Seattle documented a positive response from communities around the new encampments. Data and information about crime levels collected by the Seattle Police Department suggest that crime has not

significantly increased in the areas surrounding the encampments since they were established. Authors of the evaluation view the self-managed governance structure positively, as an opportunity for residents to build confidence and leadership skills. Between September 2015 and May 2017, 759 people stayed in Seattle's six permitted encampments, and 16 percent (121 people) transitioned to permanent housing. It is unclear how generalizable these findings are to other communities" (p. 16).

- Suggestions for areas of additional research (specific questions on p. 19):
  - o Understanding the characteristics of people who are living in encampments
  - o Understanding the experience of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in encampments
  - o Understanding the relative effect of interventions currently in use
  - o Exploring racial/ethnic disparities in access to the homeless services system
  - o Understanding community responses to the presence of encampments

United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2018). *Caution is Needed When Considering "Sanctioned Encampments" or "Safe Zones."*
Describes safe outdoor spaces and provides points for communities to discuss and consider if they are considering safe outdoor spaces.

- "Creating these environments may make it look and feel like the community is taking action to end homelessness on the surface—but, by themselves, they have little impact on reducing homelessness. Ultimately, access to stable housing that people can afford, with the right level of services to help them succeed, is what ends homelessness... If there is not adequate planning and resources devoted to help people exit these settings on a path out of homelessness, creating these settings alone does not reduce homelessness in communities" (pp. 1-2).
- "Creating these environments can be costly in money, staff time, and effort... It is critically important to discuss the opportunity costs of pursuing these efforts, and whether critical resources would be better focused on other strategic activities—or used directly for permanent housing and services interventions—that could have a greater impact on ending people's homelessness" (p. 2).
- "These environments can prove difficult to manage and maintain." (p. 2).
- "Although often proposed as "temporary" approaches, these programs prove difficult to close once they open... they can prove difficult to close, especially if there are not adequate plans and resources dedicated to helping people exit these settings and end their homelessness" (p. 2).
- Questions to ask for any community that chooses to pursue this approach (pp. 2-3):
  - o "Are we doing all we can within our existing emergency shelter programs, and can we also create more effective indoor shelter or crisis housing options, if needed?
  - o Are we planning and budgeting for how people staying in these settings will be able to exit homelessness and access permanent housing?
  - o Are we aiming as high as we can in providing a high-quality environment within these temporary settings?
  - o Are we assessing the outcomes, impact, and cost-effectiveness of these efforts?"

Safe Parking Programs

Safe parking programs offer people—particularly those sheltering in a vehicle—a place to park their car overnight without fear of ticketing or towing. These established spaces may also provide security or other supportive services.

Three documents on safe parking programs were reviewed, including one peer-reviewed study, one report by the Sol Price School of Public Policy at the University of Southern California, and a report by the Homeless Policy Research Institute. The findings indicate that safe parking programs may be an effective pathway to rehousing people, particularly when paired with additional supports such as

housing and employment services. The Price School report offers six best practices echoed in other reports: intentional program design, strategic location, fostering trust, focused social services, engaging stakeholders, and implementing benchmarks.

TABLE 13. SAFE PARKING PROGRAMS

Lewis, L. R., Rabinowitz Bussell, M., & Livingstone, S. (2024). An Analysis of Safe Parking Programs: Identifying Program Features and Outcomes of an Emerging Homelessness Intervention. *Housing Policy Debate*, 1–28.
"This three-year, mixed-methods study analyzed one of the largest safe parking programs in operation: the Jewish Family Service of San Diego Safe Parking Program (JFS SPP). Through analysis of quantitative data and interviews with 349 clients and 15 staff, this study yielded three major findings. First, JFS SPP has a 40% positive exit rate, with younger clients, women, veterans, and families more likely to exit into housing. Second, JFS SPP is preferred over shelters by persons who have used both services. This preference is especially important for older clients and clients with disabilities for whom safe parking is a safety net. Finally, increasing access to lots and services would benefit all clients, including families, seniors, and individuals with nontraditional schedules. Findings support policy recommendations for safe parking programs" (p. 1).
"During our study's time period, [program] placed 40% of its clients into housing. JFS SPP clients vary demographically in important ways that impact their access to resources. JFS SPP specifically helps clients who are able to work or utilize social or communal resources by offering a safe space to build up their savings and more quickly rehouse" (p. 2).   "Safe parking programs bolster upward cycles for those with the capacity to work, draw on social ties, or access housing assistance" (p. 20).   "Second, JFS SPP is highly preferred over emergency shelters by clients who have used both types of services, due to a greater sense of safety and community, and offers clients a greater ease of meeting one's basic needs than would be available through street outreach efforts alone. This is especially important for clients who are not able to work, often due to their older age or chronic health challenges. Preventing downward spirals: safe parking benefits clients with fewer resources and provides an alternative to outreach and shelters" (p. 2). The program offers a safety net.   "Finally, JFS SPP can better serve all clients including seniors, persons with disabilities, families with young children, and individuals with nontraditional work schedules if it provides expanded access to its lots and resources, including expanded hours" (p. 2).   - Expanded access to lots, case management, and showers would benefit all clients of safe parking programs" (p. 21).   - Policy Recommendations (p. 2):   - Argue safe parking programs play important and distinct role in the homelessness services ecosystem and efforts should be made to expand their operations, including their ability to operate 24/7 lots, hire more case managers, and provide ongoing training to staff.   - Recommend safe parking programs be officially categorized by HUD as a homelessness intervention to establish proper channels for federal funding and enable standardized evaluation.
Homelessness Policy Research Institute (2021). *Safe Parking Programs*.
This memo presents best practices from publicly operated safe parking programs of note across the country, specifically their structure, services, and outcomes (most data come from LA County, but full list of programs can

be found in Appendix A of the report). It incorporates and builds on the Long Beach Safe Parking Program Feasibility Study released in June of 2017.[10]

- All programs studied reported success placing participants in housing, although the rates vary greatly from 5% to 65%.
- Successful Safe Parking programs draw funding from a wide range of sources including:
  - County and city program funds
  - Faith-based organization funding
  - Private funding
  - HUD Homeless Prevention funds (p. 1)
- Best practices
  - On-site services are tailored toward employment and housing placement, rather than mental health or substance abuse services.
  - Relationships with local law enforcement are key to the successful operation of Safe Parking programs.
  - Access to bathrooms and waste disposal help to address the potential health issues associated with vehicle dwelling.
  - In LA County, financial status and employment are key challenges for the population living in their vehicles. (p. 1)

McElwain, L., Schiele, D., & Waheed, L. (2021). *Smart Practices for Safe Parking*. Prepared by University of Southern California Sol Price School of Public Policy for The Center for Homeless Inquiries.

A group of graduate students working on a Capstone team identified and examined safe parking programs nationwide to distill smart practices. The team's research focused on program recruitment, target service population, service provision and program benchmarks. Components of programs studied evolved into smart practice recommendations for safe parking programs. This report provided a larger sample and more in-depth data than prior reports on the safe parking topic and identifies three program models: umbrella organizations, composite programs, and independent operators. Recommendations drawn from cross-case analysis offered smart practices in six themes to inform program design elements and features to best serve community members. "Our findings support the concept of safe parking as a stabilizing force in parkers' lives and benefit to the broader community." (p. 1). "Safe parking programs can provide security and the basics for people to stabilize; however, their success at rehousing people is mainly dependent on the integration with a successful social support system. Measuring the success of safe parking as rehousing is measuring the success of social services that partner organizations often offer" (p. 36).

- Recommendations for successful safe parking fall into six themes (more detail in report):
  - *Intentional Design-* Programs should plan, operate, and structure their organizations intentionally to meet local needs and align with local resources (p. 33).
  - *Strategic Locations-* Safe parking programs should organize lots and services according to geography, population needs, and local social services (p. 34).
  - *Fostering Trust-* Safe parking programs should focus on fostering trust with and among parkers. Trust can help build community and dignity for parkers and increase their ability to engage with social services (p. 34).
  - *Focused Social Services-* Case management services are essential for rehousing, but programs do not need to fund case management independently; programs can integrate with third-party social services (p, 35).

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[10] Colopy, K. (2017). *Long Beach Safe Parking Program Feasibility Study (Memo)*. City of Long Beach. https://www.longbeach.gov/globalassets/city-manager/media-library/documents/memos-to-the-mayor-tabbed-file-list-folders/2017/june-1--2017---long-beach-safe-parking-program-feasibility-study.

> o *Engaging Stakeholders*- Safe parking programs should anticipate initial opposition to safe parking. Opposition can be prevented or overcome by engagement and planning efforts (p. 35).
> o *Implementing Benchmarks*- Programs should develop benchmarks for rehousing rates, lengths of stay, and service engagement with internal and external stakeholders (p. 35).
> • Smart Practices by Successful Programs Include:
> o Recruiting parkers through channels like 211, government and nonprofit social services, law enforcement officers, word of mouth
> o Planning for diverse populations with robust services including a thorough intake process, large quantity of lot spaces, multiple lots to sort based on demographics or other factors to maintain safety and comfort, and flexibility on a valid license, registration, insurance, background check (p. 25).
> o Including services to connect with housing:
> ▪ Early identification of what the parkers desire from the program (not all want stable housing)
> ▪ Connection to case management through an existing shelter or service hub
> ▪ Financial assistance for deposits/first rent payment
> ▪ Partnering with social service organizations for case management
> ▪ Strong community connections and partners (p. 26).

Tiny Home Villages

Tiny home villages are clusters of small (400 or fewer square feet) dwellings intended to provide those experiencing homelessness temporary shelter in a place that provides privacy and storage. Local units of government may choose to establish tiny home villages in partnership with local nonprofits or other service organizations.

The limited published information on tiny home villages suggests that they offer a housing solution that is generally well received by the people living there as well as their neighbors, with one study finding reports of neighborhood concerns reducing over time. Of the three documents reviewed, one of which was a thesis, one a peer-reviewed study, and one a news article by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), only one—the USICH report—addresses the viability of the overall strategy rather than describing the characteristics and outcomes of individual villages. USICH recommends embedding studies of the appropriateness of tiny home villages within a broader community plan and approaching the solution with caution. This careful planning is especially warranted in more diverse communities, as the Portland-based peer-reviewed study suggested racial disparities in the success of the intervention regarding both participation and reported feelings of belonging.

TABLE 14. TINY HOME VILLAGES

Ferry, T., Townley, G., & Zapata, M. (2022). *Village Research & How-To Guide*. Portland State University.
A report examining if the village model was working as intended in Portland's Dignity Village, "whom was it serving, and what lessons could be learned to improve future village efforts based on insights from those with personal experience living in, working at, or designing for a village. This document is the outcome of a multi-year research project to answer these questions. There is currently very limited research on villages and much still to be explored, but this effort hopes to make a significant contribution to the understanding of villages by comparing six different

villages in the Portland Metro region with varying degrees of infrastructure, management or governance structures, operating support, and origins" (p. 6).

- Villagers were largely satisfied or very satisfied with their pod as a place to live (86% expressed being satisfied or very satisfied).
- Most (69%) were satisfied or very satisfied with their village as a place to live.
- Most (79%) were satisfied or very satisfied with their neighborhood as a place to live.
- Food insecurity remains a major problem at villages, with 45% of villagers reporting being food insecure. This suggests that while villages are helping some individuals meet their basic needs for food, there is still a need to ensure that everyone has access to food.
- Villages have disproportionately served White people (particularly White men) and need to institute more mechanisms to support people of color. This disparity is reflected in our research, with only 17% of the villagers we interviewed identifying as BIPOC despite the most recent Point-in-Time count for Multnomah County reporting that 40% of those who were unsheltered were people of color. We also found that BIPOC villagers reported lower levels of belonging and acceptance within their villages compared to White villagers.
- The feeling of having a voice and influence over the social and physical aspects of the village had major impacts on villager satisfaction, but it was not necessarily contingent upon full self-governance. The majority of villagers (69%) said that they should share in decision making at the village, while 26% said that only villagers should determine what happens in the village.
- Concerns about villages among neighbors diminished over time. That is, most neighbors who reported concerns (e.g., decreased property value, increased crime) when they first learned of villages being located in their neighborhood reported no longer having those concerns after living near the village.
- Size, cost, infrastructure, and governance structures vary widely across villages, and there is very limited knowledge sharing between villages.
- The vast majority of stakeholders feel that the ideal number for a village is between 20 and 30 people. This range was offered for a variety of reasons that included community cohesion, impacts on internal work shifts at self-governed villages, staff to villager ratio, and efficiencies and limitations related to the physical infrastructure of a village.
- Key unexplored opportunities include integrating villages into emergency preparedness plans, designing villages to better support parents, creating a city-level village liaison position, designing villages around activities and interests, and leveraging village investment toward the creation of affordable housing (p. 8).

Longworth, M. D. (2019). *Occupy Madison Village: A Case Study of the Lived Experience*. [Unpublished thesis].

"The purpose of the case study was to describe the phenomenon of people with a history of homelessness living in Occupy Madison Village, a tiny house village located in Madison, Wisconsin. Participant narratives were analyzed to identify themes and describe their perceptions of the experience. The advocates for the Occupy Madison Village creatively combined best practices from multiple approaches of housing and community development. The objective was to pull together elements of governance, community-based decision making, and communal living elements. Descriptions of participatory governance, decision making, and design created an environment that encouraged individuals to develop place and community attachment. Themes of place and community attachment emerged from examples of personalization of the space, sense of belonging, length of residency, purpose, and community participation. The integration of community focused principles of cooperative housing and cohousing and place and community attachment encouraged experiences that generated long term residency, self-efficacy, leadership skills, and community engagement" (p. iii).

- Limitations:
  - Does not offer insight into the effectiveness of this program, only describes its characteristics and how it was perceived by villagers.
  - Methods cannot be generalized to all tiny house villages as the sample is small and the phenomenon and analysis were location specific.

- o The demographics of the participants, over 50 years old, white, with some college education, cannot be generalized to all long-term homeless individuals (p. 53).
- o The majority of the residents reported the rules and regulations create conflict between the board members and the residents, and between residents themselves (p. 66). Residents also reported desiring more private access to bathrooms and kitchens.
- Occupy Madison was a nonprofit with an elected board consisting of community leaders and residents, offered general membership, and encouraged participatory democratic decision making (p. 66). Advocates for the Occupy Madison Village creatively combined best practices from multiple approaches of housing and community development. The objective was to pull together elements of governance, community-focused decision making, and communal living elements (p. iii).
  - o The majority of the participants indicated their long-term housing plans were to stay at Occupy Madison Village though the study did not mention rates of transition to permanent housing.
  - o As a community focused on cooperative living, the affordable tiny house design developed a sense of belonging and community commitment among the residents" (p. 65).
  - o The community focused approaches of governance, decision-making, and communal focused design appeared to provide a robust interdependent community-focused system (p. 84).
  - o "A strong sense of community did not eliminate the opportunity for conflict; however, conflict resolution methods allowed for differences to be expressed and provided opportunity for community cohesion (Fromm, 1991)" (p. 85).
  - o "Place attachment was fostered and influenced by the interdependent sense of safety and security" (p. 86).
  - o "The time and effort invested through participation in community activities while living in a secure space appeared to contribute to a stable environment" (p. 86).

United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (2016). *Asking the Right Questions about Tiny Houses.*
This news article by USICH provides guiding questions for communities exploring the viability of Tiny Homes Villages to address homelessness. "Ending homelessness means making sure that people are in a permanent, home-like environment where they have the opportunity to build long-term community connections. Communities that are considering developing tiny homes as part of their systemic solution to homelessness must ensure that they are appropriate for achieving that goal" (para. 1). "Must have a clearly defined plan to decommission and dismantle a tiny home community if built with the intention of offering a time-limited response to a crisis. Otherwise, it may continue to divert resources from more permanent solutions" (para. 13).

- "Exploration of the viability of tiny homes should be embedded in a comprehensive community planning process that includes a broad range of stakeholders, including meaningful participation from people experiencing or exiting homelessness" (para. 2).
- "Questions to guide exploration:
  - o Will the tiny homes you are considering provide a home-like environment and meet local and federal housing quality standards?
  - o Do tiny homes provide a living environment that a potential resident would choose and that meets their needs for safety, stability, and community?
    - ▪ As part of planning process, should consult extensively with the populations the tiny homes would serve to determine if the accommodations meet their needs. Pay particular attention to how residents would be selected and why.
    - ▪ Potential residents may decline housing if tiny home community perceived as homelessness development that faces being ostracized and separated from the broader community. Must also consider what other housing resources will have available for people who decide that a tiny home is not for them.
  - o What role will tiny homes play within your systemic efforts to end homelessness?
    - ▪ An effective community response to homelessness must be built on a coordinated system of temporary and permanent housing opportunities, including emergency shelter, bridge housing, rapid re-housing, and supportive housing, among others.

> ▪ Role of tiny homes in this system must be clearly defined, along with measurable performance outcomes related to housing placement and stability. While tiny homes might be appropriate for short-term emergency or bridge housing, they may not be suitable for permanent housing.
> o Are tiny home developments the best use of financial and land resources?
> ▪ To get the most from scarce resources, it is important to closely examine the economics of tiny houses, particularly the square-footage costs and the total number of housing opportunities created, as compared to affordable multi-unit apartments or supportive housing developments.
> ▪ Resources should be invested in the range of options that will most effectively decrease and end homelessness over time.
> o How will the tiny homes be appropriately integrated into the community?
> ▪ Should reflect home and community-based living standards laid out by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.
> ▪ Should be integrated in and support full access of individuals to greater community, including opportunities to seek employment and work in competitive integrated settings, engage in community life, control personal resources, and receive services in the community.
> ▪ Should optimize individual initiative, autonomy, and independence in making life choices, including but not limited to, daily activities, physical environment, and with whom to interact" (para. 3-12).

Progressive Engagement

Progressive engagement is a strategy for working with people at risk of or experiencing homelessness that lets the individual drive the provision of services. It involves beginning with the lowest intensity services and only escalating as service recipients indicate need.

The literature on progressive engagement (PE) is somewhat sparse, as PE efforts are often embedded in other types of programming and support. Of the three documents analyzed, two were government reports—one stemming from Veterans Affairs (VA) and one from Santa Cruz and Marin Counties, California. The third was a two-page fact sheet from the National Alliance to End Homelessness, suggesting the need for further research on the topic.

In general, progressive engagement may be viewed as a strategy embedded into other types of homelessness prevention. It is often the lowest-cost option, as it intentionally allows the service recipient to direct what they need and only escalates as individual cases require. Successfully implementing this approach requires a nimble, low-barrier entry point that is ready to adapt to the need of recipients.

TABLE 15. PROGRESSIVE ENGAGEMENT

Housing for Health Partnership. (2022). *Policy Board Orientation and Training Manual*. County of Santa Cruz.
Santa Cruz County Housing for Health Partnership Policy Board Orientation and Training Manual that notes they use progressive engagement components
• Because progressive engagement practices are often embedded in other programs/models, literature on impact of these strategies alone in comparison areas are lacking. • Additionally, "best practices" associated with these areas' use of PE are difficult to ascertain given the unique and sometimes unclear ways in which these principles are used in each area.

- Further, the term "progressive engagement" appears to be interpreted/used differently in some programs/areas, and adherence to practices vary.
- States that "all ESG or CoC funded programs must use Housing First (and progressive engagement practices), including the following:
  - Ensuring low-barrier, easily accessible assistance to all people, including, but not limited to, people with no income or income history, and people with active substance abuse or mental health issues;
  - Helping participants quickly identify and resolve barriers to obtaining and maintaining housing;
  - Seeking to quickly resolve the housing crisis before focusing on other non-housing related services;
  - Allowing participants to choose the services and housing that meets their need, as practical;
  - Connecting participants to services available in the community that foster long-term housing stability;
  - Offering financial assistance and supportive services in a manner that offers a minimum amount of assistance initially, adding more assistance over time if needed to quickly resolve the housing crisis. The type, duration, and amount of assistance offered shall be based on an individual assessment of the household, and the availability of other resources or support systems to resolve their housing crisis" (p.8).

National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2022). *Progressive Engagement Fact Sheet* **(Alliance Pressure Points Resource Series).**

Describes who progressive engagement serves, when and where it is used, how it works, and why to use it.

- Progressive engagement matches resources with unique level of need, ensuring those with most need can access most intensive resources. Efficient (not one-size-fits all). It is:
  - "An approach to quickly ending homelessness for a household that considers their tenant or housing stabilization barriers, and utilizes the minimal financial and support resources as is necessary. It is considered a person-centered approach, as it is based on tailoring assistance to each household's strengths and needs. Progressive engagement assesses what works best for each household while integrating their specific situation, cultural needs, and goals into solutions. Additional supports are applied on an as-needed basis to achieve housing stabilization" (p. 1).
- PE can be used in any setting with diverse populations of unhoused individuals/families and at any point in their experience being unhoused/securing housing.
- "Key to a successful [PE] approach is to consistently employ problem-solving conversations throughout the household's experience within the homelessness response system. As their circumstances change and their strengths are identified, supports are adjusted throughout their pathway to permanent housing" (p. 2).
- "Effective [PE] requires homelessness response systems and programs to be flexible. It also means taking creative approaches to solve a problem, and trying different approaches as necessary until providers find what works best for a household" (p. 2).
- "The fastest way to end homelessness is to immediately connect each household in the homelessness response system with a permanent address of their own. [PE] recognizes that there are ways to accurately predict how much help someone may need to end their homelessness and avoid a return to the streets or shelter. PE ensures those predictions are informed by dialogue with the household on their strengths, obstacles, needs, and wants, and are not informed by false assumptions about what people need/want" (p. 2).

Supportive Services for Veteran Families. (2016). *Deeper-Dive Discussion Guide.* **United States Department of Veterans Affairs.**

Overviews progressive engagement, rationale for using, and keys to success (with a focus on veterans, but pieces could be applicable to other populations). [Note: while this was produced by a government entity, "keys to success" are not visibly backed up by citations/research]

- "Progressive engagement recognizes that there is no way to accurately predict how much help someone may need to end their homelessness and avoid a return to the streets or shelter" (p. 1). Rationale includes:
  - "Avoids false assumptions: people who are very poor and may be disabled –including those who score high on assessment tools –do not all need or want more intensive or longer-term assistance. People who initially appear to need more may end up needing less – and vis-versa" (p. 1)
  - Individualization

- o Efficiency
  - o "Effectiveness: rapid re-housing programs that use Progressive Engagement show high rates of success serving people with a wide range of needs. Programs take risks, frequently have to make tough decisions, and assume some will fail – meaning the program may need to do something different if they help the same participant again" (p. 1)
- Keys to Success in Targeting:
  - o "Err on screening-in: screen-in every homeless Veteran except those able to exit quickly on own or with other assistance
  - o Target Veterans across a range of needs, from those only needing "light touch" assistance to those who are eligible and waiting for permanent supportive housing (including VASH) who can be re-housed now with appropriate supports" (p. 1)
- Keys to Success in Baseline Assessment & Initial Housing Plan:
  - o "Focus only on barriers directly related to obtaining/maintaining housing
  - o Plan should include short-term, actionable goals – accounting for limited ability to take action and make changes
  - o Periodically reassess barriers and plan progress and adjust plan, as needed" (p. 1)
- Keys to Success in Individualized, Flexible Assistance:
  - o "Offer assistance in small amounts and short increments (e.g., move-in costs, first month rent, and weekly home visits for initial month once housed); increase/extend when needed
  - o Ensure the program is capable of providing flexible assistance: providing as little (e.g., housing search assistance, mediation) OR as much support as needed, desired, and allowed by funders to obtain/maintain housing
  - o Conduct regular case reviews to ensure housing plan progress, review needs, obtain consent for additional assistance, share lessons and build team competencies, celebrate success" (p. 2)
- Keys to Success in Housing & Service Partnerships:
  - o "Build a broad array of landlord and service partners to support participants, increase choice, and limit the amount and duration of program assistance needed
  - o Establish clear referral processes and "warm handoffs" to ensure seamless transitions to non-crisis services"
- Keys to Success in Case Closure:
  - o "Have clear criteria for when the crisis is resolved and initial housing stabilization goals are met
  - o Ensure participants have a "Plan A" to increase stability and access community-based supports and a "Plan B" to avoid future housing crises and a return to homelessness – what to do, resources available, how to access" (p. 2)
- Keys to Success in Program Policies, Procedures, and Quality Improvement:
  - o "Ensure policies and procedures support progressive engagement practices
  - o Provide staff with the training and support needed to be comfortable, confident and successful
  - o Regularly review practices, program outputs and outcomes, and make improvements" (p. 2)

Equity-Focused Approaches

Rather than working as a standalone approach to homelessness prevention, equity-focused approaches aim to identify and remove system-level barriers that lead to housing insecurity, particularly structural racism and xenophobia.

The final six documents in this review center on equity-focused approaches to prevent and ameliorate homelessness. These reports, all published by government sources, offer case studies in leading with equity. As such, these approaches are heavily context- and community-dependent. In general, the

reports focus on the idea that systemic barriers including racism and discrimination make it more difficult for BIPOC to exit homelessness.

Equity-focused approaches require local units of government to intentionally explore the specific barriers facing minoritized communities within their municipalities. Suggested improvements include working with case managers, landlords, and other housing stakeholders to address implicit bias and discrimination; intentionally investing in and including BIPOC organizations when discussing homelessness solutions; and improving overall regional and community connections to create a more interwoven system of supports. The literature recommends centering principles of equity and working to reduce systemic barriers to housing for any approach selected. Carefully reviewing each document in this category for strategies and policies to reduce racial disparities can complement the success of any other strategy listed in this memo. Table 9 below includes the content abstracted from each resource that informed this summary of findings.

TABLE 16. EQUITY-FOCUSED APPROACHES

Housing for Health Partnership. (2024). *Housing for a Healthy Santa Cruz: A Strategic Framework for Addressing Homelessness is Santa Cruz County*. County of Santa Cruz.
"The vision of Santa Cruz County is to align and develop the array of resources, stakeholders, and collective wisdom across the greater Santa Cruz community to promote public health and make significant impacts on the crisis of homelessness, benefiting all residents, particularly those without homes." Using a person-centered approach, the county seeks to tackle homelessness using a countywide scope, data-driven processes, system-level approach, equity and inclusion lens, and actionable steps encompassing clear responsibilities and accountability. (p. 8)
- Goals in the Santa Cruz plan include: "Reduce the length of time people experience homelessness   - Reduce the percentage of people returning to homelessness   - Ensure our local data captures information on program outcomes and community needs   - Coordinate outreach and access to services across the region" (taken from list on pp. 10-11).   - To accomplish these goals, the county committed to the following actions: "Build a coalition of action-oriented partners from the community and its leadership   - Prevent homelessness using targeted prevention and early intervention   - Increase Connections to expand and improve "front door" programs and services including outreach, temporary housing, and supportive services   - Increase permanent housing affordability through income growth and other housing opportunities" (taken from table on p. 12).
Milburn, N. G., Edwards, E., Obermark, D., & Rountree, J. (2021). *Inequity in the Permanent Supportive Housing System in Los Angeles: Scale, Scope and Reasons for Black Residents' Returns to Homelessness*. California Policy Lab.
In Los Angeles County, a quarter of Black residents who enroll in PSH will leave their housing and fall back into homelessness, and Black residents are 39% more likely to return to homelessness than White residents. This paper begins to explore these inequities and offers possible policy approaches to address the findings.
Black residents are more likely than white residents to return to homelessness following permanent supportive housing (PSH) measures, in part due to segregation and bureaucratic structures, housing discrimination, variation in PSH programs and resident perceptions thereof.

- While housed in PSH, Black residents reported a lack of safety and security, case management turnover and inconsistency, lack of opportunities for growth and independence, and pathologizing and racist treatment by system staff.
- Further, Black residents reported a lack of preparation to transition out of PSH, a loss of supports after exiting PSH, and navigating a structurally racist housing market and society (text heavily cited from pp. 5-6).
- Recommendations to address these findings include:
  - Acknowledge and collect information about the broad range of PSH types (location-specific)
  - Plan for a more differentiated PSH system (location-specific)
  - Address implicit bias, prejudice, and discrimination that exists among case managers, property managers, and landlords
  - Fund 24-hour services to enhance safety
  - Reduce case management turnover
  - Develop a peer advocate program
  - Provide sustained services to support transitions to independent housing after exiting PSH" (pp. 8-9).

Board of Supervisors of Marin County. (2024). *County of Marin 2024 Legislative Platform*.

Marin County put forth a list of state and local policies they plan to support or endorse this year. Critically, the county listed Race Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging as its top general principle for consideration.

- Using a lens of racial equity, Marin County endorsed a number of policies on the following topics: housing production, housing preservation, allowances for emergency housing, and affirmatively furthering fair housing.
- The report also contains a full list of policies endorsed under these topics.

County of Sacramento. (2022). *Local Homeless Action Plan*.

This report explicitly noted that race and ethnicity are additional risk factors of homelessness and formed a Racial Equity Committee in 2020 following data indicating Black and AI/AN communities experiencing homelessness at disparate rates.

- "The Racial Equity Action Plan identified a number of initial steps to begin redressing systemic harm. These include increasing access points in historically under-resourced communities; diversifying language and literacy levels on key documents to improve participants' understanding and consent for services; increase hiring of diverse staff including partners with lived expertise across all organizational levels within the homeless response system; engaging in practices of restorative justice; and replacing the current common assessment tool with a culturally responsive design" (p. 9).
- Guiding principles for the local action plan include:
  - "Strive to make homelessness in Sacramento rare, brief, and non-recurring
  - Implement a person-centered, trauma-informed countywide response system, which provides access to immediate and on-going supportive service needs (i.e., mental health, substance use, housing retention)
  - Promote housing-first policies and practices
  - Address racial disparities across programs and system outcomes
  - Create partnerships that value the experience, voice, and contribution of Partners with Lived Expertise
  - Collect quality data and use to inform decisions on program prioritization and resource allocation
  - Facilitate collaborative planning and decision-making across jurisdictions" (p. 12).
- Using key elements from national best practices in homelessness prevention, Sacramento committed to the following:
  - Building and scaling a countywide coordinated access system
  - Ensuring current and new emergency shelter and interim housing is focused on rehousing
  - Increasing permanent housing opportunities
  - Expanding prevention and diversion resources
  - Investing in community capacity-building and training (p. 5)

Ostar, J., Rivera, J., Meier, J., & Sawicki, K. (n.d.). *Strategic plan to advance racial equity, diversity and inclusion*. Oregon Metro.

This strategic plan to advance racial equity, diversity and inclusion was the culmination of Metro's efforts to articulate how the agency intends to advance equity in its crucial work in the Portland metropolitan region. Rationale: "Metro will concentrate on eliminating the disparities that people of color experience, especially in those areas related to Metro's policies, programs, services and destinations. People of color share similar barriers with other historically marginalized groups such as people with low income, people with disabilities, LGBTQ communities, women, older adults and young people. But people of color tend to experience those barriers more deeply due to the pervasive and systemic nature of racism. By addressing the barriers experienced by people of color, we will effectively also identify solutions and remove barriers for other disadvantaged groups" (p.8)

- Portland Metro has a number of equity-focused goals, including convening and supporting regional partners to advance racial equity through supporting the development of affordable housing to meet the urgent need for stable housing choices. They commit to working to break down silos between housing and other supportive services/community needs (p. 19).
  - One example of this goal in action is the convening of regional partners for an Equitable Housing Leadership Summit.
  - Metro commits to meaningfully engaging communities of color to hear community voice in an authentic way and build supports accordingly (p. 25).
  - Metro hires, trains, and promotes a racially diverse workforce, offering all community members a chance to interact with someone who has a similar lived experience to theirs (p. 31).
  - Metro creates safe and welcoming services, programs, and destinations, aiming to break down implicit barriers to access (p. 37).
  - Metro's resource allocation will advance racial equity by developing and applying an equity decision-making tool (p. 45).
- While these goals and supports do not all directly address housing, the fundamentals of equity work must be applied to all Metro services, including housing supports.

Pazolt, M. (2023, June 6). *Washington state investments in affordable housing projects, including permanent supportive housing (Sec. 128(114) of the 2021-23 biennial operating budget)*. State of Washington Department of Commerce [Official Correspondence].

There are three key findings in this report: (1) There is insufficient revenue to support the operations and services of the pipeline of new supportive and youth housing funded with state capital funds. Addressing this deficit will require collaboration with partner public funders, maximizing the state's Foundational Community Supports (FCS) program, and a dedicated source of ongoing revenue for housing operations. (2) Commerce should reduce administrative burdens associated with monthly invoice reconciliation and redirect staff time to measuring outcomes of the state's investments in housing and tenancy support services. Measuring housing stability rates and tenant satisfaction, disaggregated by race, will also help to ensure racially equitable outcomes. (3) To meet its goals of reducing chronic homelessness and costly, unnecessary institutionalization, the state should use the same eligibility criteria and tenancy support services definition for all its investments in supportive housing (p. 7).

- Recommendations for funding included:
  - Address challenges related to cost categories by including all industry standards for operating housing, including 24/7 staffing and services provided on behalf of all tenants. Distinguish tenancy-sustaining services, housing stability, and tenant well-being in project budgets.
  - Perform housing operating cost analysis and set funding benchmarks at the state level, rather than by geographic region, to reduce disparities.
  - Benchmark tenancy support services at the state level (taken from table on pp.8-9).
- Program recommendations included:
  - Consistently apply pertinent statutes and programs to all PSH investments.
  - Establish OMS program guidelines.

- o Bring the investments in supportive housing from multiple state agencies and programs into alignment to ensure desired outcomes.
- o Include and invest in organizations led by and serving primarily Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color.
- o Streamline the process of expense reconciliation to shift staff time to tracking outcomes.
- o Begin to track basic tenant outcomes of investments.
- o Align commerce operating and rental assistance commitments with accountability periods of capital investments (taken from table on pp.13-15).

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