Visit Focus Strategies’ website focusstrategies.net to find our reports, research, news, and more information about who we are and what we do. Focus Strategies offers analytic services to help communities reduce and end homelessness. Our services include system planning and performance measurement; system and program evaluations; coordinated entry design; supportive housing system development; and point in time counts.
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City of Durham  
Final SWAP Analysis and Performance Measure Report  
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Executive Summary

Focus Strategies has been engaged by the City of Durham, on behalf of the Durham Continuum of Care, to conduct an analysis of homeless system performance and make recommendations for system re-design. This report presents our findings – including an assessment of the quality of Durham’s Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data, our assessment of system performance, and suggested next steps to improve both data quality and homeless system effectiveness. We used HMIS data covering January 2015 through December 2016 to assess the performance of individual programs, program types, and the system as a whole. This analysis also included modeling to assess the impact of different strategies on the size of the homeless population. We also conducted telephone interviews with key stakeholders to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the current system, and to assess what kinds of changes the Durham CoC could consider to support its goals. The results of our analysis of these information sources is presented in this report and will be used by the CoC and the City of Durham (as the CoC Lead Agency) to inform the next steps in its system planning work, including developing an integrated set of strategies to further reduce homelessness in Durham and refining the homeless system governance structure to carry out the new direction.

Findings

Overall, we found that the homeless system in Durham is moving in a positive direction, increasing its level of coordination and integration. The system is also coming into alignment with best practices and piloting proven models in the field of reducing homelessness. Although leadership and other stakeholders recognize some systemic challenges and areas for growth, people generally feel the community is capable of and willing to make these changes to ensure the system achieves its goals of ending homelessness. The following section provides an overview of our key findings in our assessment of Durham’s homeless system performance.

Using data drawn from HMIS and individual program budgets, Focus Strategies assessed the performance of emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing on the following metrics. Our findings are summarized below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bed and Unit Utilization</th>
<th>We found high utilization for transitional housing and permanent supportive housing suggesting that system inventory is being used to maximum capacity. Emergency shelter utilization was lowest at 78% and is due to one shelter operating at half capacity.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entries from Homelessness</td>
<td>Currently many of the programs in the system are serving a high number of households who were not literally homeless upon entry. In particular, 49% of households entering shelter and 41% entering transitional housing were coming from housed situations. In a high performing system, beds are prioritized for people who</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
are literally homeless while those who are still housed are diverted from entering the system. This finding is also likely related to the presence of high entry barriers among some of the programs in the system.

**Lengths of Stay**

Lengths of stay are somewhat high in all system components, and particularly transitional housing where the average stay is 245 days. Program providers often structure their service models on the assumption that longer stays lead to higher rates of exit to permanent housing. Yet, as noted below, the data does not support this assumption.

**Rate of Exit to Permanent Housing**

The rates at which households exit transitional housing and rapid rehousing to permanent housing are low, with transitional programs exiting only 66% of households to permanent housing and rapid rehousing exiting only 72%.

**Cost Per Permanent Housing Exit**

Although Durham’s Rapid Rehousing programs are achieving only slightly better results than transitional housing in terms of the numbers of households who exit to permanent housing, they are much more cost effective. The cost for each permanent housing exit from rapid re-housing is about one third the cost of transitional housing.

**Rate of Return to Homelessness**

For households who exit to permanent housing, the rate of return to homelessness is very low across all program types. There is no evidence that people who secure permanent housing more quickly and cost effectively using rapid re-housing are more likely to experience a loss of housing and return to homelessness.

**Data Quality and HMIS Participation**

Generally speaking, the quality of the data in City of Durham’s CoC’s HMIS system is high, with relatively few missing data elements. HMIS participation is high in this community which allows for better understanding of how clients move between HMIS participating programs and how the system is performing.

In 2011, the Homeless Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) was formed to serve as the CoC Governance Board for the Durham CoC and to lead Durham’s systemwide efforts to address and end homelessness. As the governance body for the CoC, the HSAC’s responsibilities include:

- Appointing a representative to the North Carolina Statewide HMIS Governance Committee;
- Designating an agency as the Collaborative Applicant for the annual CoC Application to HUD (City of Durham DCD);
- Completing system- and project-level monitoring for both CoC and ESG-funded programs;
- Developing and operating a Coordinated Entry System;
- Establishing written standards and policies for the entire system;
- Leading all system planning
- Overseeing the bi-annual Point In Time (PIT) count, and
- Overseeing the CoC Application to HUD.

In the same year of that HSAC was created, the City of Durham Department of Community Development (DCD) took on the role as the lead agency of the Durham City/County CoC. In addition to overseeing the City’s community development efforts and entitlement funding, DCD’s responsibilities as the CoC lead include staffing HSAC and its committees; managing the CoC’s local implementation of the Statewide
HMIS and conducting data analysis with information collected via HMIS; managing CoC and ESG contracts, CoC compliance, and system planning efforts. Currently, DCD is in the process of rearranging its organizational structure as part of a new Affordable Housing strategy being developed in collaboration with Enterprise Community Partners. CoC-dedicated staff will be integrated into the team responsible for the development of affordable rental housing within the community. The vision behind this restructuring is to create a stronger working connection between the City’s strategies to address homelessness and its strategies to expand the supply of affordable rental housing in Durham.

Recommendations

The following section provides a high-level summary of our recommendations for improving both data quality and homeless system effectiveness.

A. Program and System Strategies

The Durham CoC has taken significant steps in re-orienting its efforts to end homelessness to be more housing-focused and data-driven. The work to date appears to be yielding strong results and homelessness has decreased, as measured by the Point in Time Count. Achieving “functional zero” or effectively ending homelessness is within reach for the community – to do so, the community needs to create a systemic approach in which all people experiencing literal homelessness receive an immediate housing solution. This will involve:

1. **Fully Implementing Coordinated Entry and Lower Program Barriers to Ensure that Literally Homeless and Higher Need Households Can Be Prioritized**: To see more immediate progress on ending homelessness, the community will need to design and implement coordinated entry for single adults and youth (this planning process is getting underway soon) and ensure that the CE policies are designed to prioritize people who are literally homeless. At the same time, the community should revisit its family coordinated entry system to ensure it is striving towards and achieving parallel goals.

2. **Provide Shelter Diversion and Housing Problem Solving Throughout the System**: The Coordinated Entry System will largely benefit from integrating a strong shelter diversion component and problem-solving approach to prevent households from unnecessarily entering shelter and other parts of the homeless system, when possible. Modeling results suggest that if robust shelter diversion is implemented systemwide, it can result in a dramatic reduction in the size of the homeless population. Diversion uses strengths-based problem solving, mediation and small amounts of flexible financial assistance to help people with unstable housing situations remain where they are or to move directly to alternative housing (i.e. doubling up with friends or family, establishing or reestablishing a lease in their own name). It is critical to keep as many households from entering the homeless system as possible, due to the community’s current insufficient supply of permanent housing interventions.

3. **Invest in High Performing Rapid Re-Housing**: Our analysis found that existing rapid re-housing programs in Durham are achieving strong results in exiting people to permanent housing at relatively low cost and with low rates of return to homelessness compared to temporary housing interventions. Our analysis shows that Investing in increasing the community’s supply of RRH and decreasing investments in low-performing transitional housing will result in housing significantly more people experiencing homelessness, especially those who are not defined as chronically homeless.
4. Connect Homeless System and Affordable Housing Priorities by Targeting New and Existing Affordable Housing Slots for People Experiencing Homelessness: The DCD’s efforts to increase the production of affordable rental housing in the community and integration of CoC staff in the process will provide significant opportunities for housing people experiencing homelessness and integrating mainstream and homeless system housing resources. Some strategies that could be impactful include:

- Maximizing the amount of rental housing produced for incomes at or below 30% Area Median Income;
- Dedicating some percentage of DCD funded affordable units for people experiencing homelessness;
- Require that units dedicated for people experiencing homelessness take referrals from CE and prioritize these units for those households who need a long-term subsidy to resolve their homelessness; and
- Explore whether any of the City’s mainstream housing resources can be used flexibly to provide short-term rental subsidies to support expansion of rapid re-housing capacity in the system.

5. Invest in Landlord Recruitment and Housing Location Services: As Durham seeks to expand rapid re-housing capacity, the community should consider expanding its resources dedicated to developing landlord relationships and helping clients with searching for and securing housing. These landlord engagement efforts have proven effective in many communities, particularly those with challenging housing markets like Durham’s.

6. Continue Efforts to Expand HMIS Participation and Improve Data Quality: Continuing the CoC’s efforts to bring non-participating providers on board will be critical to ensuring that the data needed for strategic system planning is available, and to build upon the community’s current strengths in HMIS participation and data quality.

B. Governance Recommendations

To achieve a more systematic and impactful approach to homelessness, the CoC Governance structure – both the Governance Board and Lead Agency – must embrace and define their role as leaders in community-wide efforts to plan a system with the objective of ending homelessness. To do so, we recommend the following:

1. Create a policy and system planning function within the existing structure: Because of the HSAC’s size, we recommend designating a smaller group made up of key decision makers and funders to develop and implement a systemwide strategy and plan. Potential candidates for this role include the existing Executive Committee or a new Funder Alignment Committee, designed specifically to oversee system planning.

2. Empower the committee entrusted with system planning to design and execute a systemwide plan: The group tasked with system planning must be empowered by local leadership to make and execute decisions related to homelessness beyond just the scope of projects receiving CoC funding, but also including other public and private homeless system funding streams.
3. **Expand or reorganize existing staffing to support system planning efforts:** In addition to a formal governance body that oversees systemwide planning, we recommend the CoC Lead Agency (DCD) dedicate staff to policy and system planning to guide and support the work of the Board committee. We also recommend designating one dedicated staff person to take the lead on policy and system planning work, who is knowledgeable about industry best practices, policy, and strategic planning.
I. Background and Purpose of Report

The City of Durham, on behalf of the Durham City and County Continuum of Care, has engaged Focus Strategies to assess the performance of the existing homeless system and the community’s efforts to reduce homelessness. The Durham community has made a strong local commitment to addressing homelessness, as evidenced by the implementation of a range of initiatives and programs to address the problem. These efforts have resulted in a reduction in the number of people experiencing homelessness counted in the most recent Point in Time Count. Durham is now seeking to make further progress by developing a data-informed strategy to develop a more systematic homeless response that will better integrate and coordinate the many different activities underway. This work also represents an important goal area in the City’s recently adopted affordable housing strategy.

The purpose of our technical assistance is to assist the Continuum of Care and the City (as the CoC Lead Agency) to assess how well the current system is performing and develop strategies to better integrate the different components of the system and ensure resources are invested in interventions that will yield the greatest results. This includes recommendations about changes to the homeless system governance structure to advance the identified strategies.

Focus Strategies has completed our analysis of the performance of the existing homeless programs in Durham and of the system as a whole. The results of our analysis are presented in this report along with our recommendations for system re-design and changes to the governance structure for homeless-related initiatives.

II. Methodology: Information Sources and Analysis

A. Data Sources

This report is based on work conducted by Focus Strategies from February through June 2017. To compile this report, we conducted several different types of analysis:

- **Document Review**: Focus Strategies reviewed existing planning and governance documents and reports including the 2016 Durham City and County CoC funding application, CoC Governance Charter, and Durham Affordable Housing Goals Report. A list of documents reviewed can be found in Appendix A.

- **Stakeholder Interviews**: Focus Strategies conducted interviews with key stakeholders who have been involved with the CoC and community efforts to reduce homelessness. The purpose of the interviews was to give stakeholders an opportunity to share their perspectives on strengths and challenges in the existing system. A summary of stakeholder feedback and list of people interviewed can be found in Appendix B.

- **Performance Data**: Focus Strategies conducted an analysis of data provided by City of Durham which included:
  1. The community’s inventory of emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing units as documented in the annual Housing Inventory County (HIC) submitted to HUD;
2. Client data exported from the community’s HMIS for the two-year period from January 2015 through December 2016; and
3. Program budget data collected directly from homeless program providers, including the total annual operating cost of each program, its revenue sources, and amounts.

The data sets were uploaded into a customized Web-based application developed by Focus Strategies (Base Year Calculator – BYC) which generates an analysis of HMIS data quality for each project, as well as the performance of each project across a range of measures. The analysis results are summarized in this report, with the project data presented at the level of program types: emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing. Data from the BYC was also used to model a range of possible system changes and assess their impact on the size of the homeless population. Modeling results are summarized in Appendix C.

- **Point in Time Count.** Data from the City of Durham Point in Time (PIT) count from 2015 and 2016 was used for context on the size and composition of the homeless population.
- **Review of Research on Ending Homelessness.** We conducted a literature review on evidence about system strategies that have proven to be effective in reducing homelessness. This research is summarized in Appendix D. A more in-depth summary of resources relating to diversion is provided in Appendix E.

**B. Programs Included in Data Analysis**

The performance analysis presented in this report incorporates data on programs in the City of Durham that provide housing, shelter, and services to people experiencing homelessness. The programs analyzed fall into four categories: (1) emergency shelters, (2) transitional housing, (3) rapid rehousing, and (4) permanent supportive housing. The scope of the analysis is limited only to these four program types and does not include homelessness prevention assistance for people at-risk of homelessness, or other types of safety net assistance or mainstream system services provided to people who are homeless.

The universe of programs analyzed included any of the above program types that were included on the community’s Housing Inventory Count (HIC) and that also participate in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and for which there were two years of data available. To understand program performance in relation to the level of financial investment, data was collected from individual providers about their project budgets, including the total annual operating cost of each program, its revenue sources, and amounts.

**III. Background on Durham’s Homeless System**

This section provides a general overview of the current system of housing and services for people experiencing homelessness in the City of Durham, including data on who is homeless in the community, the inventory of homeless programs and their capacity, and an overview of the community’s homeless governance structure and key system initiatives.
A. Numbers and Characteristics of People Experiencing Homelessness in Durham

The table below presents data from the 2016 Homeless Point in Time Count (PIT), conducted in January 2016. The count found a total of 354 people experiencing homelessness, comprising 270 households. The data shows that the majority of the homeless population in Durham is sheltered, with 63% of counted households living in emergency shelters and 25% living in transitional housing. There were 32 unsheltered households, comprising 12% of the total households counted.

The overall population is primarily single adults without children (71% of all people counted). Of the 251 homeless single adults counted, 57 or 23% are chronically homeless, defined as: (1) currently unsheltered or in emergency shelter; (2) having been continually homeless for at least a year or four or more times within the last three years with a total duration of at least one year; and (3) having a disability that significantly impairs ability to secure and sustain housing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016 Homeless Populations</th>
<th>Sheltered</th>
<th>Unsheltered</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emergency</td>
<td>Transitional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Households/All persons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Persons (Children)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Persons (age 18 to 24)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Persons (Adults)</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL PERSONS</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016 Homeless Subpopulations¹</th>
<th>Sheltered</th>
<th>Unsheltered</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chronically Homeless Individuals</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronically Homeless Families</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons in Chronically Homeless Families</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severely Mentally Ill</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic Substance Abuse</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons with HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims of Domestic Violence</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Subpopulation categories are not mutually exclusive, so these figures do not sum to the total homeless population. People may be represented in multiple categories.
B. System Inventory

The table below presents a summary of the homeless system’s overall capacity, which is drawn from the Housing Inventory Count (HIC) from January 2016 and includes data on participation levels in HMIS.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Type</th>
<th>Number of Providers</th>
<th>Number of Programs</th>
<th>Number of Beds</th>
<th>Percentage of Beds Participating in HMIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Shelter</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Housing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapid Re-Housing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Supportive Housing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>733</strong></td>
<td><strong>93%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The City of Durham homeless system currently has a very large inventory of emergency shelter and permanent supportive housing beds, comprising 31% and 42% of all beds respectively. There is relatively little rapid rehousing (13% of inventory) or transitional housing (14% of inventory). To align the system with federal policy priorities and with best practices and evidence, the CoC has been reducing the numbers of transitional beds and increasing rapid re-housing over the past several years.

While the HMIS participation rate is strong across all the program types, we would also note that one of the larger service providers in the community, the Durham Rescue Mission, does not enter data into HMIS. It is difficult to assess how the beds operated by the Durham Rescue Mission impact the community’s efforts to reduce homelessness, due to the lack of HMIS data from these programs.

C. Households Served in HMIS Participating Programs

The data below shows the total number of people served in HMIS participating programs Durham during 2015 and 2016. Over the course of the two-year period, the CoC served 2,804 people. Of these, 71% were adults 25 and older, 21% were transition age youth (TAY) ages 18 to 24, and 8% were children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Total Unduplicated People</th>
<th>2,804</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults 25+</td>
<td>2,001</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAY 18 - 24</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Projects with a “Current” and “New” indicator were collapsed where appropriate; only those projects with HMIS data available were included in the analysis.
The following tables show the unduplicated number of people served in the same timeframe by program type. Individuals who received services from more than one program type are reflected more than once (i.e., in each of the service types they received). Programs types with short lengths of stay tend to serve a larger number of people than those with longer or unlimited lengths of stay. Emergency shelters served 1,917 or 68% of total people served, while permanent supportive housing served 411 (15%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Unduplicated People</th>
<th>ES</th>
<th>TH</th>
<th>RRH</th>
<th>PSH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adults 25+</td>
<td>1,366</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAY 18 - 24</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. Governance Structure

In 2011, the Homeless Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) was formed to serve as the CoC Governance Board for the Durham CoC and to lead Durham’s systemwide efforts to address and end homelessness. Prior to its creation, the Continuum of Care (CoC) was overseen and operated by a non-profit agency within the community. The HSAC was created through an interlocal agreement between the City and County of Durham which specifies the representation of elected officials and other representatives on the Board. Following the creation of the HSAC, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) published the CoC Interim Rule, which mandates broad participation of community stakeholder in community-wide planning and systemwide coordination efforts. The HSAC membership has been expanded twice to align with these requirements. The HSAC has convened a broader CoC membership group that include any agency that completes a membership agreement, in addition to those who are members of the HSAC. The CoC’s membership convenes at least twice per year, while the HSAC meets monthly.

As the governance body for the CoC, the HSAC’s responsibilities include: appointing a representative to the North Carolina Statewide HMIS Governance Committee; designating an agency as the Collaborative Applicant for the annual CoC Application to HUD; completing system- and project-level monitoring for both CoC and ESG-funded programs; developing and operating a Coordinated Entry System; establishing written standards and policies for the entire system; and leading all system planning, overseeing the bi-annual Point In Time (PIT) count, and overseeing the CoC Application to HUD.

In 2011, the City of Durham Department of Community Development (DCD) took on the role as the lead agency of the Durham City/County CoC. DCD coordinates all City of Durham community development efforts, including programs related to homelessness, affordable housing, homelessness prevention, and financial empowerment. The Department also oversees the City’s community development entitlement funding, which includes federal dollars from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Home Investment Partnership (HOME), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), and Housing Opportunities for People...
with AIDS (HOPWA). DCD also has primary responsibility for spending the City’s Dedicated Housing Fund (DHF) which in 2017-2018 is two cents of the City’s property tax rate and is expected to raise approximately $5.4 million for affordable housing related activities. As the CoC’s lead agency, DCD employs two full-time employees dedicated to working on activities within the CoC and related to homelessness, as well as a support staff person who is partially assigned to assist with CoC activities. DCD’s responsibilities within the CoC include staffing HSAC and its committees; managing the CoC’s local implementation of the Statewide HMIS and conducting data analysis with information collected via HMIS; managing CoC and ESG contracts, CoC compliance, and system planning efforts. The DCD’s homeless system staff also coordinate the State ESG Regional Application process – soliciting, evaluating and recommending local project applications for State ESG funding for homeless shelters and housing.

Currently, DCD is in the process of reorganizing its organizational structure as part of a new Affordable Housing strategy being developed in collaboration with Enterprise Community Partners. New teams will be created aligned around the City’s three new housing goals. The Department plans to integrate its CoC-dedicated staff into the team responsible for Goal 1, which will focus on the development of affordable rental housing within the community. This team maintains working relationships with developers and other community housing development organizations to increase Durham’s supply of affordable housing. The vision behind this restructuring is to create a stronger working connection between the City’s strategies to address homelessness and its strategies to expand the supply of affordable rental housing in Durham.

E. Stakeholder Perceptions of System Strengths and Challenges

As part of this effort, Focus Strategies conducted interviews with key stakeholders who have been involved with the CoC and community efforts to reduce homelessness. The purpose of these interviews was to give stakeholders an opportunity to share their perspectives on key strengths and challenges in the existing system. Below we have summarized the main themes we heard from stakeholders. A more detailed summary of input is provided in Appendix B.

Strengths:

- **Increased Coordination**: Stakeholders agreed that shifts towards increased coordination have been beneficial to the CoC and system at large and has played a role in strengthening partnerships and efforts between agencies that participate in the CoC. Stakeholders also commended systemwide shifts towards and alignment with a greater Housing First focus, which has led the community to see reductions in family, unsheltered, and Veteran homelessness in recent years.

- **Growing Focus on Project and System Effectiveness**: Several stakeholders identified an increased systemwide emphasis on system- and project-level effectiveness using data analysis and performance measurement/targets. Many said that the system has seen widespread buy-in around utilizing data and performance measurement amongst providers and other CoC partners in recent years. A CoC subcommittee has recently formed to discuss how to use system and project data to measure whether the CoC is achieving its objectives, as well as set policies and performance benchmarks for projects within the CoC.
• **Single Point of Entry for Family Homeless System**: Recently, Durham County’s Department of Social Services has taken on the responsibility of acting as the “single point of entry,” or front door, for assessment and referral of families who are experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of homelessness. In addition to creating a streamlined way for families to access assistance, the coordinated entry point has allowed for the development of diversion processes, which many said have been central in preventing families from unnecessarily entering the homeless system whenever possible.

• **Landlord Engagement Efforts**: Throughout our interviews, stakeholders echoed the usefulness and benefit of community landlord engagement efforts – such as the Unlocking Doors initiative, which was designed to engage and incentivize landlords to rent to people experiencing homelessness through a dedicated phone line, tenant support and case management from nonprofit organizations, and unit inspection services. The CoC is also in the process of developing a risk mitigation fund for landlords who rent to homeless system clients, while other provider agencies within the community have hired Housing Specialists to work on growing and strengthening their landlord base and provide a direct line of communication with participating landlords.

• **Significant Reductions in Veterans Homelessness**: Throughout the interviews, stakeholders noted the community’s accomplishments in significantly reducing Veteran homelessness and ending Veteran chronic homelessness by utilizing a robust supply of housing options and other resources dedicated to this population. Some accredited this progress to the Mayor’s Challenge, which focused on directing resources to Veterans experiencing homelessness. One stakeholder said the Durham CoC’s “buy-in to ending veterans homeless far outshines the other CoCs I’ve seen.”

• **Community Generosity**: Several stakeholders who were interviewed said that Durham possesses “a culture of community activism” and people are eager to help those experiencing homelessness. One stakeholder noted people’s willingness to contribute money and time towards ending homelessness is a great opportunity and asset for the CoC.

**Challenges:**

• **Lack of overall strategy for system/capacity for strategic planning**: Overall, stakeholders expressed that the HSAC lacks strategic direction, and lacks clarity about what role it should play in strategic planning and implementation for the homeless system. DCD staff assigned to the Board are seen as partially filling the role of guiding the Board towards an overarching strategy to address homelessness, however, strategic work tends to be sidetracked because there is so much focus on compliance with HUD requirements and general meeting facilitation. Stakeholders articulated a desire for there to be more proactive planning and strategic thinking about how to bring all the disparate pieces of work on homelessness together into more of a system, as well as a hope for an overarching plan to guide policy and funding decisions.

• **Lack of diversion/problem-solving efforts**: Although some providers have recently implemented diversion as an element of their programs and diversion for families has been “working well,” stakeholders felt that a systemwide culture shift towards problem-solving, mediation, and family reunification is needed. Some felt there is a general absence of problem-solving skills within the CoC and options to maximize the number of people being housed (for example, shared housing)
need to be explored. Particularly within the family coordinated entry system, some households end up falling into homelessness before they are offered a diversion conversation due to the community’s diversion providers maxed out capacity.

- **Single adult system CE not yet in place**: As mentioned, a coordinated entry process is currently only in place for family households experiencing homelessness. Many stakeholders mentioned the need for a coordinated entry for single adults, as well as families. To address this system gap, the CoC has issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a provider to design a CES for single adults and youth.

- **Program barriers**: Despite shifts towards a more housing-focused system, several permanent housing and shelter programs within the system still have high barriers to entry, such as sobriety, income, and employment requirements. One stakeholder also said the system must determine how to house people with a range of levels of need, as the current system works best for people with low barriers or very high barriers and people “in the middle tend to get stuck.”

- **Limited PSH and RRH**: Despite efforts to increase the community’s stock of permanent housing interventions, some stakeholders felt there is still very limited RRH and PSH resources within the community. Stakeholders said that RRH providers generally have limited capacity and resources for the program, and many have faced difficulties with administrative and funding, ultimately limiting their programs’ reach and capacity. While stakeholders had mixed opinions about whether the community needs more PSH, some feel that the CoC needs to better define the purpose of PSH, and unite under a set of common, Housing First-oriented goals, policies, and procedures.

- **Housing market**: Throughout the interviews, we heard stakeholders identify the community’s challenging housing market – low vacancy rates, rising rents, and overall insufficient stock of affordable housing – as a key barrier to housing people experiencing homelessness. Several expressed the need for more dedicated affordable units for people experiencing homelessness. Stakeholders identified the City of Durham’s Community Development Department as taking the lead role in affordable housing production and noted that the City has engaged consultants to help develop a more focused affordable housing strategy, which has been seen as a step in the right direction for the community.

- **Connections between homeless system and mainstream affordable housing system**: Stakeholders identified the need for greater linkage between the homeless system and mainstream resources and affordable housing. Some suggested increasing representation amongst these programs and services on the CoC Governance Board, however feel that HSAC has struggled how to determine how to align and coordinate the homeless system and mainstream system effectively.

- **Concerns about HSAC effectiveness**: Throughout the interviews, stakeholders expressed concerns about the effectiveness of the Board due to them being overly political and lacking the knowledge of homelessness to effectively fulfil their roles. Some stakeholders said that while some Board members are genuinely motivated to help people experiencing homelessness, others are simply “filling a slot.”
• **Concerns about provider capacity:** A number of stakeholders expressed concerns about the administrative capacity of many of the non-profit providers in the community. There are a limited number of agencies that have the financial and administrative systems needed to administer publicly funded programs in compliance with applicable regulatory requirements. Many of the non-profits in the community are smaller, grassroots or faith-based organizations with minimal paid staff. This means there is a fairly small group of organizations with whom the City can contract using federal funds and limits DCD’s ability to fund new programs.

**IV. Results: Analysis of System Performance**

The sections below present our analysis of homeless system performance using data drawn from HMIS, the Housing Inventory Count (HIC) and provider project budget information. We have also included information provided by key stakeholders where relevant to help provide context for the data.

**A. HMIS Data Quality**

A key precondition to any assessment of system performance is the availability of high quality data. The BYC produces assessments of four dimensions of data quality for each project type including: the amount of “missing” data, the amount of “unknown” data, the validity of calculated lengths of stay, and utilization rate. Overall, Durham does not have any significant data quality issues, although there are places where improvements can be targeted.

Understanding the difference between “missing” and “unknown” data is key in developing data quality improvement efforts. “Missing” data is information that is simply not recorded in HMIS, which usually means that the project staff are not entering these data elements into the data system. On average, prior living situation is missing across all project types for one to six percent of households served (average of three percent). Exit destination is not missing for any project type demonstrating excellent data quality in that domain.

“Unknown” data, on the other hand, reflects the percent of entries and exits that do not have a meaningful or useful response in HMIS for assessing performance. Unknown data includes: “missing data,” “data not collected,” “client doesn’t know,” “client refused,” “no exit interview conducted,” and “unknown.” Higher percentages of unknown responses, therefore, suggests that data is not reflected in HMIS in either a compliant manner (high percentage of missing data), or a useful manner (with responses not relevant to performance measurement and system improvement). Durham’s unknown prior living situations range from three percent to seven percent depending on project type (average of four percent); on average, this is within an acceptable range.

On the other hand, Durham’s average for unknown exit destinations is thirteen percent, and ranges from nine to seventeen percent. A problem that is impacting data quality on this data element is that Urban Ministries of Durham, which operates one of the largest shelters, only enters HMIS data on a weekly basis due to staffing constraints. While those who exit emergency shelter are often not available for gathering valid exit information, unknown exits from transitional housing, rapid rehousing and permanent
supportive housing are relatively high. Capturing accurate destination data is crucial for measuring permanent housing outcomes.³

We also noted that there seems to be a higher rate of missing and unknown prior living and exit destination data for VA programs (VASH, GPD, HCHV) than for other program types.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Missing/Unknown (% of all Households)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Shelter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapid Rehousing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Supportive Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We also looked at the lengths of stay in programs and found the data suggested no issues with the data quality. We specifically investigated whether the data show negative lengths of stay (indicates data entry error), or the average LOS being very different from the median length of stay (indicates extreme outliers). Both issues would indicate data quality concerns; however, none were indicated in the Durham data.

Finally, we investigated possible data quality issues regarding Utilization Rate (UR). UR might reflect data quality in 2 ways: a very low UR (indicates client stay data not being entered) or very high UR values (indicates people not exited from the HMIS program in a timely manner). The final factor that often affects UR is that the program’s capacity might be reflected differently in the HIC than is practiced by the program. In this case, very high utilization might be a result of under-reporting capacity on the HIC; likewise, very low utilization might be related to over-reporting capacity on the HIC.

B. Alignment of Inventory and Investment with Need

The graph below illustrates the relationship between Durham’s adult only and family households in terms of population size, current system capacity and investment levels. Though family households comprise just 12% of the total homeless population, 29% of financial investments are allocated to families. A similar disparity is found in the system inventory, where 18% of the bed capacity is designated for just 12% of the total homeless population. For single adult households, 71% of investment and 82% of bed capacity is allocated to the remaining 88% of Durham’s homeless population. This disproportional allocation of

³ Unknown data on these variables can affect the performance measures to be reviewed, however, the specific impact is related to whether the unknown data should be: (1) entries from literal homelessness/exits to permanent destinations; (2) entries from housed locations/exits to non-permanent destination; or (3) a blend of both. For the purpose of these analyses we assume that the distribution of unknown responses resembles that of the known responses (option 3), which ultimately has no impact on the conclusions that can be drawn from the data.
resources toward families in relation to the size of the population of homeless families is quite common and evident in several communities Focus Strategies has analyzed.

C. System Performance

In recent years, federal homelessness policy has shifted to looking at how well communities are performing in their efforts to reduce homelessness. To further these objectives, HUD has strongly encouraged communities to evaluate the effectiveness both of individual programs as well as the overall system in meeting specific performance measures. Focus Strategies has developed a set of performance metrics that build upon HUD’s system performance measures and policies as articulated in the HEARTH Act and Opening Doors: The Federal Strategic Plan to End Homelessness. While the measures we use are aligned with HUD’s goals and system performance measures, we also incorporate cost effectiveness, so that communities can understand not just system performance, but also performance in relation to the level of investment.

This section presents our analysis of Durham’s system performance on six measures:

1. Bed and Unit Utilization Rate
2. Program Entries from Homelessness
3. Lengths of Stay
4. Rate of Exit to Permanent Housing
5. Cost per Permanent Housing Exit
6. Returns to Homelessness

1. Bed and Unit Utilization Rate

This metric measures the average daily occupancy of programs in the system, as calculated using HMIS data. Maximizing the use of available bed capacity is essential to ensuring that system resources are being put to their best use and that as many people experiencing homelessness as possible are being served given the existing inventory.
The graph below presents the utilization rate for emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing.\footnote{4} This data uses bed utilization for single adult programs, and unit utilization for family programs (because sometimes a unit in a family program might have unfilled beds simply due to housing a smaller sized family than the unit is designed to accommodate).\footnote{5}

Utilization rates for emergency shelters were the lowest at 78%. Utilization for transitional housing and permanent supportive housing matches what we would expect to see when programs are maximizing their ability to serve homeless households. Although the emergency shelter utilization rate is brought down by one project which was physically transitioning during the first six months of the year, shelter utilization rate is over 90% if this project is not included in the analysis.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{utilization_rates.png}
\caption{Utilization Rate}
\end{figure}

2. \textit{Entries from Homelessness}

This measure looks at the degree to which programs are serving people with the most acute housing needs, namely those who are \textit{literally} homeless (i.e., they are living outdoors, in a vehicle, or in an emergency shelter). While certain funders may allow programs to serve people who are living in other situations (i.e., those at risk of homelessness), successfully reducing homelessness depends on prioritizing those with the highest need for available units. This measure reflects the federal policy goals of ending chronic homelessness and prioritizing literally homeless people for permanent housing. To create a “right sized” system in which there is an appropriate housing intervention for all people experiencing homelessness, those who are not literally homeless must be diverted from entering the homeless system to begin with, thereby making resources available for those with nowhere to live.

The graphs below show the prior living situations for households entering emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing in Durham. The first chart shows the

\footnote{4} Note: Rapid rehousing is not included in this analysis because this program type does not have a fixed bed capacity; the methodology applied to the other program types does not generate a comparable result.

\footnote{5} The formula used for calculating Utilization Rate is: number of beds nights used in HMIS data/number of bed nights available per HIC capacity ((beds for single adults + units for families) \times 365)
percentage of people coming from literal homelessness (streets, vehicles, emergency shelter) and the second one shows the percentage come from non-homeless situations (e.g. living with friends and family, living in subsidized or unsubsidized rental housing, or in a motel). Currently, emergency shelters and transitional housing are admitting many people from housed situations. Almost half of all households entering emergency shelters and over 40% of households entering transitional housing are coming from housed locations. Permanent supportive housing enters fewer households annually and often takes a higher percentage of households from institutions than other project types. The metric associated with where people have lived prior to entering PSH is also very important as it helps illustrate whether PSH projects in the community are prioritizing those with the greatest housing needs.

This data is consistent with a system in which Coordinated Entry (CE) is not yet fully operational and there is no or only limited diversion taking place. Currently Durham has a single point of entry for families experiencing homelessness that is operated by the Durham County Department of Social Services and there is some diversion taking place at family shelters and transitional housing programs. However, there is no CE yet in place for single adults (The City of Durham has just issued an RFP for planning work for adult and youth CE). Fully implementing CE and deploying diversion resources throughout the system will help ensure that households experiencing unsheltered homeless or who are living in shelter have priority.
access to the system, while who those who are still housed receive support and problem solving to identify a housing solution and prevent entry into the system.

The relatively large number of people entering programs who are still housed and the low rate of entry by people who are unsheltered suggests some programs may be screening out households with higher needs. While we have directly examined program entry criteria, our stakeholder interviews revealed that that there are still many programs that have admission criteria that likely have the effect of screening out highest need households. In a system that is strongly oriented to the Housing First philosophy, programs have relatively few barriers to entry so that households with the greatest needs are served and no one is screened out of assistance due to not being “housing ready.” While the providers in Durham appear to have a solid understanding of Housing First, opinions expressed in the interviews suggested that there is a broad spectrum of practice in this area, with some programs strongly aligned with Housing First principles and others operating more on a Housing Readiness model.

3. **Lengths of Stay**

Achieving relatively short lengths of stay in emergency shelter, transitional housing and rapid rehousing programs is essential to ending homelessness. Every day a person is homeless has an associated cost and reducing lengths of stay results in a quicker rate of exit and a lower cost per exit, which in turn allows more people to be served. The HEARTH Act has established a goal that no one is homeless longer than 30 days, although this aspiration has not been codified in any HUD requirements. To increase effectiveness and reduce homelessness the entire system must strive for the shortest stays needed to reach this goal.

Length of stay in Durham programs was calculated using HMIS data based on the entry and exit dates for each program stay recorded in the system. Currently none of the system components have achieved lengths of stay below 30 days. Transitional housing stays are the longest, with an average of 245 days. Rapid rehousing program stays, by contrast, are much shorter. This data should be considered in relation to the rate of exit to permanent housing, presented in the next section. Many transitional housing programs are designed with relatively long lengths of stay based on the assumption that longer stays allow households to develop the skills and resources they need to successfully secure housing upon exit. Yet data shows that despite these longer stays, participants in rapid rehousing programs have higher rates of permanent housing exit. The longer stays in transitional housing are not necessarily yielding stronger outcomes. Likewise, the cost per permanent housing exit and rate of return to homelessness are much lower for rapid rehousing than transitional housing.
4. **Exits to Permanent Housing**

While helping households exit shelter and transitional housing quickly is a key strategy to end homelessness, it is just as important to understand where people go when they exit. The rate of exit to permanent housing is a very important metric and one that HUD has asked communities to report on for several years. This measures the degree to which a project assists clients to move to a housed situation and is a critical aspect of project performance.

The next graph shows the rate of exit to permanent housing for all emergency shelter, transitional housing, and rapid rehousing programs in Durham. For this measure, “permanent housing” includes any housed situation that is not time-limited, such as a market rate apartment, a subsidized housing unit, shared housing with a roommate, or staying permanently with family or friends.

As shown in the table below, the rate of exit to permanent housing for emergency shelter programs in Durham is 52%. The exit rate should be considered in relationship to household entries. Emergency shelters are entering households from housing at a rate of 49% and exiting households to permanent housing at a rate only slightly higher (52%). The results for transitional housing are better at 66%, but still below what would be expected in a high performing system. As discussed in the next section, emergency shelters and transitional housing are not cost-effective strategies to reduce homelessness in general, and low performance on the rate of exit further reduces cost effectiveness. Typical performance for exits from emergency shelter to permanent housing are 20%, while the HUD standard for transitional housing exits to permanent housing is greater than 80%.

We also noted that rapid rehousing has a higher success rate on this measure than either shelter or transitional housing with 72% of households exiting to permanent housing. This is true even while the lengths of stay in rapid rehousing are the same or shorter than in transitional housing. Thus, there is no

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6 Individual shelters have wide ranging performance on this indicator, which ranges from a low of 11% exits to PH to a high of 87% exits to PH.

evidence that staying longer in each program results in a higher rate of successful exit. Nonetheless, permanent housing exit rates from rapid rehousing fall below the 85% that has come to be expected and that is established by the NAEH as the target.

5. **Cost Per Exit to Permanent Housing**

To create a more efficient system, it is essential that investments are aligned with the objective of ending homelessness. Cost per permanent housing exit is a key performance measure because it assesses not only whether a program is helping clients to move to permanent housing, but also whether they do so in a cost-effective manner. As funds are shifted from expensive programs to those that are more cost effective per person served, system capacity will increase and the numbers of people experiencing homelessness will be reduced.

The graph below shows the average cost per permanent housing exit for all program types. These figures are calculated using the total program cost, utilization of beds/units, and client length of stay (cost per day is calculated and then multiplied by the number of days the individual/family was in the program).  

As shown in the graph below, the cost per permanent housing exit for transitional housing programs ($15,441) is nearly three times higher than the cost for rapid re-housing programs ($5,560). This is consistent with many national studies which have found that rapid rehousing typically is more cost effective and achieves better housing outcomes than transitional housing. If investments were to shift from these costlier interventions to those that are more cost effective, the overall system would be able to house many more homeless households. 

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8 The formula used to calculate Cost Per PH Exit is: (1) Calculate Cost per bed night = Total budget divided by number of bed nights used in HMIS data; (2) Multiply cost per bed and length of stay to get household stay cost; (3) Average household stay cost for all households that exited to permanent housing.

9 The average cost of emergency shelter is quite high at more than $11,000 per exit. The cost is inflated, however, because of the shelter that was physically transitioning during the year, which impacted the utilization rate (which impacts cost per PH exit). Removing that shelter from the analysis results in an average cost of just under $4,000 per permanent housing exit.
6. **Returns to Homelessness**

Reducing lengths of stay and increasing rates of exit to permanent housing must be balanced by ensuring that people who exit programs do not return to homelessness. Tracking this metric allows communities to assess whether programs are helping place clients into permanent housing situations that “stick” and are appropriate for their needs. For this analysis, returns to homelessness is calculated by looking at all households who exited programs and determining whether any had a new entry into an emergency shelter or transitional housing program within 12 months.

The next graph presents rate of return to homelessness for people who exited emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid rehousing, or permanent supportive housing in Durham between January 1, 2015 and December 31, 2016 with an exit destination that was a permanent housing situation and returned within one year of that exit. The rate of return is quite low for all project types, between 0% and 4%. This data again supports the premise that rapid rehousing is just as effective, if not more so, in helping people move quickly to a permanent housing situation that sticks.
D. Modeling the Impact of System Shifts

Using the data collected to conduct the performance analysis, Focus Strategies conducted a further analysis to assess the impact of possible system changes that the City and CoC might consider implementing. We focused in on two particular initiatives: (1) achievement of a set of performance targets in all projects of each project type; and (2) investing new resources in rapid rehousing (RRH) and in shelter diversion.

The modeling results suggested that by setting and meeting relatively ambitious performance targets, it would be possible to eliminate unsheltered homelessness for both single adults and families in 2018. To achieve further reductions in homelessness would require adjustments to the emergency shelter system to reduce the population of people in shelter. We therefore modeled the impact of adding rapid rehousing capacity to help people more quickly exit shelter, and also implementing shelter diversion to reduce the entry of households into shelter. We found that by adding 25 units of rapid rehousing for single adults in 2019 and investing in a fully functioning diversion approach throughout the system, it would be possible to decrease shelter utilization and achieve dramatic reductions in the number of people experiencing sheltered homelessness. Appendix C presents the results of this modeling analysis.

V. Assessment of CoC Governance Structure

In addition to the system performance assessment discussed above, Focus Strategies also analyzed the Continuum of Care governance structure in Durham. We based this analysis on our review of governance documents, interviews with City of Durham staff and community stakeholders, and our knowledge of CoC planning structures from around the country.

We have identified several strengths to build upon, as well as areas where improvement is needed. The following sections outline our assessment of these key strengths and challenges.

A. Strengths

The formation of the Homeless Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) to replace the older provider-led governing body has increased systemwide transparency, as participation within the CoC has been broadened and CoC activities have become more visible to the public. Additionally, the creation of HSAC has increased accountability amongst government agencies, local elected officials, and other CoC members, while eliminating various conflicts of interest that existed under the previous structure.

By using an Interlocal Agreement to formalize the HSAC structure, the City and County have ensured that the Board operates under clear rules that are publicly known and understood. The Interlocal Agreement and Governance Charter lay out a clear set of operating policies for the HSAC, including how members are selected and seated, how meetings are to be conducted, roles and responsibilities within the Board, and activities of the CoC. The expansion of the HSAC to align with HUD CoC requirements has brought a greater diversity of experience and opinion to the table and provides a structure to support a more collaborative and coordinated approach to addressing homelessness in Durham. Additionally, in part due to its scope and broadened community participation, the Board has done an excellent job focusing public attention on the issue of homelessness in the City and County of Durham.

By dedicating staff to CoC functions within the DCD, the City of Durham has ensured that there is strong and ongoing support for the Board. We noted that there is strong internal capacity for HMIS data
collection, data quality efforts and data analysis. As a result, the CoC maintains a high capacity for collecting and analyzing system- and project-level performance data collected via HMIS. Through this strong data capacity, in recent years, the CoC has been able to increase its focus on data-driven project performance and move towards a more systematic approach to addressing homelessness.

B. Challenges

The primary challenge facing the Durham CoC is that the current structure does not incorporate a strong system planning role, either within the Board or the Lead Agency. While the HSAC is nominally responsible for overseeing planning efforts for the homeless system in Durham, in practice its role has mostly been more narrowly defined and limited mostly to making decisions about how to allocate CoC funding and ensure compliance with HUD CoC requirements amongst projects that receive this funding. These efforts include completing extensive rating and ranking processes for projects competing for CoC dollars. Similarly, the CoC lead agency (DCD) staff have not been explicitly tasked with leading strategic planning or system planning efforts. Responsibilities of the CoC staff are conceived more in compliance rather than policy terms, and their work on planning tends to be framed within the limits of what is required to compete effectively for CoC funds. For example, staff have worked with the board to begin re-allocating funds from transitional to rapid re-housing. However, they have not developed a strategy to bring rapid re-housing to scale and use this intervention type to really drive reductions in homelessness among non-chronically people experiencing homelessness (see recommendations). Staff are also somewhat constrained by the limited number of organizations in the community with who they can contract to implement new projects and programs, given that many lack the administrative capacity to administer federal funding.

A related issue is that as currently configured, there is nowhere in the existing governance structure for work to take place around aligning funding streams for homeless activities to maximize effectiveness. While there are several HSAC members who represent entities that oversee a range of funding sources for homeless programs and services, such as the County, the Durham Housing Authority (DHA), and private funders, the Board is not currently a forum where decisions about how to coordinate these funding streams takes place. Despite this opportunity for collaboration and coordination, planning and decision making related to these funding sources does not happen within the context of HSAC.

While the expanded representation on the HSAC means that the Board brings in a wide diversity of perspectives and knowledge, it also means that the Board does not necessarily have the background and knowledge base to engage in the kind of strategic planning and funding alignment needed to transform that existing collection of programs into a system. The Board is too large and diverse to do this type of work and would benefit from the creation of a smaller Policy and/or Funding Alignment committee tasked with driving the system planning and system change work with support from staff (see recommendations). Without a strong focus on system planning and a clearly articulated data-informed strategy to generate reductions in homelessness, there is a risk that individual Board members or groups will push for initiatives and projects that are not in alignment with industry best practices and proven strategies for effectively reducing homelessness.

Although the Board’s increased level of transparency and openness is beneficial to system planning work, we also noted that this level of transparency comes with heightened sense of political conflict and tension. Due to the formal, public nature of the Board’s meetings and the presence of elected officials on the board, some of the community’s providers and other CoC participants fear being “called out” for poor performance or compliance issues.
VI. Recommendations

A. Program and System Strategies

The Durham CoC has made great strides in re-orienting its efforts to end homelessness to be more housing-focused and to use data to assess system and project performance. The work to date appears to be yielding strong results and homelessness has gone down, as measured by the Point in Time Count. The community is also fortunate that there is a relatively small homeless population of only about 350 people at a point in time. Reaching functionally zero people experiencing homelessness is realistically within reach. What is needed is to accelerate progress creating a systemic approach in which all aspects of the community’s response to homelessness are oriented towards quickly finding a housing solution for each household that is experiencing literal homelessness. Our modeling shows that if the CoC sets performance targets and programs succeed in meeting those the targets, then the homeless population will be reduced significantly. Suggested performance targets are detailed in Appendix C.

Program and system strategies we recommend that the community consider implementing to improve performance include:

1. **Fully Implement Coordinated Entry and Lower Program Barriers to Ensure that Literally Homeless and Higher Need Households Can Be Prioritized.** The system performance assessment reveals that the existing programs and services in Durham are serving large numbers of people who are not literally homeless, even while there are unsheltered individuals in the community and others who cycle in and out of shelter. To make faster progress on ending homelessness, the community will need to design and implement coordinated entry for single adults and youth. This planning process is getting underway soon and will include an evaluation of current CES access points and determine if they should be maintained, merged, or expanded. The City and CoC should ensure that the CE policies are designed to prioritize people who are living outdoors, in vehicles or in emergency shelter. A family centralized intake process is already in place, and this should be revisited while CE for adults is being developed, to ensure both systems are designed to ease access into housing for those who have the greatest housing barriers and need the most support from the homeless system to become housed. To maximize effectiveness, prioritization should largely be based on length of time homeless and numbers of episodes of homelessness as well as barriers to housing (e.g. no rental history, no or low income, limited employment history) and less upon assessment of vulnerability. This will ensure that those who have the greatest need for assistance to become housed are prioritized.

   At the same time, programs in the system must reduce their entry barriers and agree to accept referrals from the coordinated entry system. This work is already underway through the CoC application process (programs with lower barriers receive higher scores), but more intensive, one-on-one support and TA will likely be needed to help providers fully embrace a Housing First orientation.

2. **Provide Shelter Diversion and Housing Problem Solving Throughout the System.** The CE system will benefit from the integration of a strong shelter diversion/problem solving component to help keep households who are not yet homeless from entering the system. Our modeling analysis found that robust diversion practices throughout the system, coupled with expanded investments in rapid re-housing, will result in dramatic reductions in the number of people entering shelter and ensure beds are available for those who are having an immediate crisis and have no other options. Since the homeless housing interventions (RRH and PSH) in Durham are
not yet right sized and it is not possible now to offer housing assistance to all households who are homeless or at-risk, it is critical to prevent as many households as possible from entering the homeless system.

To be maximally effective, diversion should target those households who are imminently going to be homeless within one to three days. Generally, this intervention is targeted to households that do not have their own rental unit but are living informally with friends or family or in a motel. Diversion differs from traditional homelessness prevention, which generally provides assistance with back rent for those who are living in their own rental unit and facing a potential eviction. While traditional prevention programs may be effective at preventing evictions, data suggests that few of the households assisted would ever enter the shelter system even if they did not receive prevention help. Diversion uses strengths-based problem solving, mediation and small amounts of flexible financial assistance to help people with unstable housing situations remain where they are or to move directly to alternative housing, often shared housing with friends or family. Appendix E summarizes best practices in implementing diversion.

3. **Invest in High Performing Rapid Re-Housing.** The performance data we analyzed demonstrated that the existing rapid re-housing programs in Durham are achieving strong results in exiting people to permanent housing at relatively low cost and with low rates of return to homelessness in comparison to either shelter or transitional housing. Our modeling also showed that expanding RRH capacity can have a substantial impact on the size of the homeless population. This suggests that the system could likely house significantly more people experiencing homelessness with an expansion of rapid re-housing and a shift of resources from lower performing transitional housing. Providing rapid re-housing at a much larger scale is the key solution to ending homelessness for the non-chronically homeless households in the community. The City is already investing some DHF funds for rapid re-housing and we would encourage exploring what other local sources could be dedicated to adding more RRH slots. When the CE system is operational, standardized assessment can be used to identify those households with the greatest housing barriers who are not eligible for permanent supportive housing (due to not meeting the disability or chronicity requirements) and ensure they are prioritized for available RRH.

4. **Connect Homeless System and Affordable Housing Priorities by Targeting New and Existing Affordable Housing Slots for People Experiencing Homelessness.** The City of Durham DCD will be implementing a strategy to ramp up the production of affordable rental housing and intends to have the staff responsible for CoC activities be housed within this housing production unit. This will provide great opportunities for homeless and housing strategies to be integrated. Some strategies that could be impactful include:

- Maximizing the amount of rental housing produced for incomes at or below 30% Area Median Income;
- Ensuring that all new housing developed with City financing has some set aside of units for people experiencing homelessness;
- Require any units dedicated for people experiencing homelessness to take referrals from Coordinated Entry and prioritize these units for those households who cannot resolve their homelessness without a long-term subsidy. One possibility could be to target homeless units for those households for whom rapid re-housing has been attempted but has not been successful. They could also be targeted for “moving on” strategies for people currently living in permanent supportive housing who no longer require intensive services to remain housed.
• Explore whether any of the City’s mainstream housing resources can be used flexibly to provide short-term rental subsidies to support expansion of rapid re-housing capacity in the system. HOME has a TBRA options and ESG can already be used for RRH. CDBG could also be used to provide services to pair with short term rent subsidies.

5. **Invest in Landlord Recruitment and Housing Location Services.** As Durham seeks to expand rapid re-housing capacity, the rising cost of housing will make it difficult for participants to locate appropriate units. Experience from other communities suggests that this problem can be mitigated through expending system resources on staff who are dedicated to cultivating relationships with landlords and to helping clients with searching for and securing housing. Currently there are some programs in the community that offer clients housing search assistance, but this service is not available to all clients who need it. A community-wide landlord outreach/liaison program coupled with expanded resources for rapid re-housing would likely yield strong results.

6. **Continue Efforts to Expand HMIS Participation and Improve Data Quality.** Durham generally has strong participation in the HMIS system and good data quality. Continuing efforts on the part of CoC staff to bring non-participating providers on board will be critical to ensuring that the data needed for strategic system planning is available. Continuing to support providers to conduct regular data entry and problem solve how to address staffing limitations that limit data entry efforts will also be essential.

**B. Governance Recommendations**

Implementing the system strategies identified above will require strong leadership. To turn the curve towards having a more systematic and impactful approach to homelessness, the CoC Governance structure – both the Governance Board and Lead Agency – must embrace and define their role as leaders in community-wide efforts to plan a system with the objective of ending homelessness. These bodies must also come together to coordinate and think more broadly about the purpose of the CoC and homeless response system, rather than simply administering and overseeing CoC resources. While several successful initiatives have been implemented, the community’s efforts remain somewhat uncoordinated and fragmented. The community leadership and CoC Board needs to be set up to spearhead the development and implementation of a unified, data-informed strategy to reduce homelessness. Specific recommendations include:

1. **Create a policy and system planning function** within the existing structure. The HSAC is too large and diffuse to hold responsibility for development of an overall system strategy. There are simply too many voices on the Board to conduct this role and facilitate overall system planning effectively and efficiently. This role is best played by a smaller group made up of key decision makers and funders whose can not only develop systemwide strategy and planning, but also implement it. Viable options for filling this role include be the existing Executive Committee or a new Funder Alignment Committee, created specifically for system planning purposes. Another option may be restructuring the Executive Committee to include stronger funder representation. Whatever the body, it needs to include representation from the DCD, the County, DHA and private funders who are making significant investments in the homeless system. To really drive system planning, this group should meet monthly and report out to the main HSAC for discussion on a regular basis. By shifting responsibility for system planning
and strategy to a smaller Executive or Funder committee, there HSAC could meet less frequently (bi-monthly or quarterly).

2. **Empower the committee entrusted with system planning to design and execute a systemwide plan.** Whether it be a restructured Executive Committee or new funder’s committee, this system planning group must be empowered by local leadership to make and execute decisions related to homelessness. Decision making must not be limited just to the scope of projects receiving CoC funding but must also include other public and private homeless system funding streams that fund local homeless interventions – for example, mainstream housing resources and other County resources dedicated to homelessness, as well as private funding for emergency shelters. This will set up a decision-making structure that allows the community to make the most effective use of available public and private dollars.

3. **Expand or reorganize existing staffing to support system planning efforts.** Despite the importance of creating a formal governance body committed to systemwide planning, a single committee on its own cannot be responsible for shaping the entire system. The CoC Lead Agency (DCD) must also have staff dedicated to policy and system planning that can guide and support the work of the Board committee. We recommend designating one dedicated staff person to take the lead on policy and system planning work. This person should have strong experience and knowledge of policy, community planning, and the local homeless system, as well as federal policy mandates, current best practices, and evolving thinking and evidence in the field of reducing homelessness. In practice, this person should work directly with the board to develop and articulate a strong data-driven vision and plan for creating a local system that will ensure the community continues to see year to year reductions in homelessness. This would include overseeing the development and implementation of the strategies described above: using Coordinated Entry and diversion to systematically target highest needs households for assistance; identifying funding to expand rapid re-housing opportunities, including training and capacity building for RRH providers; and developing policies that will maximize access to permanent supportive housing and affordable housing for people experiencing homelessness. Additionally, this lead staff person should have a strong understanding of how to use data to inform system thinking and planning. For example, developing programmatic strategies for improving the rate of exit from emergency shelter to permanent housing for single adults experiencing homelessness and setting targets against which to measure success. Finally, this person needs to be well-informed about HUD requirements, focusing not just on how the system can comply with these requirements, but rather how to think about and follow these guidelines to effectively shift towards a system that achieves real reductions in homelessness.

**VII. Conclusion**

As stated at the beginning of this report, the Durham CoC appears to be making significant, positive strides towards achieving a more coordinated, housing-focused, and data-informed system for addressing and ending homelessness. In addition to current successes, such as reaching functional zero amongst Veterans, the Durham CoC maintains a relatively small homeless population of around 350 people at any point in time and could realistically achieve functional zero amongst all populations. Key strengths of the system include recent improvements in governance and systemwide coordination and focus on project- and system-level performance; the development of coordinated entry processes for families and soon all populations; community momentum around increasing the supply of affordable housing and engaging
landlords to house people experiencing homelessness; and a transparent and strongly supported CoC governance structure. Results of our analysis also suggest that system inventory is being used to maximum capacity; Rapid Rehousing programs are more cost effective and slightly more effective at exiting clients to permanent housing than temporary housing interventions (i.e. ES and TH); the rate at which people return to homelessness is very low across all program types; and system data-quality is high. Given these findings, we believe that the community has a strong foundation for successfully driving forward systems planning and systems change efforts to further reduce homelessness in Durham.
Appendix A: Summary of Documents Reviewed

The following list contains the system documents that were collected and reviewed by Focus Strategies during our assessment.


Appendix B: Summary of Key Stakeholder Interviews

Enterprise Community Partners have engaged Focus Strategies, on behalf of the City of Durham and the Durham Continuum of Care, to conduct an analysis of homeless system performance and make recommendations for system re-design. As part of this effort, Focus Strategies conducted interviews with key stakeholders who have been involved with the CoC and community efforts to reduce homelessness. The purpose of the interviews was to give stakeholders an opportunity to share their perspectives on strengths and challenges in the existing system – this feedback will inform Focus Strategies assessment and recommendations.

A total of 12 stakeholder interviews took place between April and May 2017. Focus Strategies also interviewed staff from the City of Durham (CoC Lead Agency) for additional context. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. A complete list of stakeholders who participated in the interviews is provided at the end of this document.

This document provides a summary of the feedback heard from stakeholders during the interviews. It will also be included in our final system assessment report.

A. Homeless Subpopulations
During the interviews, stakeholders were asked to identify whether there are certain subpopulations of people experiencing homelessness who are less well-served by the system, and which populations are being served most effectively. The following sections provide an overview of the key areas that stakeholders touched on.

• **Unsheltered and Chronically Homeless Population:** Stakeholders noted that overall, Durham has seen decreases in people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, due to increased collaboration, communication, and outreach amongst the CoC, providers, and other community partners, such as the Durham Police Department. However, some providers were hesitant to accept decreasing PIT numbers in unsheltered people and felt that the unsheltered population was inaccurately reflected in PIT numbers due to weather conditions during and leading up to the most recent Count.

• **Veterans:** During the interviews, some stakeholders expressed that the community has improved its ability to house homeless Veterans through several partnerships and initiatives with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Stakeholders pointed to SSVF and VASH as programs that are working effectively and that there is strong collaboration between the CoC and the VA. As a result, several stakeholders said that Durham has seen a significant decrease in Veteran homelessness in recent years and has functionally ended chronic homelessness amongst Veterans.

• **Youth:** Despite low Point in Time (PIT) Count numbers for youth experiencing homelessness, some providers felt that the youth population remains underserved within the CoC. One provider said that the population of youth who are experiencing homelessness or are very unstably housed is much higher than the community may realize and estimated that around 70 young people are “extremely housing unstable” within the community at any given time. “This population is not in the same places [as other populations experiencing homelessness], [Youth] are not going to shelters or in sleeping in camps – most are scrambling to find a place to stay each night,” the provider said. The community
has developed strategies to determine more effectively how many young people are homeless at a point in time, including using youth-specific PIT questions and targeting locations where homeless youth frequent throughout the week.

B. System Coordination, Strengths, and Gaps
Stakeholders were also asked to identify key strengths of Durham’s homeless system, as well as system gaps and areas where improvement is needed. The following sections provide a summary of the input we heard.

System Strengths

• **Increased Coordination and Housing First Focus:** Generally, stakeholders agreed that recent shifts towards increased system coordination, as well as a greater focus on and commitment to a Housing First philosophy have been key strengths of the Durham CoC. Several interview participants said they feel partnerships amongst different agencies within the CoC (i.e. the City, County, providers) have grown and strengthened. One provider also said that the community has made significant movement from a “housing readiness” orientation to a “Housing First” focus. As a result, the community has seen reductions in family, Veteran, and overall unsheltered homelessness, according to stakeholders.

• **Family Coordinated Entry:** Throughout the interviews, stakeholders identified the Family Coordinated Entry system as a key strength. Durham County’s Department of Social Services currently is the “single point of entry” for assessment and referral for families experiencing a housing crisis or homelessness. The providers of shelter and housing for homeless families in Durham have worked with the County to create a coordinated system that includes a standardized process for families with children to access shelter and housing. The family system providers have also been able to develop diversion processes, which many said have been successful in preventing families from unnecessarily entering the homeless system.

• **Landlord Engagement Efforts:** Many said that in recent years, the community has developed strong landlord marketing and engagement efforts. The Unlocking Doors initiative was identified as a particularly successful initiative within the community, that has been instrumental in getting voucher-holders housed. Unlocking Doors successfully brought non-profit agencies, the City, and the Durham Housing Authority into coordination to engage and incentive landlords within the community through a dedicated phone line, tenant support and case management from nonprofit organizations, and unit inspection services. The community is also working to develop a risk mitigation fund, in case of property damage or other unforeseen circumstances related to tenants. Stakeholders felt this effort was particularly meaningful within the community, as it has successfully convened key stakeholders and City leaders, such as the Mayor, to break down barriers to housing for people experiencing homelessness.

Provider agencies within the community, such as Alliance Behavioral Healthcare, are continuing to grow and strengthen landlord engagement and retention efforts by hiring additional Housing Specialists, who work directly with landlords to house clients, and coordinating directly with the Durham Housing Authority.

• **Increased use of data and improved data quality:** Some stakeholders noted that overall, the CoC has seen systemwide improvements in data quality, the ways in which data is used, and buy-in around utilizing data and performance measurement in recent years. For example, the community regularly
convenes CoC partner agencies at the System Performance Meetings to discuss data quality and utilizing data in thoughtful, meaningful ways. This group has also been used to set policies around data and performance benchmarks for agencies that participate in the CoC.

- **Ending Veteran Chronic Homelessness:** Throughout the interviews, stakeholders noted the significant accomplishment related to reducing Veteran homelessness and ending Veteran chronic homelessness. As previously mentioned, there is a robust supply of housing options and other resources for this population, including both long-term (VASH) and shorter term (SSVF) assistance. As a result, several stakeholders said that Durham has seen a significant decrease in Veteran homelessness in recent years and has functionally ended chronic homelessness amongst Veterans. Some also accredited these reductions to the Mayor’s Challenge, which helped to ensure that resources are regularly available to Veterans. According to one stakeholder, the Durham CoC’s “buy-in to ending veterans homeless far outshines the other CoCs I’ve seen.”

- **Homelessness-dedicated housing vouchers:** In addition to resources directed at ending Veteran homelessness, the Durham Housing Authority (DHA) has dedicated 225 Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) for homeless families. Many pointed to this as a key system strength, but also noted that at present there are no vouchers being issued due to uncertainties regarding federal housing funds. Some also noted that while having the supply of vouchers is critical, the tight rental market has made it difficult for some families to find a landlord to accept their voucher. However, overall stakeholders agreed on the importance of having mainstream housing resources dedicated to the homeless system and expressed a hope that this could be expanded in the future.

- **Community Activism and Generosity:** Several stakeholders who were interviewed said that Durham possesses “a culture of community activism” and people want to help those experiencing homelessness. One stakeholder noted people’s willingness to contribute money and time towards ending homelessness is a great opportunity and asset for the community.

**System Gaps**

- **Overall coordination:** Overall, stakeholders seemed to agree that overall coordination around efforts to end homelessness has significantly improved in recent years, however many identified areas where coordination and communication could still be refined. Some stakeholders noted that while implementation of Coordinated Entry (CE) for families has been a big success, the community is still in need of CE for all populations (i.e. single adults, youth). “Not having a single door is challenging for people,” one stakeholder said. Stakeholders felt that there is currently a basic framework of CE in place, including assessment via the VI-SPDAT, which can be built upon to create a more streamlined intake, assessment and referral process for all people experiencing homelessness.

  One provider noted that the CoC – outside of the family system – is “operating on a referral culture,” where clients are “sent from place to place with a referral,” rather than having their needs assessed and addressed at a single front door to the homeless system. The provider said that the community needs to shift towards a greater “culture of coordination.”

- **Lack of Diversion efforts:** Throughout the interviews, stakeholders mentioned the need for increased efforts around diversion. Although some providers have recently implemented diversion as an element of their programs and diversion for families has been “working well,” stakeholders felt that a systemwide culture shift towards problem-solving, mediation, and family reunification is needed.
Another stakeholder noted that the system and its providers must begin considering shared housing as a viable housing solution for people experiencing homelessness and housing instability. “We have boxed ourselves into a situation where people are considered homeless just because they don’t have their own lease,” the stakeholder said. “We need to re-frame what shared housing looks like. We need to remove the stigma around [shared housing] and change that narrative, to involve the community and connect people [to each other] so they can stay housed.”

Currently, within the family CE system, some households end up falling into unsheltered homelessness before they have an opportunity to have a diversion conversation. Typically, this is due to all diversion providers in the community being at capacity and not having any opening for diversion conversations. Some stakeholders mentioned that having the ability to refer households – particularly families – for short-term hotel and motel stays would be a useful tool for keeping these households off the streets.

- **Housing program barriers:** Some stakeholders noted that while overall system coordination has improved and the CoC has shifted its focus towards finding housing solutions for all people experiencing homelessness, several programs within the system still have high barriers to entry. For example, some RRH programs impose income requirements on clients and some shelters operate with a “transitional housing mindset” according to one stakeholder.

Additionally, one provider pointed out that the system works best for people with lower barriers or very high barriers, however does not do a good job serving people “in between” and people “in the middle tend to get stuck.” “It’s important to figure out how to serve the people in the middle – the system needs to look into that,” the provider said.

- **Lack of Resources:** Many stakeholders noted that funding overall is insufficient to meet the housing needs of all people experiencing homelessness. The CoC receives about $1,200,000 to spend annually on efforts to end homelessness through the CoC Application (excluding Emergency Solutions Grant, ESG, funding, which total around $300,000 annual between the City and CoC ESG awards). Some noted that the mainstream housing system has more resources than the homeless system, pointing to the federal funding managed by the Housing Authority and the City’s Community Development Department. Several stakeholders articulated a desire to see more mainstream resources dedicated more specifically to addressing homelessness, citing the example of the Housing Authority’s allocation of vouchers for homeless families. One stakeholders also said that increased transparency around what funding streams and opportunities are available, particularly through the Community Development Department, is needed.

- **Resources for youth experiencing homelessness:** During the interviews, stakeholders noted that increased coordination of services and housing for youth is needed in Durham. Currently, case management and other social services are available for youth experiencing homelessness but housing programs and other housing opportunity for youth are limited. Stakeholders recognized a need for a Coordinated Intake system for youth experiencing homelessness. Currently, the LIFE Skills Foundation operates the intake process for youth; however, one provider noted that the Foundation does not have the capacity to coordinate housing placements for all youth who need assistance. Providers also identified a need for more shelter and emergency placement resources for youth, as many youths either will not access or do not feel comfortable accessing adult shelter resources.
Recently, the community’s first rapid re-housing (RRH) program for youth was started through State Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) dollars. Overall, providers said the program has been difficult to manage, due to the complex nature of this funding stream and the complexity of youth homelessness. One stakeholder indicated that the funder (Department of Social Services) mandates that the RRH subsidy lasts a maximum of 6 months for youth experiencing homelessness, providers feel that youth need more than one year to benefit from the program and prevent returns to homelessness. The provider also noted that this population also has a very difficult time obtaining a steady source of income and the programs sees very few that have “income ability.”

Currently, the CoC’s Youth Committee is working on a plan for a youth and young adult drop-in center, which some stakeholders hope will improve coordination amongst the CoC and its partner agencies, and lead to greater opportunities for youth experiencing homelessness.

- **Housing market and lack of affordable housing:** Throughout the interviews, we heard stakeholders identify the community’s housing market as a key barrier to housing people experiencing homelessness. Stakeholders reported low vacancy rates paired with rising rents and an overall lack of affordable housing in the Durham.

  Several expressed the need for more dedicated units for people experiencing homelessness. “The non-profit organizations need to invest in creating housing,” said one provider. “Durham is a boom town – landlords can rent to whoever they want… and homeless people are on the bottom of their list.” Stakeholders identified the City of Durham’s Community Development Department as taking the lead role in affordable housing production and noted that the City has engaged consultants to help develop a more focused affordable housing strategy, which was seen as a positive step. Some noted that the County has a limited role in housing production. One stakeholder said that as “affordable housing problems are becoming increasingly pronounced,” community pressure around this issue may move the County to take a more active role in the housing arena. One stakeholder also noted that the Homeless Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) is not strongly linked in to work being done on affordable housing within the community, which may leave people experiencing homelessness out during planning processes and affordable housing development.

- **Housing Choice Vouchers:** Many stakeholders noted that while many clients have obtained housing vouchers, the housing market makes it very difficult to find available units and/or landlords and property managers willing to accept these vouchers – even with housing search and placement assistance from programs. Of all the households with housing vouchers, only around one-third can obtain a unit, according to one stakeholder. Although the CoC has shifted towards a more Housing First approach, “landlords do not work on a Housing First model – they want clients with income,” as one stakeholder put it.

  Some stakeholders indicated that the units that are available and accept housing vouchers are “substandard” (for example, some units have issues with mold or have not been properly upkept). Others said that the neighborhoods where landlords accept vouchers are unsafe and “not constructive” for people trying to exit homelessness. However, many people feel that these units are “better than nothing” and accept these conditions, despite health and safety risks. Many identified the need for risk mitigation funds and increased resources to incentivize landlords to rent to people experiencing homelessness.
As previously noted, the Durham Housing Authority (DHA) has frozen the issuing of dedicated housing vouchers for homeless families due to federal budget issues. As a result, some high needs families are being offered rapid re-housing. Some providers expressed concern that these families likely need a higher level of supports and services.

- **Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH):** Stakeholders had mixed opinions about whether there is a sufficient supply of permanent supportive housing (PSH) within the community. One stakeholder also noted that the CoC and its partners (PSH providers) need to “build greater consensus on what exactly PSH is,” and unite under a set of common, Housing First-oriented goals, policies, and procedures. There was near unanimous agreement that more affordable housing is needed, however.

- **Rapid Re-Housing (RRH):** Although the community is beginning to build its stock of rapid re-housing (RRH), some stakeholders felt there is still very limited RRH resources within the community – especially for the single adult population. Stakeholders also noted that RRH providers generally have limited capacity and resources for the program. Several RRH providers have faced difficulties with administrative and funding complexities, which have ultimately limited the reach and capacity of RRH programs. Some providers also noted that keeping people housed “takes a lot of work” and “case management is not funded enough to keep them in housing.” One provider noted that caseloads are often between 25 and 30 high-needs clients per case manager.

- **Lack of shelter beds and barriers to shelter:** During the interviews, stakeholders identified a need for additional shelter beds within the community, as well as a need for lower barrier shelters and improved shelter policies. One stakeholder noted that the Durham Rescue Mission will only serve people of faith, which significantly limits who can access this shelter resource. Urban Ministries of Durham reserves a significant number of beds for people who are actively involved in a work or employment program while staying at the shelter, leaving a relatively small inventory for those who are not interested or willing to participate in a structured program. Several stakeholders identified a need for more “low barrier” shelter beds and for shelters to provide more housing-focused services.

  Stakeholders also said that several shelters within the community need improved policies and procedures around serving people with substance abuse and behavioral health issues. Currently, shelters in Durham are generally “dry” or abstinence-focused and shelter staff are “not very tolerant of people with behavioral health issues,” according to one stakeholder. Some felt that the community needs a low-barrier, “wet” shelter for people dealing with substance abuse.

- **Wrap-around, supportive services:** Throughout the interviews, several stakeholders identified the need for additional wrap-around, supportive services for people who are housed through housing vouchers and other interventions. These services are key to ensuring that people can “get back on their feet” and remain housed once their program and/or subsidy ends. Stakeholders said these services should be flexible and “meet people where they are at,” however the community’s funding sources have many constraints and do not allow for spending on these types of flexible services.

C. **CoC Governance Structure and Purpose**

During our interviews, we asked stakeholder to identify the role and functions of the Homeless Services Advisory Committee (HSAC, the CoC Governing Board), as well as its strengths and areas for improvement. The following is a summary of what we heard.
Board Function and Effectiveness: Overall, stakeholders seemed to agree that the creation of the HSAC in 2012 as the governance structure for the CoC has significantly improved coordination amongst key agencies and partners. Several stakeholders indicated that under the previous structure (with the Durham Affordable Housing Coalition as lead) there was an over-representation of providers and concerns about conflicts of interest. The interlocal agreement that established the HSAC and the more recently adopted Governance Charter were noted by stakeholders as providing critical transparency and fairness to the Board and its decision-making.

Many of those we interviewed felt that the HSAC is “effective” in convening diverse sectors and representatives, making decisions, and generating a focus on ending homelessness in Durham. One stakeholder said that the Board “has provided some structure and order for [agency representatives working on homelessness] who are mandated to be there.” The Board also convenes many subcommittees, which meet on topics including income, access to care, housing results, performance measurement, and youth; stakeholders felt these subcommittees are particularly useful to providers, while the broader Homeless Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) were less relevant for them.

While some stakeholders felt that the Board and its subcommittees is very representative, others felt that the Board has too many members and needs to be streamlined to be more effective. However, other stakeholders felt that they were unclear of the Board’s exact purpose, function, and level of influence. Stakeholders said that it is “not clear if the Board is meant to be advisory or decision-making” and the Board “is not good at making things happen.” While the Board votes on many policies and recommendations, some community members are still uncertain what level of impact their vote has on the community.

Limited understanding of homelessness amongst members: Many stakeholders expressed that the size of the Board has grown larger over time, and most of the Board’s members have a limited understanding of the complexities of homelessness, homeless programs, the CoC, and HUD requirements. One stakeholder said Board meetings are “eye-opening for some people” who are unfamiliar with the homeless crisis response system and she often finds herself explaining to Board members how the system works. “The Board is helping to inform the people who are on it about how complex the problem [of homelessness] is. I think this is bringing a greater sense of ownership to the community.” Others felt that this lack of understanding amongst Board members has made it “very difficult to do the work that is required for the CoC.” Although the group was described as “well-intentioned,” this lack of understanding and knowledge often limits Board members’ ability to make thoughtful, informed decisions. One provider said, “People don’t know any better, so they just rubber stamp the recommendations.”

Lack of strategic thinking/planning. Many stakeholders pointed to the HSAC as lacking in strategic direction. There is a sense that the Board isn’t sure what role it has to play in terms of strategic planning and implementation of a homeless system. The DCD staff assigned to the Board are seen as partially filling the role of guiding the Board towards an overarching strategy to address homelessness. However, the strategic work tends to be sidetracked because there is so much focus on compliance with HUD requirements and general meeting facilitation. Stakeholders articulated a desire for there to be more proactive planning and strategic thinking about how to bring all the disparate pieces of work on homelessness together into more of a system. There was also a desire expressed for an overarching plan to guide policy and funding decisions.
• **Need for funding alignment.** Related to the topic of strategic planning, some stakeholders said that the HSAC needs to have a more thoughtful and integrated approach to funding strategies. Although the Board typically does a good job filling identified funding needs, stakeholders felt that investment decisions should be better thought out and processes should be refined. “We’ve found that if investments are not well grounded, then it can be actually be counter-productive,” one stakeholder said. It was also noted that the Board only oversees CoC funding and that there is a lack of alignment of the different major funding streams for homelessness work (CoC, DCD, DHA, County, private funds).

• **Linkage to mainstream resources:** Stakeholders identified the need for greater representation of mainstream resources and programs, such as affordable housing providers, on the Board. Stakeholders said this has been a hurdle that HSAC has “struggled to figure out.”

• **Political nature of the board:** Throughout the interviews, we heard stakeholders express feeling that the Board is overly political. Some stakeholders said that while some Board members have pure intentions and genuinely want to help people experiencing homelessness, others are motivated by self-interest or are simply “filling a slot.”

• **Tension between CoC Staff and Providers:** Some stakeholders perceived tension between providers and CoC staff in several areas. For example, one stakeholder noted that the CoC has increased pressure on programs to make significant changes and improve performance without being given the necessary tools and supports. Providers also have trouble seeing standards are inter-related. “For example, if [providers] focus on increasing income, then length of stay tends to go up,” one stakeholder said. “It feels very public and high stakes... like there is no room for failure.” Stakeholders said this issue stems from CoC leadership who also “feel a lot of pressure to hit performance measures. They hold the idea of system performance, but the way they are breaking it down program by program introduces a lot of tension.”

**D. Conclusion**

Taken as a whole, the interviews show a community in which stakeholders see the homeless system on a positive trajectory. The system is becoming more coordinated and integrated, new program models are being piloted, and the community leadership is engaged in a thoughtful process to identify outstanding gaps and make needed improvements. While stakeholders pointed to many challenges that remain to be addressed, there was a high degree of optimism that these issues can be resolved and that the community overall is on the right track in its strategic approach to reducing homelessness.
## List of Stakeholders Interviewed

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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<td><strong>Stakeholders</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lindsey Jordan Arledge</td>
<td>Durham VA</td>
<td>April 24, 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drew Cummings</td>
<td>Durham County (County Manager’s Office)</td>
<td>April 18, 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ryan Fehrman</td>
<td>Families Moving Forward</td>
<td>April 27, 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Angela Holmes</td>
<td>Community Volunteer</td>
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<td>Olive Joyner</td>
<td>Housing for New Hope</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charita McCollers</td>
<td>Lincoln Community Health Center</td>
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<td>Patrice Nelson</td>
<td>Urban Ministries of Durham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denise Neunaber</td>
<td>NCCEH</td>
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<td>Ann Oshel</td>
<td>Alliance Behavioral Health Care</td>
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<td>Alex Protzman</td>
<td>Carolina Outreach, Life Skills Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tia Sanders-Rice</td>
<td>NCCEH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anthony Scott</td>
<td>Durham Housing Authority</td>
<td>May 5, 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fred Stoppelkamp</td>
<td>Urban Ministries of Durham</td>
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<td><strong>City Staff and Consultants</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reginald Johnson</td>
<td>City of Durham, Community Development Department</td>
<td>June 21, 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karen Lado</td>
<td>Enterprise Community Partners</td>
<td>May 4, 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lloyd Schmeidler</td>
<td>City of Durham, Community Development Department</td>
<td>May 5, 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matt Schnars</td>
<td>City of Durham, Community Development Department</td>
<td>May 5, 2017</td>
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All interviews were conducted by Kate Bristol, Director of Consulting.
Appendix C: Modeling Results

A. Introduction

The City of Durham asked that Focus Strategies model the system impacts of two initiatives: (1) achievement of a set of performance targets in all projects of each project type; and (2) implementation of $500,000 of rapid rehousing (RRH). This appendix summarizes the results of this modeling analysis using system performance data collected from HMIS for the period from January 2015 through December 2016. Our modeling projects changes to the population of homeless single adults and families with children over the next three years, through the year 2020.

Overall, results suggested that achievement of the somewhat aggressive performance targets would result in the elimination of unsheltered homelessness for both single adults and families in 2018. Therefore, in addition to the requested models, we also modeled the system impact of implementing effective system wide diversion in an effort to decrease the emergency shelter capacity needed in the community.

Modeling results are therefore presented for the following four scenarios:

- Updating the housing inventory with changes in since 2016
- Achievement of performance targets in 2018
- Implementing $500,000 of RRH in 2019 and 2020
- Implementing $250,000 of RRH and diversion in 2019 and 2020

B. Results

1. Updating Durham Project Inventory

Since the HMIS data used was for 2016 and it is currently the end of 2017, the model was “brought up to date” with information about inventory changes provided by Durham. The inventory was further updated to reflect planned changes for 2018. Specific inventory changes are listed below:

2017 Inventory Changes
- Added PSH project Goley Pointe – 4 chronically homeless adult households and 8 chronically homeless family households
- Added RRH project Fresh Start II – 12 chronically homeless adult households
- Removed TH project Dove House – 8 adult households
- Removed PSH project Sherwood – 20 adult households
- Removed RRH project CAARE-RRH – 20 adult households
- Reallocated FMF Family Matters project from TH to ES – 15 family households

2018 Inventory Changes
- Added RRH project Fresh Start III – 20 adult households
- Expanded HNH RRH City ESG by 8 beds/units and increased proportion of adult vs. family funding from 25:75 to 38:62.
The table below illustrates the modeled homeless population following the inventory changes in 2017 and 2018. It is evident that the inventory changes coupled with continuing current performance leads to increases in both the unsheltered and sheltered population. In 2017, for example, the inventory changes represent a net loss of 32 beds for single adults; the impact is reflected in the almost 50% increase in the number of unsheltered homeless single adults from 188 to 276. Further impacting the increases in the number of unsheltered single adults and families, is the relatively high rate of exits to non-permanent housing across projects included in the model. The 2018 inventory shifts do not counteract these dynamics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total # of Households</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Shelter</td>
<td>1,640</td>
<td>1,777</td>
<td>1,777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Housing</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsheltered</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,937</td>
<td>2,170</td>
<td>2,248</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Adult Households</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Shelter</td>
<td>1,527</td>
<td>1,583</td>
<td>1,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Housing</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsheltered</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,795</td>
<td>1,964</td>
<td>2,031</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Family Households</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Shelter</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Housing</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsheltered</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The tables present the annualized count of sheltered homeless households and annualized count of unsheltered homeless households. Note that all data is presented in terms of households, not people.
2. Achieving Performance Targets in 2018

For modeling, the City of Durham agreed to the performance targets listed below for each project type. Although some of the targets are aggressive\(^2\), they represent an optimally operating system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>ES</th>
<th>TH</th>
<th>RRH</th>
<th>PSH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utilization Rate</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Stay</td>
<td>45 days</td>
<td>180 days</td>
<td>150 days</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exits to PH</td>
<td>50% (S) / 65% (F)</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entries from literal homelessness</td>
<td>75% (S) / 50% (F)</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Achievement of the targets substantially impacts both the sheltered and unsheltered populations. The rightmost column in the table below indicates the percent change between “2018 without targets” (i.e., only inventory changes) and “2018 with targets” (i.e., inventory changes and achievement of performance targets). The data illustrates that by reaching the performance targets, Durham may be able to reduce unsheltered homelessness to zero. Moreover, sheltered homelessness declines by 19% for single adults, and by 13% for families. This pattern of results suggests that this model reflects a system that has reached a point where shelter beds/units are available for all literally homeless households who need them; some refer to this as functional zero.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total # of Households</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018 without targets</th>
<th>2018 with targets</th>
<th>% difference with targets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Shelter</td>
<td>1,640</td>
<td>1,777</td>
<td>1,777</td>
<td>1,450</td>
<td>-19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Housing</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>-30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsheltered</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,937</td>
<td>2,170</td>
<td>2,248</td>
<td>1,523</td>
<td>-32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Adult Households</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018 without targets</th>
<th>2018 with targets</th>
<th>% difference with targets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Shelter</td>
<td>1,527</td>
<td>1,583</td>
<td>1,583</td>
<td>1,282</td>
<td>-19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Housing</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>-30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsheltered</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,795</td>
<td>1,964</td>
<td>2,031</td>
<td>1,355</td>
<td>-33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Family Households</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018 without targets</th>
<th>2018 with targets</th>
<th>% difference with targets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Shelter</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>-13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Housing</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsheltered</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>-28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^2\) See the final page of this Appendix for the targets set in relation to Durham’s performance in 2016.
3. **Adding $500,000 of Rapid Rehousing in 2019**

As mentioned earlier, the City of Durham was interested in the system impacts that an additional $500,000 in rapid rehousing would have. The tables below estimate the impact of adding 50 units of rapid rehousing for single adults in 2019. The data indicate that all unsheltered homelessness is resolved (i.e., the system is at functional zero) and the sheltered emergency population is dramatically reduced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2018 with targets</th>
<th>2019 50 units RRH</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>% change from 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Shelter</td>
<td>1,450</td>
<td>736</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>-72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Housing</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsheltered</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,523</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>-68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2018 with targets</th>
<th>2019 50 units RRH</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>% change from 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Shelter</td>
<td>1,282</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>-72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Housing</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsheltered</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,355</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>-68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **Adding $250,000 of Rapid Rehousing PLUS Diversion in 2019**

Building on the results of the model in #3 above, we investigated the system impact of adding only 25 units of rapid rehousing for single adults to the model in 2019. The remaining funds, instead, could be used to implement a fully functioning diversion approach in the system. We operationalized diversion in the SPP by decreasing shelter utilization rates to 50% (effectively cutting cut capacity in half) and specified that 90% of enrollments were from an unsheltered situation. This model indicates again, that all unsheltered homelessness is resolved (i.e., the system is at functional zero) and the sheltered emergency population is also dramatically reduced, but to a greater extent than by implementing RRH alone.

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3 Average cost of single adult RRH permanent housing exit in Durham is $11,682, so we adopted $10,000 for modeling.
### Performance Targets in Relation to Current Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Measure</th>
<th>ES</th>
<th>TH</th>
<th>RRH</th>
<th>PSH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Utilization Rate</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Performance</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>102%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of Stay</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>45 days</td>
<td>180 days</td>
<td>150 days</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Performance</td>
<td>63 days</td>
<td>245 days</td>
<td>189 days</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exits to PH</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>50% (S) / 65% (F)</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Performance</td>
<td>58% (S) / 49% (F)</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entries from literal homelessness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>75% (S) / 50% (F)</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Performance</td>
<td>14% (S) / 21% (F)</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Section 18 of HUD’s 2018 fiscal budget outlines their request for ongoing funding of the Homeless Assistance Grant (HAG), as well as the impact of and case for various HAG-funded programs across the nation, including Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), Continuum of Care (CoC), and the Homeless Information Management System (HMIS). HUD provides data-informed justification for the effectiveness and efficiency of HAG-funded programs, as well as the need for ongoing funding to these programs to meet targeted goals and outcomes to make an impact on the state of homelessness in the United States.

2. “Using Homelessness and Housing Needs Data to Tailor and Drive Local Solutions,” United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH)


This piece by USICH provides an overview of the types of data needed to understand homelessness locally, inform and drive community-level strategies to reduce and end homelessness, in addition to methods that may be used to utilize each type of data. Data points and information examined by USICH in this article include: federal definitions of homelessness and housing needs; Point In Time Count data; annualized HMIS data; and data from other communitywide systems of care (i.e. schools, hospitals). This article also provides situational analysis of key community considerations and decision points given specific local data findings and the community context.


The 2016 AHAR, an annual report to Congress that outlines that year’s trends in homelessness, provides a detailed summary of national Point In Time Count results. The document reports out the characteristics and scope of homelessness by subpopulation, household type, geography, and other demographics. The report also provides an overview of national progress to date on ending homelessness, as outlined in Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness. Communities can utilize this information to understand the state of homelessness in their community and their progress on ending homelessness relative to national accomplishments and targets.


Part 2 of the 2015 AHAR, an annual report to Congress, that outlines 2015 trends in homelessness based on data from community Point In Time Counts and HMIS. This report serves a data reference guide to understand how your community compares to the rest of the country and point to areas in need of further analysis and examination, as well as assist communities in interpreting local and national data related to homelessness.


HUD produced the “Worst Case Housing Needs” report for Congress in 2015, which highlights unmet needs for affordable housing and the overall inadequate supply of public housing assistance throughout the country since 2013. The report presents research on the various elements of “worst case housing” and housing instability for people living in extreme poverty and provides a context for measuring and assessing these issues in the context of homelessness at the local level.

6. “System Performance Improvement Briefs: Strategies for System Performance Improvement,” HUD


HUD’s System Performance Improvement Brief on improving systemwide performance provides a foundation for communities to understand how to utilize, monitor, and improve upon HUD and other similar system performance measures. The brief provides strategies for assessing the performance of various elements of a homeless crisis response system, including Coordinated Entry, local policies and procedures on the project and system levels, and the local portfolio of projects. A number of strategies for enhancing system and project performance to make greater reductions in homelessness are also included.

7. “Housing First Checklist: Assessing Projects and Systems for a Housing First Orientation,” USICH

https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Housing_First_Checklist_FINAL.pdf

USICH’s Housing First Checklists enables communities to assess their homeless system and its projects on Housing First principles. Part of determining a community’s commitment to being Housing First includes assessing whether the CoC has implemented
data-driven approaches to intake and assessment, prioritization, performance measurement, and connecting clients to mainstream resources and systems of care.


In this status report on the state of homelessness in the United States, the NAEH compiles PIT Count data from all 50 states to determine trends in homelessness in various regions, states, and cities across the country. This report is useful in helping communities understand their progress on reducing homelessness and the extent to which they have implemented national best practices in comparison to other communities and the nation as a whole.

9. “The Family Options Study” and “Findings and Implications of the Family Options Study,” HUD

https://www.huduser.gov/portal/family_options_study.html#short-term-outcomes


The Family Options long-term outcomes report published by HUD’s Office of Policy Development and Research in October 2016 looks at the results of three years’ worth of research on the effectiveness of housing and service interventions, including long-term housing subsidies (such as Housing Choice Vouchers), temporary rapid re-housing (RRH), and temporary transitional housing. The study found that long-term subsidies, such as Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) were associated with the best outcomes for those experiencing homelessness, while RRH resulted in the best outcomes for households amongst short-term interventions studied.
Appendix E
Resources for Implementing Diversion

Shelter diversion is a strategy designed to prevent households from entering the homeless crisis response system by unveiling and tapping into that household’s natural resources and support networks to determine a housing solution. In some communities, diversion is called “Housing Problem Solving” to emphasize that it is an affirmative effort to help the household identify and execute a solution to their homelessness – not just an effort to send them someplace else.

In places where diversion has been implemented, it has reduced the number of people entering homelessness, as well as the demand for emergency shelter and other system resources. This appendix provides a list of resources and tools designed to assist communities in designing and implementing diversion programming locally.

1. “Closing the Front Door: Creating a Successful Diversion Program for Homeless Families,” The National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH)

   The National Alliance’s diversion brief provides an overview of diversion strategies and best practices, including assessing for diversion eligibility, implementing screening tools and processes, designing system entry points, collaborating with system partners, and developing diversion funding streams. The brief also provides examples of cases where diversion may be possible and guidelines for measuring diversion program performance. ([http://www.endhomelessness.org/page/-/files/4155_file_diversion_paper_final.pdf](http://www.endhomelessness.org/page/-/files/4155_file_diversion_paper_final.pdf))

2. “Comprehensive Assessment Tool,” The National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH)

   This assessment tool, developed by NAEH, was designed to help communities prioritize and assess the needs people experiencing homelessness may have for emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing. The tool also incorporates diversion and prevention questions and is designed to be used at the front door to system entry to ensure only those who will become homeless without assistance enter the homeless crisis response system. ([http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/alliance-coordinated-assessment-tool-set](http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/alliance-coordinated-assessment-tool-set))

3. “Shelter Diversion,” Ed Boyte, Cleveland Mediation Center

   This presentation provides an overview of diversion programming at the Cleveland Mediation Center in Cleveland, Ohio, as well as specific strategies for implementing diversion. The Cleveland Mediation Center has been recognized as a pioneer in the development of shelter diversion strategies and has provided training to many CoCs on this approach. This presentation touches on resources needed to implement diversion, examples of where diversion may and may not be appropriate, and the Mediation Center’s conflict mediation approach. ([http://www.endhomelessness.org/page/-/files/Shelter%20Diversion%20%20July_2.pdf](http://www.endhomelessness.org/page/-/files/Shelter%20Diversion%20%20July_2.pdf))

4. Diversion Resources, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness

   The Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH) has implemented a statewide diversion strategy that is structured around a regional Coordinated Access Network (CAN). The CCEH website provides a number of practical resources on implementing diversion, including a step-by-
step guide for program directors and staff to put shelter diversion into practice. The guide provides specific examples of diversion assistance, staffing strategies, and roles of program administration and staff/caseworkers. This site also provides sample tools such as the Coordinated Access Network (CAN) Assessment Outline detailing how to conduct a diversion conversation. The outline includes principles of active listening and strengths-based, motivational interviewing to assist households to determine a housing solution based on available resources. The CAN Worksheet is a tool for case managers and diversion specialists to document elements of the client diversion conversation, such as details of their housing crisis, strengths, and next steps for moving forward. [http://www.cceh.org/provider-resources/shelter-diversion/]


This document provides an overview of diversion strategies for families, as well as a case study of a shelter diversion pilot program in New London County, Connecticut. The case study includes the pilot program’s processes, result, and impact on the greater CoC, and provides models and information on what to expect for communities seeking to implement diversion. [http://ccceh.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/NL-Shelter-Diversion-Brief-FINAL.pdf]


Your Way Home Montgomery County has developed a nationally recognized coordinated entry system in which households that approach the system have an initial “Housing Counseling” (diversion) conversation to identify whether there is a no cost solution to their housing crisis. This document provides detailed policies and procedures. [http://yourwayhome.org/your-way-home-operations-manual]


The North Carolina Balance of State CoC developed a Coordinated Assessment Tool comprised of three parts: prevention and diversion screening, VI-SPDAT, and a case management tool. The prevention and diversion screening portion is designed to be administered as soon as a person or household presents themselves to the front door of the homeless system and determines whether that household may be successfully diverted through a set of questions regarding current living situation and social networks. [http://www.ncceh.org/media/files/page/abddf21c/Coordinated_Assessment_Toolkit.pdf]

8. “Shelter Diversion Pilot,” Building Changes, The City of Seattle Services Department, United Way of King County, and Catholic Community Services of Western Washington

This document provides a summary of a diversion pilot program funded by the Washington Families Fund, including target population, diversion eligibility criteria, program activities and expenses, data collection, reporting procedures, and program goals. It can be used by communities seeking to implement diversion to determine key elements of and resources for diversion programming. [http://allhomekc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Diversion_GrantGuidance_Revised_7_10_15.pdf]


OrgCode Consulting’s blog post “Characteristics of an Exemplary Diversion Specialist” offers key traits and qualifications to keep in mind while hiring and training diversion specialists. Key
characteristics include a problem-solving, strengths-based orientation, as well as the ability to actively listen and directly communicate with clients. 
(http://www.orgcode.com/2016/09/06/characteristics-of-an-exemplary-diversion-specialist/)