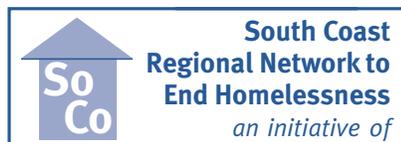


Opening Doors for Opportunity: Report on Homelessness in Bristol County

August 2016

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The South Coast Regional Network to End Homelessness aligns with the Federal Vision to end homelessness as outlined in *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*. The Plan states, “No one should experience homelessness-no one should be without a safe, stable place to call home.”

VISION

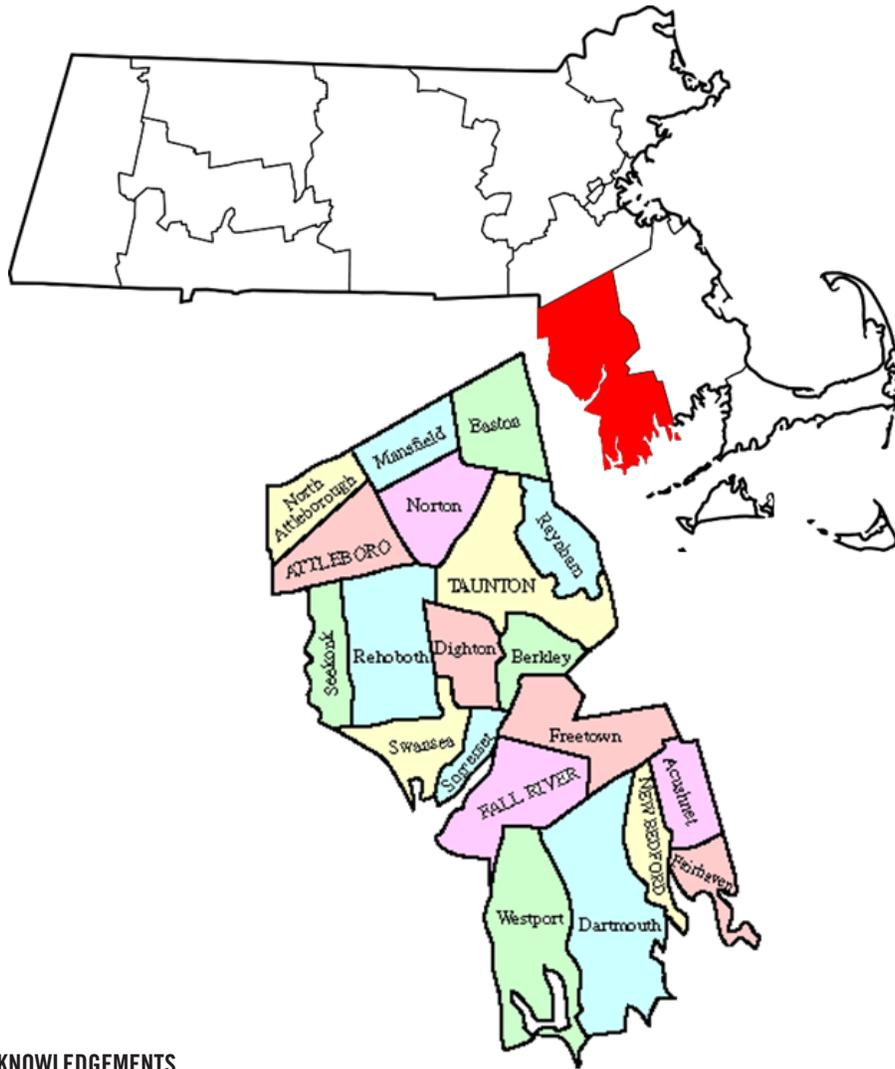
The South Coast Regional Network’s vision is to reduce, prevent, and eliminate homelessness and housing insecurities for individuals and families within the Bristol County area.

MISSION

SoCo seeks to enhance the quality of life to people experiencing and those who have formerly experienced homelessness, and empower them to live as independently as possible.

To accomplish this, the region will:

- Identify barriers that are preventing people currently experiencing homelessness from obtaining and maintaining housing;
- Increase access to resources to promote housing and economic stability;
- Embrace data-driven strategies to end homelessness. This will be accomplished through a process of:
 - Establishing baselines to understand where we are now,
 - Leveraging existing subcommittees to help define aggressive yet obtainable performance goals for our subcommittees, and
 - Using system performance measures to track our progress over time and influence regional policy.
- Develop strategies to support self-sufficiency; and
- Coordinate services through a region-wide technical framework.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The South Coast Regional Network to End Homelessness (SoCo) and our partners are delighted to release the 2016 Opening Doors for Opportunity in Bristol County. The support from our state legislators shows their tireless commitment to ending homelessness in Bristol County. Specifically we would like to thank Sen. Michael Rodrigues, Sen. Richard Ross, Sen. James Timilty, Sen. Marc Pacheco, Sen. Mark Montigny, Rep. Jay Barrows, Rep. Antonio Cabral, Rep. Carole Fiola, Rep. Patricia Haddad, Rep. Paul Heroux, Rep. Steven Howitt, Rep. Robert Koczera, Rep. Christopher Markey, Rep. Shaunna O'Connell, Rep. Keiko Orrall, Rep. Betty Poirier, Rep. Paul Schmid, Rep Alan Silva, and Rep. William Strauss. Their leadership and their vote of confidence in this network is what has made this report possible.

Additionally, SoCo is grateful for the continued support and fiscal sponsorship of United Way of Greater Attleboro/Taunton, United Way of Greater Fall River, and United Way of Greater New Bedford. The plan is evidence of the extraordinary collaboration among the many SoCo partners and its Leadership Council, the Steering Committee, the three Bristol County Continuums of Care, Housing Works, Inc., and Simtech Solutions, Inc. SoCo has created this document that will change and evolve as we move through implementation in response to what we learn. Our goal is to have this be a living document that is updated on a regular basis based on changes in needs, best practices, resource availability, and a multitude of other factors which may or may not be foreseen. SoCo looks forward to the continued collaboration of and commitment to the goal of ending homelessness in Bristol County.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Vision and Mission i
Acknowledgements ii
Introduction 1
Executive Summary 2

WHERE WE ARE 3
 Response to Homelessness in Bristol County..... 3
 Parts of the System 4
 Coordination Between Partners..... 5

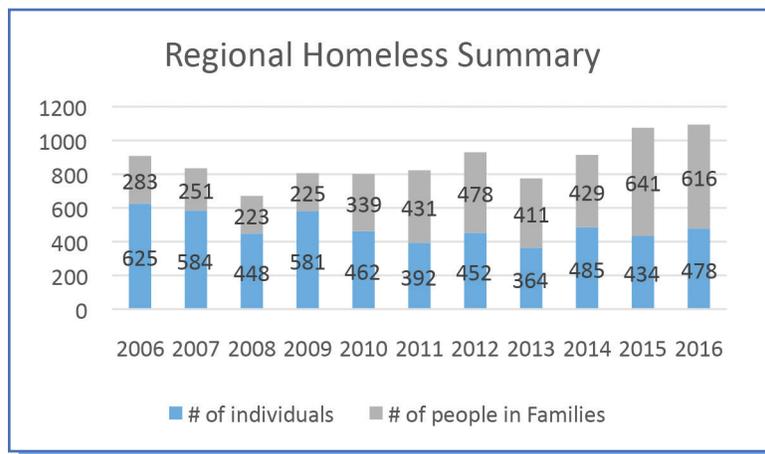
LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS 10
 Measuring Outcomes and Impacts 16
 Who is Homeless..... 16

WHERE WE WANT TO GO 21
 Population Specific Goals and Strategies 22
 Project Tracking and Strategic Review..... 26
 Tools to Support the Strategies 26

Conclusion 30

INTRODUCTION

Homelessness continues to be a major issue in Bristol County that is getting worse. This plan intends to lay the foundation to turn the trends around. While individual homelessness had been decreasing in earlier years, there was a significant increase (33%) between 2013 and 2014. From 2014 to 2015, there was a large spike in both individual and family homelessness - an overall increase of nearly 18% in one year. From 2015 to 2016, there was an additional 10% increase, although there has been a small drop in family homelessness as shown below.



SoCo is a regional collaboration with the goal of ending homelessness. SoCo operates as a superstructure, building upon the network of providers and stakeholders in our region. Learning and sharing from each other via meetings and formal trainings has allowed the network to develop best practices for individuals and families who are struggling with homelessness. Our work is executed through committees that span the entire region and includes practices such as:

- Identifying the experiences that people have accessing services throughout the region
- Developing efficiencies and innovations to expand current practices
- Implementing a coordinated approach to housing in the region
- Co-locating case managers in the regional offices of the Department of Transitional Assistance to help prevent families from coming into homelessness; and
- Collaborating with the housing courts in an effort to prevent homelessness.

Through this Plan, SoCo moves from a partnership to a united influence to reduce, prevent, and eliminate homelessness for individuals and families in Bristol County. *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* will serve as the framework for the region to evaluate the interventions being used, and to improve the services we provide. The Federal Plan establishes the following goals to be considered by the region:

- End veteran homelessness by the end of 2015
- End chronic homelessness by the end of 2017
- End homelessness for families, youth, and children by 2020
- Set a path to ending all types of homelessness

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Homelessness in Bristol County is on the rise, yet the funding to address the issue has dropped. The region lost \$610,409 or more than 12% of its grants from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) this year. While many regions were hit hard, Bristol County faced steeper cuts than any region in the State, and Massachusetts overall fared second worst in the Country, behind Florida.

Using the *Opening Doors for Opportunity* as our guide, SoCo will assess and continue to expand our activities to strategically address homelessness, focusing on comprehensive outcomes measurement and systems evaluation. Subcommittees address homelessness amongst veterans, young adults, and families and will use new tools to chart the region's progress towards meeting the goals established within this plan.

The monitoring tools and performance measures will serve as our compass whereas the plan itself will serve as the roadmap. When used together, with the right stakeholders at the table, we will be poised to reach our goal of ending homelessness in Bristol County. Over the next 12 to 18 months SoCo will continue to focus on three broad themes – **education**, **advocacy**, and **collaboration** – in its effort to reduce, prevent, and eliminate homelessness.

The *Opening Doors for Opportunity* is an effort to recognize the varied components of Bristol County's homeless system and point the way to join them into one common framework that gets individuals and families the help they need, when they need it most. This framework consists of both the operating procedures and the technology that will maximize the efforts of all community stakeholders, reduce the level of effort for obtaining help, and inform policy through the increased reliance on evidence-based practices.

To end homelessness in Bristol County, we must understand the current population and how the many resources exist that can be best used to create lasting bridges across the current gaps in housing and services. This Plan, a map of where we are today and detailed directions for how to get where we want to go, is our first step.

As the region's resources have been identified, catalogued and assessed in this report, it is important to understand how all of these projects work together to impact homelessness throughout the region. Whether looking at trends year to year, or focusing on a project, sub-population or outcome measure, the data tells the story.

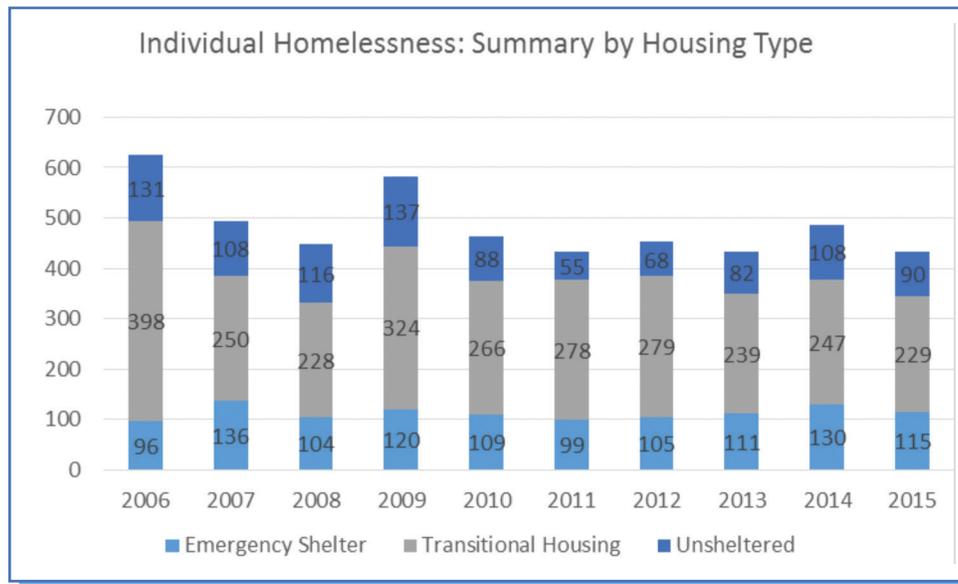
The SoCo Leadership Council and Steering Committee holds ultimate accountability for these goals and strategies. Implementation of *Opening Doors for Opportunity* will occur within each committee in the context of rich and productive dialogue and feedback on an ongoing and regular basis thus enabling us to make a difference in the lives of those for whom this plan was developed.

Homelessness is on the rise in Bristol County. While many families have moved out of hotels, particularly through the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP), many continue to struggle to find safe, appropriate, and affordable housing. Individuals, including veterans, youth and the elderly face major barriers – mental health issues, addiction and alcoholism, CORI records, etc. – and find themselves living in tents in secluded wooded areas, visiting soup kitchens to eat and emergency rooms to find comfort when the weather is dreadful. The problems continue while the resources decline so this region needs to take notice. This document lays the foundation for an effective approach so that Bristol County can work together to effectively respond to homelessness.

WHERE WE ARE

RESPONSE TO HOMELESSNESS IN BRISTOL COUNTY

Homelessness in Bristol County, like the rest of Massachusetts and the country, takes many forms and people who are at risk of homelessness can be found in many types of unstable living arrangements. The most visible face of homelessness is that of the person living on the street. Being unsheltered – *living rough*, as some say - refers to people who live on the streets, camp outdoors, or live in cars and abandoned buildings. Some people who experience homelessness, this includes those fleeing domestic violence, live in shelters or transitional housing. This group is considered to be *sheltered*.



Some people experience housing crisis that result in eviction or involuntary moves. Many people experiencing a housing crisis turn to family or friends who can provide a place to stay temporarily. This is referred to as *doubling up*, but does not meet the Federal definition of homeless. Some of these arrangements can be relatively stable, however most are not. Many youth may be *couch surfing* from one place to another, unable to stay anywhere for more than a few days at a time. Some families with children are living in motels or other places that are severely overcrowded and not safe.

In the 1980's the spike in the number of people experiencing homelessness resulted in many agencies, nationally and locally, providing an immediate response with a patchwork of programs and dollars designed for quick help. Agencies began to institutionalize some of the quick fixes, refining missions and service specialties, and even funding streams, thus establishing different and varying priorities and reporting requirements. The result has been one of confusion, difficulty understanding compliance requirements, and how best to meet the housing needs of people in crisis.

The *Opening Doors for Opportunity* report is an effort to recognize the many components of Bristol County's homeless system and point the way to join them into one system that is easy to navigate and gets individuals and families the help they need when they need it most. To end homelessness in Bristol County, we must use the many resources that exist to create lasting bridges across the current gaps in housing and services.

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development uses entities known as a "Continuum of Care" (CoC) as the vehicles for funding. However, HUD demands reporting and accountability for all homeless programs within the geographic footprint of the CoC, regardless of how those projects are funded. Bristol County

includes three Continuums of Care – Fall River, Greater Bristol County, and New Bedford. Each of these has a Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness each with an overarching goal not unlike this one from New Bedford:

To advocate on behalf of homeless individuals by enlisting the cooperation of homeless providers and organizations, to improve the accessibility of existing public resources, to maintain statistical data on the homeless population, and to provide supportive services and empowerment strategies to allow these individuals and families to be integrated into the community. The New Bedford Continuum of Care is committed to the concept that each person is entitled to live in dignity.

PARTS OF THE SYSTEM

Outreach and Engagement

Currently there are several agencies in Bristol County providing outreach and engagement to people experiencing homelessness to help them find services and resources. Included are agencies that have federal *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)* grants targeted for street and shelter outreach for homeless individuals. Additionally the *Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)* maintains staff at local Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) offices to provide a single point of entry, either in person or by phone, for families experiencing homelessness. Additionally the local offices of the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health and the local police departments play a role in outreach and engagement.

Prevention, Diversion, Rehousing, Permanent Supportive Housing

PREVENTION is defined as services or funding that can assist a family experiencing a housing crisis and stabilize the current tenancy. **DIVERSION** assists at the point of imminent risk of homelessness and intervenes to find an alternative to shelter. **RE-HOUSING** provides funds and wrap around services to enable the family to re-enter a stable housing situation as soon as possible, often with short term rental subsidies where there is not an identified need for intensive support. **PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING** means that a person receives support enabling long term tenancy. This often includes people experiencing chronic long-term homelessness who have a disability and who under an old model would have remained homeless until they could meet program eligibility requirements. The primary sources of funding for these interventions come from *Massachusetts DHCD*, the *US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)*, and the *Veterans Administration (VA)*.

Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing

EMERGENCY SHELTERS are defined as places not meant for long term accommodation. Guests may not have rooms but often are assigned a bed in a large open area. Some shelters have long term guests and function more as transitional housing or even “step down” programs from substance abuse or mental health facilities.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING is temporary housing, not to exceed twenty four months, whose clients are homeless. People are often referred from shelters, detox programs and the outreach and assessment programs working with the street homeless and the emergency shelter providers. Transitional housing is falling out of favor as communities and HUD focus on permanent housing and ending homelessness.

COORDINATION AMONG/BETWEEN PROVIDERS

The Three Continuum of Care

In the early 1990's when HUD introduced an improved coordination system for homeless providers, its' goal was to create a collective impact by organizing community stakeholders to do an annual gap analysis and develop a plan for homeless services within a geographic area. As stated earlier, Bristol County includes three Continuums of Care (CoC). The CoC model promotes a single grantee, more recently known as the Collaborative Applicant, to receive funding from HUD and distribute said funds to any number of non-profit agencies who provide services and housing to people experiencing homelessness.

The three CoCs are very different in many ways – population, geography, governance – Fall River and New Bedford are managed by a city department – the Office of Community Development; whereas, Greater Bristol County is managed by an agency who is also receiving HUD funding. Greater Bristol County includes Attleboro, Taunton and all towns in Bristol County.

HUD has increasingly focused on funding permanent housing and funding some Transitional Housing; additionally they will also fund some supportive services programs, planning activities, operations such as *coordinated access*, and funding to support the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) which defines how information is collected and seeks to tell the story of homelessness. The charts on the next page are excerpted from the 2015 HUD Awards.¹

¹https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/reportmanagement/published/CoC_AwardComp_State_MA_2015.pdf

CoC Name: New Bedford CoC

	# of New Projects	New Project Award Total	# of Renewal Projects	Renewal Project Award Total	Planning Projects Award Total	UFA Projects Award Total	Total Number of Projects	Total Award	Percentage CoC Award
Permanent Housing									
PH - Permanent Supportive Housing	0	\$0	6	\$1,611,929	n/a	n/a	6	\$1,611,929	95%
Supportive Services Only	1	\$46,757	0	\$0	n/a	n/a	1	\$46,757	3%
HMS	0	\$0	1	\$29,524	n/a	n/a	1	\$29,524	2%
GRAND TOTAL	1	\$46,757	7	\$1,641,453	\$0	\$0	8	\$1,688,210	
% of Total Award		2.7%		97.2%	0%	0%			

CoC Number: MA-519

CoC Name: Attleboro, Taunton/Bristol County CoC

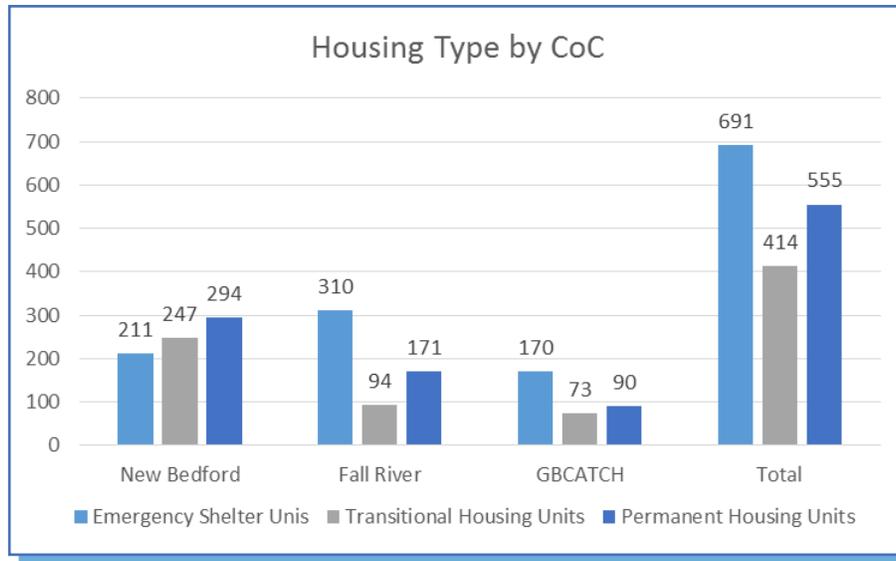
	# of New Projects	New Project Award Total	# of Renewal Projects	Renewal Project Award Total	Planning Projects Award Total	UFA Projects Award Total	Total Number of Projects	Total Award	Percentage CoC Award
Permanent Housing									
PH - Permanent Supportive Housing	0	\$0	7	\$775,196	n/a	n/a	7	\$775,196	95%
Transitional Housing	0	\$0	1	\$16,542	n/a	n/a	1	\$16,542	2%
CoC Planning Project	0	\$0	0	\$0	\$27,406	n/a	1	\$27,406	3%
GRAND TOTAL	0	\$0	8	\$791,738	\$27,406	\$0	9	\$819,144	
% of Total Award		0%		96.6%	3.3%	0%			

CoC Number: MA-515

CoC Name: Fall River CoC

	# of New Projects	New Project Award Total	# of Renewal Projects	Renewal Project Award Total	Planning Projects Award Total	UFA Projects Award Total	Total Number of Projects	Total Award	Percentage CoC Award
Permanent Housing									
PH - Permanent Supportive Housing	0	\$0	7	\$1,410,044	n/a	n/a	7	\$1,410,044	81%
PH - Rapid Re-housing	0	\$0	1	\$66,194	n/a	n/a	1	\$66,194	4%
Transitional Housing	0	\$0	1	\$81,991	n/a	n/a	1	\$81,991	5%
Supportive Services Only	1	\$100,088	0	\$0	n/a	n/a	1	\$100,088	6%
HMS	0	\$0	1	\$32,662	n/a	n/a	1	\$32,662	2%
CoC Planning Project	0	\$0	0	\$0	\$58,378	n/a	1	\$58,378	3%
GRAND TOTAL	1	\$100,088	10	\$1,590,891	\$58,378	\$0	12	\$1,749,357	
% of Total Award		5.7%		90.9%	3.3%	0%			

In addition to the projects that are funded, the CoC is responsible for understanding all projects in the region. This chart represents an inventory of the housing types in the region, by CoC.



The Hearth Act

All three CoCs are challenged with the requirements of the 2009 *Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH)* Act that amended the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act with substantial changes. The changes outlined within the HEARTH Act include:

- A consolidation of HUD’s competitive grant programs
- The creation of a Rural Housing Stability Assistance Program
- A change in HUD’s definition of homelessness and chronic homelessness
- A simplified match requirement
- An increase in prevention resources
- An increase in emphasis on performance

One goal of this plan is to identify where the regions are now and detail the work to be done in order to meet these requirements.

Entitlement Community Resources

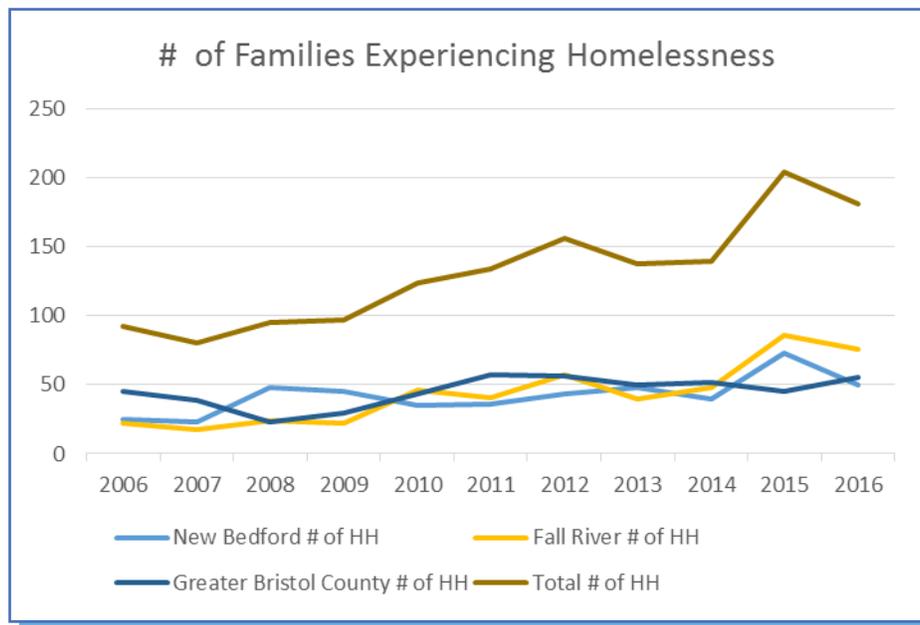
All four cities within the SoCo Region are *Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Entitlement Communities* – Attleboro, Fall River, New Bedford, and Taunton. Entitlement Communities receive allocated Federal dollars annually to develop viable communities by providing decent housing, a suitable living environment, and opportunities to expand economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate-income persons.

The four cities also receive Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, which are then distributed locally in an effort to address homelessness. Additionally agencies in the region receive *Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG)* through DHCD which provides funding to assist households at imminent risk of becoming homeless to help stop an impending eviction and stabilize a household within their current unit or re-locate them to another unit where they are able to stabilize in order to prevent homelessness.

Massachusetts Family Homeless System

Most families in Massachusetts facing homelessness receive assistance through the Emergency Assistance (EA) program, a unique program that provides shelter and some housing assistance for all families that meet the criteria and who are not disqualified for a range of reasons. Although the core of the EA program continues to be shelter, there have been some changes to the program that supports housing and decreased reliance on hotels. Most significantly, is the increased use of a program called HomeBASE which supports housing – through prevention, diversion and re-housing, over shelter. Increasingly, families have been able to be sheltered close to their home communities, providing support and better success when housed.

The number of families experiencing homelessness in the region began to inch up after 2010 and took a significant jump of 45% between 2014 and 2015, but an 11% decrease from 2015 to 2016. While the number of families experiencing homelessness has declined, there is still more work to be done to strengthen families.



Nonetheless, in relying primarily on the provision of emergency shelter, the current EA system has become increasingly expensive to support and has proven itself to be ineffective at eliminating homelessness. No child in the Commonwealth should be without a safe, and decent place to call home. Yet, under the current EA system, more and more families facing a housing crisis find themselves staying for extended periods of time in less than ideal emergency shelters and motels instead of quickly securing a more stable and permanent housing arrangement. New approaches such as helping families stay in the region of origin, reuniting families, co-housing families, etc., all in an effort to improve placements keeping them near their existing support systems in hopes of eliminating family homelessness while making efficient use of resources.

South Coast Regional Network – SoCo

SoCo is one of ten regional networks across Massachusetts and has been financially supported over its' six years by many streams of funding, including the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness (ICHH), the Paul and Phyllis Fireman Foundation, Island Foundation, Bristol County Savings Bank Foundation, Bank of America Balfour Foundation, Mechanics Cooperative Bank, Mansfield Charitable Foundation, Wal-Mart Foundation, Webster Bank, United Way of Greater Attleboro Taunton, United Way of Greater Fall River, United Way of Greater New Bedford, affiliate partners and agencies, and most recently as a part of the 2015 State budget.

SoCo serves all cities and towns in Bristol County, Acushnet, Attleboro, Berkley, Dartmouth, Dighton, Fairhaven, Fall River, Freetown, Mansfield, New Bedford, North Attleboro, Norton, Raynham, Rehoboth, Seekonk, Somerset, Swansea, Taunton, and Westport. We also include service providers, municipalities, and state agencies in an effort to maximize collaboration, resources and best practices for greater success. SoCo builds upon the three existing CoC membership organizations in Bristol County and will guide the overall process that will result in a new approach and guiding a system of accountability and outcomes, while supporting CoC compliance in solving homelessness.

The Call



The CALL [Coordinated Assessment to Local Links] is a process set up for the three Continuums of Care [CoC] within Bristol County— New Bedford’s CoC [Homeless Service Providers Network—HSPN], Fall River’s CoC [Homeless Service Providers Coalition - HSPC], and the Greater Bristol County/Attleboro/Taunton/ Coalition to End Homelessness’ CoC [GBCATCH]. As mandated by HUD, the CALL’s purpose is to reduce and / or eliminate chaos for families and individuals in crisis and to serve the hardest to house first. The participating programs work cooperatively to provide a single point of intake and initial assessment. The CALL will also comply with the goals and regulations of the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and the HEARTH (Homeless

Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing) Act.

Referrals to housing services and providers will be conducted through a single point of entry coordinated throughout each CoC. CSS (Catholic Social Services) is responsible for the operations of THE CALL accessed through a 1-800-homeless phone number which will be the primary source for intake and initial assessment. All agencies receiving CoC funding for housing related programs will be required to participate. Other programs within the CoCs are encouraged to participate. Oversight of THE CALL will be provided by an advisory committee comprised of representatives of the SoCo Leadership Council.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Background

This section provides an overall analysis of the range of housing and services to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness, and those at risk of homelessness. Data for this section has been collected on a spreadsheet that is owned by the Network and continues to be a living document. As additional information, particularly regarding data sources, funding sources and amounts, is learned it should be added so that the region can work towards maximizing the use of data and understanding costs and allocation of resources.

HUD requires all CoCs to maintain and submit a Housing Inventory Chart (HIC). The HIC includes a complete inventory of all residential “beds” that are designated for people experiencing homelessness (including shelter and safe haven projects), as well as transitional and permanent housing that is designated for people leaving homelessness. The HIC includes all projects in these categories regardless of funding.²

In addition to listing the organizations, projects, project type, population, and CoC, the analysis includes a review of where the client level data for that project is tracked, the funding source, the funding amount, the number of beds, and the utilization rates based on most recent reporting. This information was gleaned from data that has been published and is publically available from HUD.³

The landscape analysis reveals many gaps and inconsistencies in how projects are understood and where client level information is captured. Critical to implementation of this plan is reconciling and completing the Landscape Analysis spreadsheet to include all projects, data sources, funders, funding amounts, and, number of units.⁴

Organizations

There are nearly two dozen organizations or entities that provide housing and/or services to people experiencing homelessness and if each of the faith organizations were identified, this number would be significantly higher.

1. Catholic Social Services
2. Community Action for Better Housing
3. Community Counseling of Bristol County
4. Eliot Community Health Services
5. Fall River Housing Authority
6. Greater New Bedford Women’s Center
7. High Point Treatment Center
8. Justice Resource Institute
9. Missionary Sisters of Charity
10. New Bedford Women’s Center
11. New Hope
12. PAACA
13. PACE, Inc.
14. Salvation Army
15. Southeast Family Services
16. Southeastern MA Council
17. Southeastern MA Veteran’s Housing
18. Stand Down
19. Steppingstone, Inc.
20. Taunton Housing Authority
21. Various faith-based organizations
22. Veteran’s Administration
23. YWCA

²For this plan, the HICs were verified and then combined from each of the CoCs to produce a centralized list of projects, which was then augmented with additional projects that are not included in the HIC.

³Additionally, because independently of Opening Doors, Simtech Solutions supports New Bedford and Fall River on HMIS data management and reporting, they were able to do an analysis of some of the data in HMIS and compare this with the projects listed on each of the HICS. In an effort to include the most current and comprehensive information, the CoC leads were involved in verifying and supplementing informaton, based on their knowledge of the projects in their regions. Whie this process provided valuable information, it is clear that there are gaps in having a full understanding of all of the organizations and projects that serve homeless people in the region.

⁴Changes should also be made to align HMIS data name with HIC.

It is important to note that many of these organizations operate in Bristol County and also in other regions. This fragmentation creates additional challenges for providers as they seek to understand the impact that they are making across all of their programs, regardless of a particular geography.

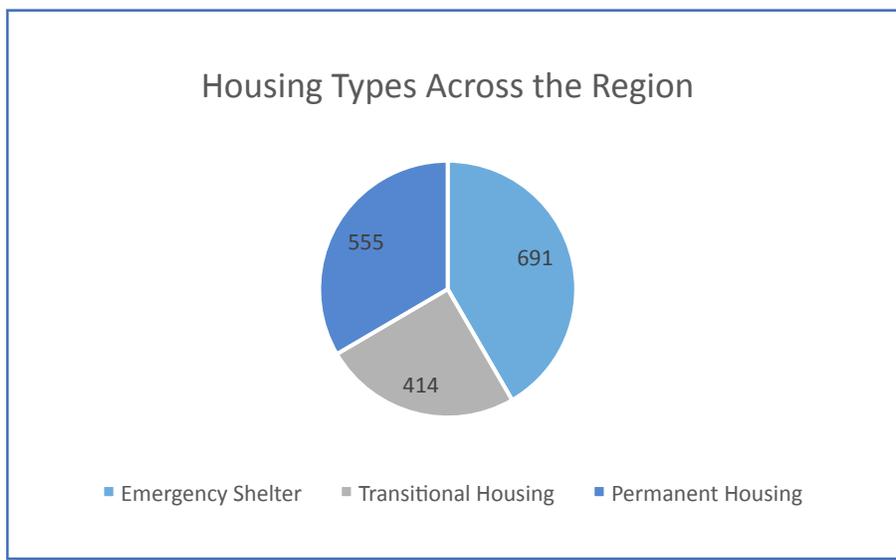
Examples include:

- Catholic Social Services operates throughout Bristol County as well as Cape Cod. They also operate The CALL, putting them at the center of coordinated entry for the region
- Justice Resource Institute receives funding and supports projects throughout the eastern part of MA and operates in multiple CoCs.
- Eliot Community Health Services operates the PATH program for the MA Department of Mental Health and the US Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) across the Commonwealth. They have statewide reporting requirements as well as Federal requirements
- The Veteran’s Administration for Fall River operates out of Providence, RI – crossing not just CoC boundaries but State lines as well.

Projects

There is a range of types of services available in the region including emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing and services. There are approximately 1660 total units of housing, including emergency shelter, transitional housing and permanent housing. In addition, there are services-only projects and resources available for rapid rehousing that may not appear on this chart.

Of the 1660 units accounted for, approximately 42% are for emergency shelter; 33% are for permanent housing; and, 25% are transitional housing.



Emergency Shelter

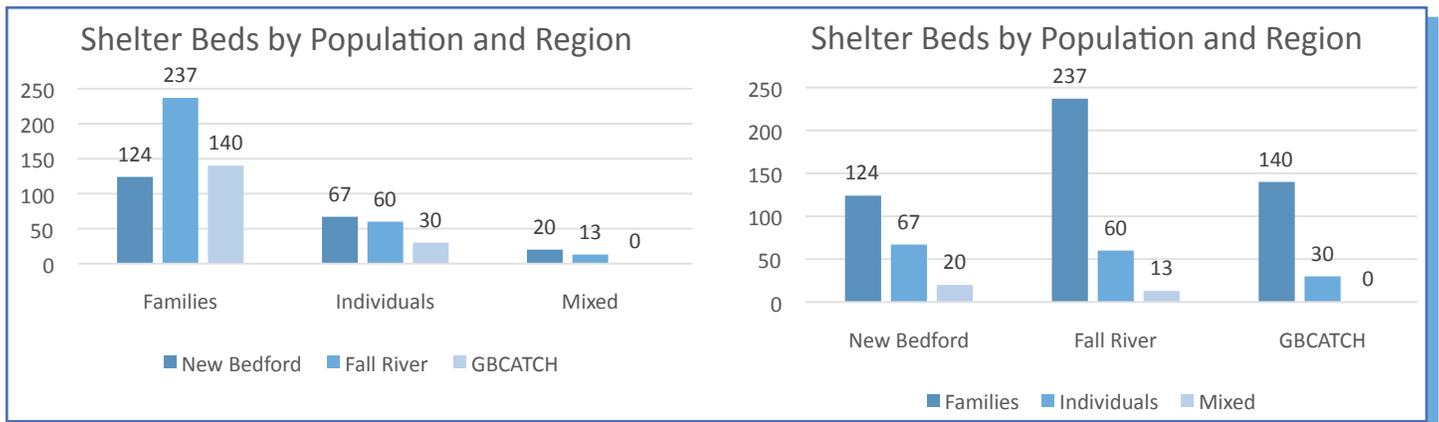
There are 21 projects that provide emergency shelter throughout the region, including 8 for individuals and 9 for families and several projects that support both individuals and families – intended to meet the needs of domestic violence victims.

There are nine non-profit organizations plus various faith-based providers providing the following:

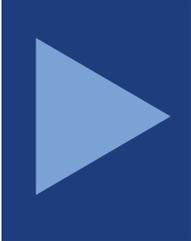
- About 500 units for families
- About 157 units for individuals
- 36 units for domestic violence survivors

Provider	Project - HMIS Name	Population	Subpop	CoC
Catholic Social Services	House Program	Families		GBCATCH
Catholic Social Services	Samaritan House	Individuals		GBCATCH
Catholic Social Services	ES FAM House	Families		Fall River
Catholic Social Services	Ruth Street & Donovan	Families		New Bedford
Catholic Social Services	Sister Rose House	Individuals		New Bedford
Greater New Bedford Women's Center	Artemis I DV	Mixed	DV	New Bedford
Greater New Bedford Women's Center	Artemis II	Individuals		New Bedford
Justice Resource Institute	ES FAM Focus	Families		GBCATCH
Justice Resource Institute	ES FAM Focus	Families		Fall River
Justice Resource Institute	FOCUS on the Family	Families		New Bedford
Missionary Sisters of Charity	Missionary Sisters of Charity	Mixed		New Bedford
New Bedford Women's Center	ES All Our Sisters Place	Mixed	DV	Fall River
New Hope	New Hope DV	Individuals	DV	GBCATCH
Southeast Family Services	ES FAM Fall River	Families		Fall River
Southeast Regional Network	Taunton Family Center	Families		GBCATCH
Southeast Regional Network	Harbour House Family Center	Families		New Bedford
Steppingstone, Inc.	First Step Inn	Individuals		Fall River
Steppingstone, Inc.	Men's Program (MTP)	Individuals	Men	Fall River
Steppingstone, Inc.	Women's Program (WtP)	Individuals	Women	Fall River
Various Faith-Based Orgs.	Hospitality Nights	Individuals		Fall River

The units are not distributed evenly throughout the region with Fall River and Greater Bristol County hosting more family units but New Bedford hosting more individual units.



Funding for emergency shelter in the region comes from a variety of sources including HUD CoC; HUD ESG; DHCD; and other local funding.



It is important to note that there are no emergency shelter programs in the region that are considered low-threshold, allowing people a safe place to stay regardless of sobriety. This is a significant gap in services and may be driving more people to either stay outside or go to another community for services.

Transitional Housing

Historically, transitional housing (TH) played an important role in moving people from homelessness to permanent housing. There is TH in every region and is used to support, families, individuals, veterans, victims of domestic violence and people coming out of treatment.

Transitional Housing is an approach that as research and practices evolve, HUD has questioned the value and efficiency of using transitional housing programs as a response to homelessness. HUD has been encouraging CoCs to reduce the use of transitional housing in favor of Rapid Rehousing and a Housing First approach. On September 18th, 2013, HUD issues a statement indicating this shift:

For many years, using HUD funds for transitional housing was the only funding alternative for serving families and individuals that did not need permanent supportive housing. With rapid re-housing now eligible under both the CoC Program and the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) program, there is an alternative and promising option for families with low-barriers that need shorter interventions. Rapid re-housing can be done with a lower cost per household – increasing the total number of households that can be served with the same amount of funding. If the majority of households served in your CoC's transitional housing are families with lower barriers, you should consider reallocating those projects into new rapid re-housing projects for families.

Year after year, HUD has continued to push and prod continuums to focus resources and strategies on proven strategies, which have clearly demonstrated that permanent housing strategies, such as permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing which are more cost effective and have better outcomes than other types of homeless assistance. In July 2015, HUD published the 18-month outcomes from the *Family Options Study: Short-Term Impacts of Housing and Services Interventions for Families* which revealed that, “an offer of housing subsidies or rapid re-housing reduced episodes of homelessness in emergency shelter and transitional housing, as compared to the assistance that families would normally have received. The study also shows that both housing subsidies and rapid re-housing were cost effective. Families offered transitional housing did not receive significant benefit despite the fact that transitional housing was the most costly intervention.⁵”

Funding for the 2015 program competition clearly reflected these priorities. During the course of working on this project, HUD announced the awards for those projects that Continuums ranked as “tier 2” in their applications. For several years, HUD has offered guidance and required CoCs to prioritize funding and projects. While funding has historically been renewed year after year, this past year marked a significant shift towards competitive funding and many regions lost funding, especially for Transitional Housing projects.

⁵HUD, Family Options Study Brief, July 2015

Bristol County faced significant cuts in five transitional housing projects and a total loss of 65 transitional beds including projects for veterans and domestic violence survivors. On the chart below, the projects in **red** are facing either partial cuts, or total elimination, from HUD.

Bristol County includes the following inventory of transitional housing projects: 24 Transitional Housing projects; Approximately 414 units; 10 organizations plus the Taunton and Fall River Housing Authorities

Provider	Project - HMIS Name	Propulation	Subpop	CoC
Catholic Social Services	Sister Rose Transitional Pgm.	Individuals		New Bedford
Community Counseling of Bristol County	Bridge House	Individuals		GBCATCH
Community Counseling of Bristol County	Robert Smith House	Individuals		GBCATCH
Fall River Housing Authority	TH FAM LHATHP	Families		Fall River
Greater New Bedford Women's Center	Home Port	Mixed		New Bedford
High Point Treatment Center	Transitional Support Program	Mixed		New Bedford
Justice Resource Institute	Transitional Living Program	Families		GBCATCH
New Hope	New Hope / New Start	Families		GBCATCH
Salvation Army	TH FAM Gentle Arms	Families		Fall River
Southeastern MA Council on Addiction	Wrap House	Individuals		New Bedford
Southeastern MA Council on Addiction	Harmony House	Individuals		New Bedford
Southeastern MA Council on Addiction	Monarch House	Individuals		New Bedford
Southeastern MA Council on Addiction	New Chapters	Individuals		New Bedford
Southeastern MA Veterans Housing	GPD CWT/TR-Vets Trans	Individuals	Veterans	New Bedford
Southeastern MA Veterans Housing Steppingstone, Inc.	Network House	Individuals	Veterans	New Bedford
Steppingstone, Inc.	GPD-Graduate House	Individuals	Veterans	New Bedford
Steppingstone, Inc.	TH IND Graduate Program	Individuals		Fall River
Steppingstone, Inc.	TH IND Men's Program (MTP)	Individuals	Men	Fall River
Steppingstone, Inc.	TH IND Transition House	Individuals		Fall River
Steppingstone, Inc.	TH IND Women's Program (WTP)	Individuals	Women	Fall River
Steppingstone, Inc.	Women's Therapeutic Community	Individuals	Women	New Bedford
Steppingstone, Inc.	Graduate Program	Individuals		New Bedford
Taunton Housing Authority	THA TLP	Families		GBCATCH

A complete cataloging of resources can serve as the foundation for an on-line Resource Directory that will enable the region's Coordinated Entry system to evolve and become more automated.

The three CoCs are responsible for reporting to HUD; organizations have a board of directors and multiple funding streams; and, clients seek services across geographic borders. In order to effectively respond to homelessness and make homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring, the region needs both operating procedures and technology that will maximize the efforts of all community stakeholders, reduce the level of effort for obtaining help, and inform policy through the increased reliance on evidence-based practices.

Operating procedures need to start with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, particularly regarding data collection and reporting. Although, ensuring comprehensive data collection may also impact other

procedures at local organizations. SoCo has an established Leadership Council and committee structure, including a Data and Performance Measurement Committee. Additionally, each of the CoCs is governed through a charter which addresses data. The CoCs and the regional leadership are currently working on finalizing clear roles and responsibilities in order to create data accountability. There are multiple layers of accountability including organization, CoC, Network, and vendor levels in order to effectively manage data to meet compliance and policy objectives.

SoCo HMIS DATA QUALITY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FLOW CHART		
WHO	WHAT	WHEN/DEADLINE
SoCo HMIS Committee with CoCs	Guidance and Direction	Ongoing
	Policies and procedures	
	Project forms & documentation	Annually
CoCs: Planning and Development	Overall responsibility for projects	Ongoing
	Lead agency for HMIS administration	Ongoing
	Liaison w/HUD	Ongoing
	Procurement of software/licenses	Annually or as needed
	Manage vendor contract	Annually or as needed
	Signatory for MOUs	Annually
	Keeper of CoC signed MOUs	Ongoing
HMIS Vendor (Housing Works and Simtech Solutions)	Creation of project forms/documentation (Housing Works)	As needed
	Professional services as detailed in contracts with the CoCs including:	Duration of the contract
	The provision of tools and training to monitor the quality of the HMIS to help ensure that it is ready for reporting	Ongoing
	Adherence to HUD data standards	Ongoing
	Guidance regarding best practices	Ongoing
	End user support and helpdesk	As needed
	Assist Partner Agencies with data collection and reporting needs	As needed/ available
Partner Agencies		
ED/CEO on behalf of the agency	Authorizing Agent for agreement/MOU that stipulates compliance with HUD and the submission of HMIS data	Once and when there is a change in ED/CEO
	Designate Agency wide HMIS administrator	As needed
	Ensure agency compliance with Policies & Procedures	Ongoing
	Ensure accountability around privacy and security as required	
	Participate in point-in-time Count	Annually or as required
	Participate in requirements of the Housing Inventory Chart	Annually
Agency HMIS Administrator/Data Quality Manager	Agency/program compliance with P & P	Ongoing
	Maintain executed client informed consent forms	Ongoing
	Authorized agent for user ids	As needed
	Ensure internet, work stations, work station security policies	As Needed
	Ensure training of appropriate agency staff	As Needed
	Review HMIS data for missing values and information	Monthly
	Prepare Data Quality Reports if needed	Monthly
	Verify accuracy of PIT and HIC counts	Annually
	Review HMIS data for APR submission	Annually
Is primary liaison with CoC and submits reports		
Agency/Program Staff	Initial Data Entry for Emergency Shelter – Family and Individual	24 hours of Entry/Exit
	Initial Data Entry other Programs – TH/SS/PH	7 days of Entry/Exit

MEASURING OUTCOMES & IMPACT

As the region’s resources have been identified, catalogued and assessed in the Landscape Analysis, it is important to understand how all of these projects work together to impact homelessness within each of the CoCs and throughout the region. To do this, we need to use data at the client level to understand who is homeless and how we impact homelessness. The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is the language of homelessness – the data includes information that allows us to know the names and demographics; where people are coming from and where they are leaving to; the health, education and income of people when they start receiving services and when they stop. The data tells us who has been homeless for a long time and who just ran on hard times. It tells us who is a veteran so they can access additional resources. We can know who is young and who is old who may need specific services. The data tells the story.

WHO IS HOMELESS & HOW DO WE MEASURE?

In order to define where we are going and set goals for progress, we need to understand what homelessness looks like today in our region. HUD has provided evolving guidance on how to measure and understand homelessness data. The primary method for numerating homelessness in a community is through HUD-mandated annual Point-in-Time (PIT) homeless census as well as the Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR). The annual census, or “homeless count,” generally takes place throughout the country on the last ten (10) days of January each year. The PIT Count will be one of the key ways that communities can measure performance year to year regarding decreasing the number of people experiencing homelessness over all, and by subpopulation.

Family Homelessness

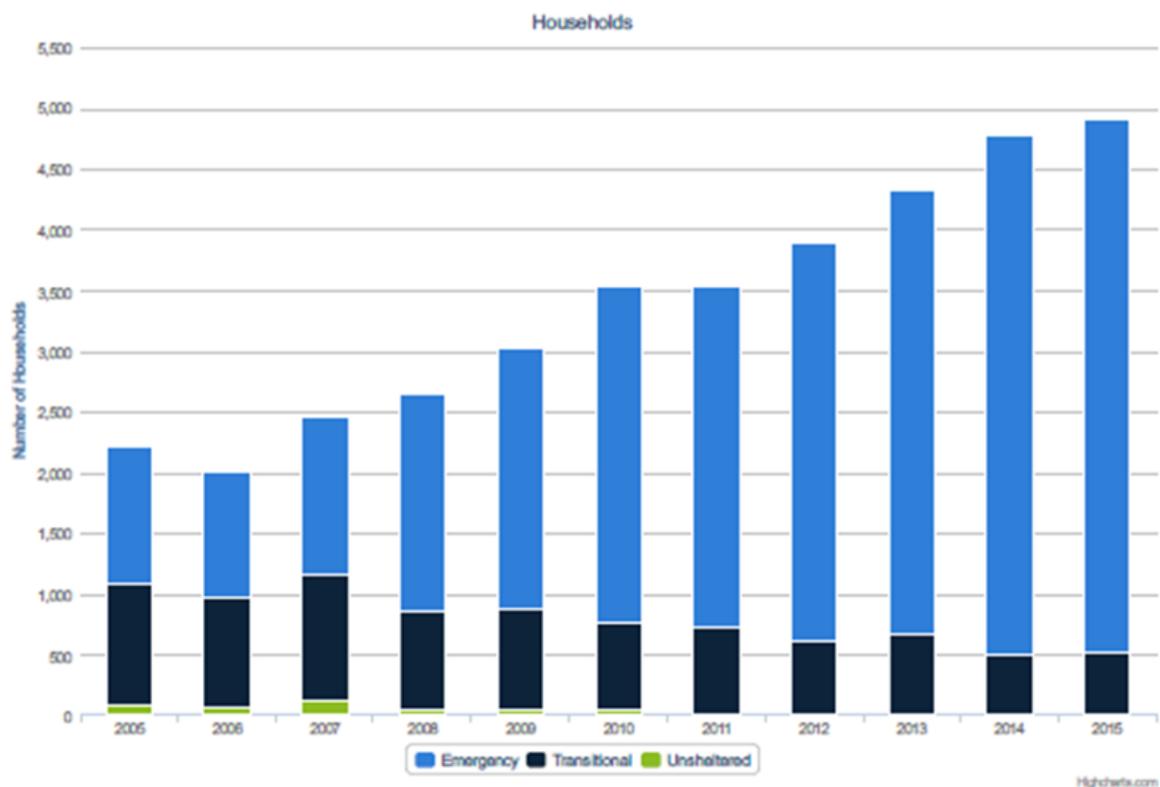
HUD has not published the 2016 PIT reports but it is clear that the region had a more significant increase in homeless families between 2014 and 2015 than the State did. And while the State may have reduced the number of Transitional Housing units, this has not resulted in a decrease in family homelessness throughout the Commonwealth.

	New Bedford		Fall River		GBCATCH		Total	
	# of HH	# People in HH	# of HH	# People in HH	# of HH	# People in HH	# of HH	# People in HH
2006	25	95	22	50	45	138	92	283
2007	23	81	18	45	39	125	80	251
2008	48	101	24	56	23	66	95	223
2009	45	101	22	50	30	74	97	225
2010	35	98	46	137	43	104	124	339
2011	36	94	41	188	57	149	134	431
2012	43	116	57	186	56	176	156	478
2013	48	107	40	122	50	182	138	411
2014	40	118	48	141	52	170	140	429
2015	73	196	86	281	45	164	204	641
2016	50	170	76	259	55	187	181	616

Massachusetts Overall:

Families

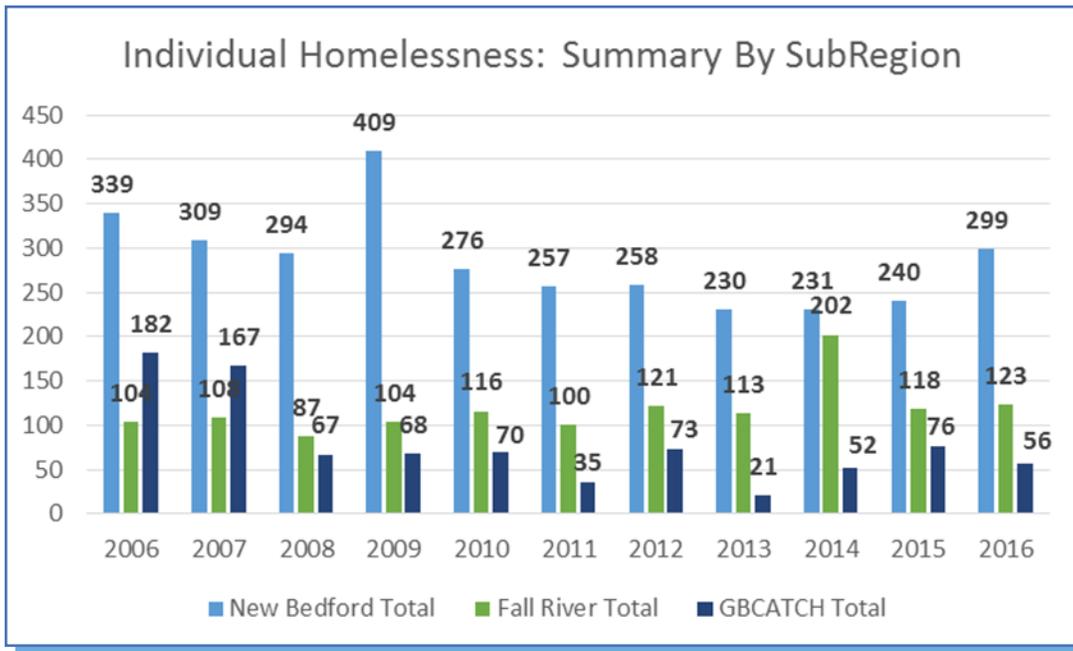
Number of Households with Dependent Children						
Year	Emergency	Transitional	Unsheltered	Total	Annual % Change	Change since 2005
2005	1120	999	86	2205	-	0.00%
2006	1027	917	64	2008	-8.93%	-8.93%
2007	1321	1030	117	2468	22.91%	11.93%
2008	1798	799	47	2644	7.13%	19.91%
2009	2163	821	51	3035	14.79%	37.64%
2010	2763	716	47	3526	16.18%	59.91%
2011	2803	718	10	3531	0.14%	60.14%
2012	3267	616	4	3887	10.08%	76.28%
2013	3653	661	13	4327	11.32%	96.24%
2014	4275	502	4	4781	10.49%	116.83%
2015	4389	503	11	4903	2.55%	122.36%



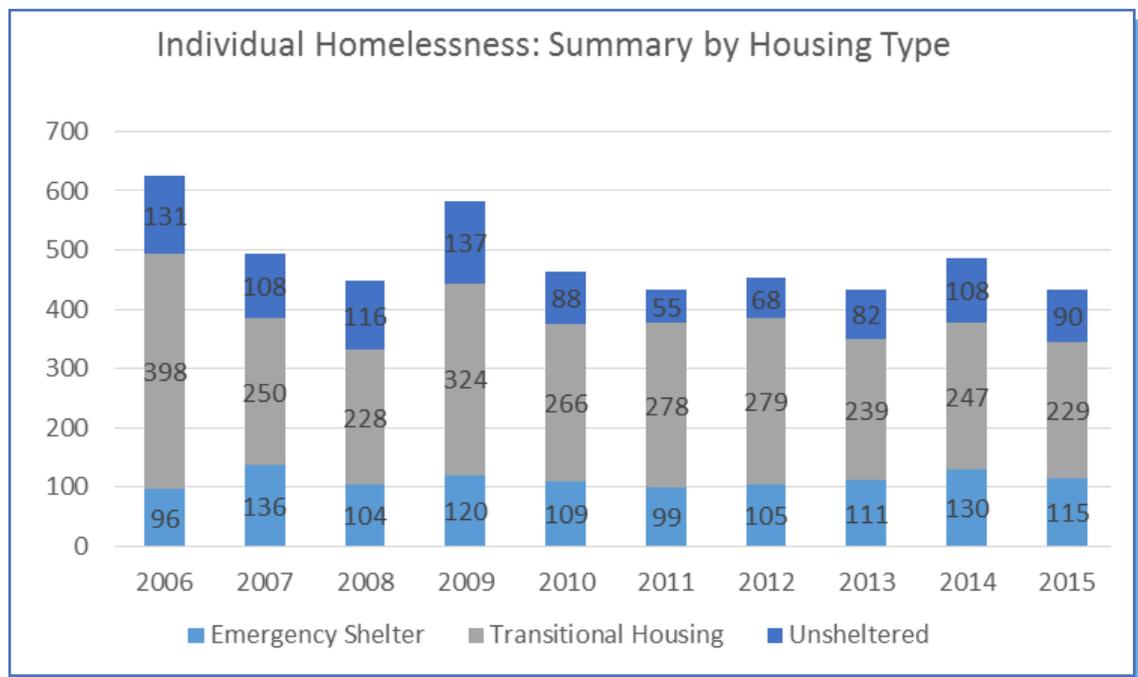
Individual Homelessness

This is a broad category of people who are experiencing homelessness “on their own,” without taking care of children under 18. Furthermore, as MA has a robust network for families, the system to address individual homelessness is fragmented through individual contracts, HUD funding through the CoC network and private resources. They are distinct systems of care.

A review of ten years of Point in Time data reveals that New Bedford has the largest number of individuals experiencing homelessness. It also reveals that each of the CoCs, and the region as a whole, has had an uneven impact on homelessness among adults, including an increase of approximately 12% from 2015 to 2016, after experiencing a 11% decrease from 2014 -2015. It is important to understand what is driving these numbers in order to impact them as the Plan gets implemented.



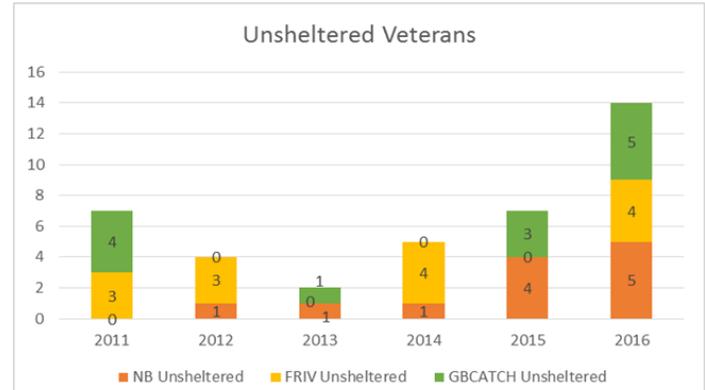
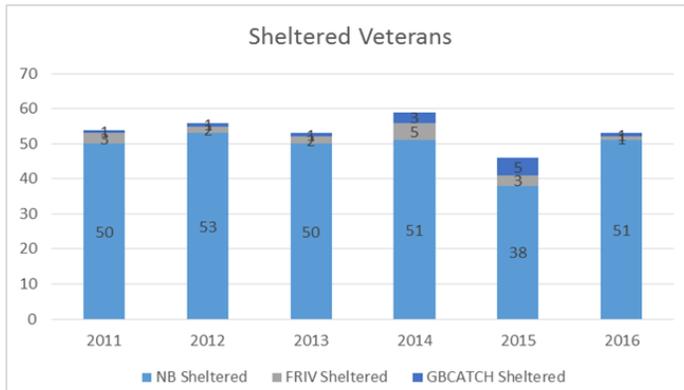
And despite National trends and pressure from HUD, a review of the data also reveals a heavy usage of transitional housing to shelter homeless individuals.



HUD has required communities to focus attention on different subpopulations in order to more precisely understand the population and target resources more effectively. As HUD has learned, the definitions and response categories have been updated. It is important to note that while each of these target groups have definitions, historically these have not been reliable counts.

Veterans

HUD has long focused on understanding the scope of homelessness among veterans and in recent years there has been increased collaboration between HUD and the Veteran's Administration, including working (slowly) towards an alignment of data collection and clarification on the privacy issues associated with data sharing. While the vast majority of sheltered veterans (86-96% since 2013) experiencing homelessness are in New Bedford because of the presence of the Southeastern MA Veterans Housing which provides transitional housing for veterans, unsheltered veterans homelessness does not follow a pattern across the region. It is important to note that Veteran homeless in the region increased from 2015 to 2016. This is true for veterans that are both sheltered and unsheltered.



Youth

On December 5th, 2011, HUD issued an updated definition of homelessness, further breaking down categories and subpopulations. The annual Point in Time Count reflects these changes and, 2012 was the first year that communities reported on Households with only children, and a focused policy on youth experiencing homelessness.

The 2013 PIT brought additional changes as data collection drilled further to identify to not only focus on children who are on their own, but on young adults, defined as 18-24, who face additional challenges and the need for a targeted response, outside of the general adult population.

The trend continues and 2015 brought an additional focus on parenting youth. New categories of subpopulations were added to identify parenting youth, and children of parenting youth. The report also began to break out demographics by those in emergency shelter, transitional housing and unsheltered.

Efforts are underway, not only nationally, but here in Massachusetts to get a better handle on young people experiencing homelessness. Massachusetts has undertaken a statewide homeless youth count. The MA Coalition for the Homeless, in conjunction with the MA Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness and the MA Department of Housing and Community Development. The focus on youth comes from an understanding that the root causes are often different than what underlies homelessness among other adults and families. For example, among homeless youth there is a disproportionate amount of LGBTQ individuals, often fleeing or forced out of an intolerant and unsafe home. There are also many young people who find themselves on the streets after aging out of foster care. A better understanding of these situations could lead to inventive new approaches from both service providers and legislators

This detail provides an opportunity for HUD and Congress to understand homelessness as well as powerful tools for communities to identify and target subpopulations, during this time of scarce resources.

The Massachusetts Youth Count 2015 focused on unaccompanied homeless youth, under the age of 24. They worked closely with the CoCs to conduct the count. The report breaks down the data collection and findings by CoC and includes a total of 35 responses from the region.

The 2015 PIT report provides details on children (under 18) and youth (18-24) by those who are parenting and those who are not and those who are sheltered and those who are not. Fortunately, there were no people in the most vulnerable groups, parenting children and youth who are unsheltered.

	Under 18 - Sheltered	Under 18 - Unsheltered	18 - 24 Sheltered	18 - 24 Unsheltered	Under 18 and Parenting - Sheltered	Under 18 and Parenting - Unsheltered	18 - 24 and Parenting - Sheltered	18 - 24 and Parenting - UnSheltered
Fall River	0	0	6	0	3	0	4	0
New Bedford	0	1	17	4	0	0	7	0
GBCATCH	0	0	10	1	4	0	15	0

Chronically Homeless

HUD introduced the notion of Chronic Homelessness in 2003 which defines a chronically homeless person as “either (1) an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has been continuously homeless for a year or more, OR (2) an unaccompanied individual with a disabling condition who has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.” However, the definition became problematic as HUD hadn’t defined criteria specifically enough to include a minimum length of an episode, or the amount of time between episodes.

In 2014, additional changes were made as the chronic definition was now also being applied to families. Specifically, under the definition of chronically homeless, the head of household (either an adult or a minor if there is no adult present) must have the qualifying disability and meet all of the other criteria (i.e., length of time homeless) in order for a family to be considered chronically homeless.

Finally, In December 2015, HUD published the Final Rule to define chronic homelessness.

The following is a summary of the most significant changes between the definitions of chronically homeless previously in effect and the definition included in the CoC Program interim rule as amended by the Final Rule Defining “Chronically Homeless”:

- To be considered chronically homeless, an individual or head of household must meet the definition of “homeless individual with a disability” from the McKinney-Vento Act, as amended by the HEARTH Act and have been living in a place not meant for human habitation, in an emergency shelter, or in a safe haven for the last 12 months continuously or on at least four occasions in the last three years **where those occasions cumulatively total at least 12 months;**

The term “disabling condition” was replaced with “homeless individual with a disability” which requires that the condition be of long and continuing duration; substantially impedes the individual’s ability to live independently; and, is expected to improve with the provision of housing.

- Occasions are defined by a break of at least **seven nights** not residing in an emergency shelter, safe haven, or residing in a place meant for human habitation (e.g., with a friend or family). Stays of fewer than seven nights residing in a place meant for human habitation, or not in an emergency shelter or safe haven do not constitute a break and count toward total time homeless; and
- Stays in institutions of fewer than 90 days where they were residing in a place not meant for human habitation, in an emergency shelter, or in a safe haven immediately prior to entering the institution, do not constitute as a break and the time in the institution counts towards the total time homeless. Where a stay in an institution is 90 days or longer, the entire time is counted as a break and none of the time in the institution can count towards a person’s total time homeless.

These changes in definitions and the addition of families makes tracking trends more complex. The chart below is a snapshot from 2014 and shows that approximately 10% of the total population are considered chronically homeless.

CoC Name	Total Homeless	Chronically Homeless	Sheltered Chronically Homeless	Unsheltered Chronically Homeless	Chronically Homeless Individuals	Sheltered Chronically Homeless Individuals	Unsheltered Chronically Homeless Individuals	Chronically Homeless People in Families	Sheltered Chronically Homeless People in Families	Unsheltered Chronically Homeless People in Families
New Bedford CoC	349	11	2	9	11	2	9	0	0	0
Fall River CoC	354	66	56	10	58	48	10	8	8	0
Attleboro/Taunton/ Bristol County CoC	222	15	9	6	13	7	6	2	2	0

WHERE WE WANT TO GO

Using the *Opening Doors for Opportunity* as our guide, SoCo will continue to expand our activities to include more comprehensive outcomes measurement and systems evaluation thus enabling us to evolve to a new level of Leadership aligned with this plan. This will become our roadmap as we meet the needs of our communities, informed by our partners’ realities and wisdom. Over the upcoming months SoCo will continue to work around three broad themes – education, advocacy, and collaboration – in its’ effort to reduce, prevent, and eliminate homelessness.

The following is our statement of what we plan to accomplish:

- **Educate about the impact of homelessness in our community and how to access resources to preserve and/or obtain housing.**

Action steps that will serve this strategy include:

1. Educate the community on how prevention helps individuals and families from ever experiencing homelessness;
2. Support policies and efforts to educate Bristol County communities about need for and successful uses of affordable housing zoning by-laws;
3. Educate elected officials as to help positively affect change at the state level;
4. Establish other work groups as needed to address emerging county-wide issues.

- **Advocate for policies that promote affordable housing and funding for best practices to access and sustain housing.**

Action steps that will serve this strategy include:

1. Advocate for prevention funds from the state and federal government;
2. Work to understand and maximize the potential for a Coordinated Entry system using shared data and technology.
3. Work with community development offices, housing authorities and landlords to locate affordable permanent housing throughout the region;
4. Increase awareness of SoCo throughout Bristol County.

- **Facilitate collaborations to optimize available resources and develop new ones.**

Action steps that will serve this strategy include:

1. Develop a work plan to address common barriers to accessing housing;
2. Continue to connect potential employees to employment resources and job opportunities in the region through the Secure Jobs Initiative;
3. Develop plans to hold a Bristol County Housing Authority Summit to discuss needs, challenges, and resources available for our target populations;
4. Investigate opportunities to partner with organizations to disseminate educational materials such as financial literacy, landlord tenant laws, fair housing information, and opportunities for homeless children, etc.;
5. Develop a region wide Veterans' Sub-Committee to help veterans increase housing and economic stability while working toward the Bristol County definition of 'Functional o'.

POPULATION SPECIFIC GOALS AND STRATEGIES

In an effort to expand our current activities beyond coordination and outreach to include outcomes measurement and systems evaluation, and using educate, advocate, and facilitate as goal driven themes, SoCo has adopted the following goals and strategies to focus on each subpopulation as indicated in the federal Opening Doors priorities. The goals and strategies outlined will provide guidance for each committee's work for the upcoming 12 to 18 months.

Veterans Homelessness

Homelessness among veterans increased in Bristol County last year, when considering the Transitional Housing programs.

Goal: 2017 PIT is to have 0 unsheltered veterans; 0 in emergency shelters; every veteran in TH has a housing plan.

Strategies:

- Ensure veterans have been fully integrated into the CALL in an effort to quickly direct them to needed resources, whether housing resources or other needed services
- Continue regular meetings of the SoCo Veterans Committee to track by name and across agencies the homeless veterans and ensure each one has a 'navigator' who will work with them until housed
- Review all data on a quarterly basis to ensure shorter lengths of stay thus reflecting positive placements and outcomes
- Ensure all members of Veterans Committee have signed a data sharing agreement in an effort to simplify coordination and collaboration
- Using baselines from this report, establish quarterly rehousing targets
- Evaluate data on a regular basis to track any new trends, make modifications, and assess sustainability
- Integrate VASH and SSVF outcome data into SoCo data base to help establish baselines and develop goals
- Increase public awareness of SSVF and VASH programs

- Dept. of Career Services will assist Eligible Veterans in writing their resume, accessing on-line job banks, and in interview preparation and networking skills.
- Engage our regional Elder Services agencies in the process of procuring services for homeless veterans, particularly those who face barriers such as declining health and competency issues

Unaccompanied Youth

The federal government continues to pursue research that will increase the understanding and nature of youth homelessness. As a nation we continue to focus on four core outcomes for youth experiencing homelessness: stable housing, permanent connections, education and employment, and health and well-being.

As one of the first states to conduct an Unaccompanied Youth Count statewide, this SoCo committee is committed to using the *Special Commission on Unaccompanied Youth Status Report* (March 2016) as a guideline for our work. In Bristol County in the 2014 Youth Count 35 youth were identified as homeless, in 2015 that number saw a decrease of 48%, down to 18 homeless youth.

Strategies:

Ensure integration into CALL system while recognizing the unique challenges of identifying, locating and tracking this population.

- Promote targeted outreach strategies to identify youth and to connect them to the supports and housing they need
- Continue to encourage each CoC to participate in the statewide Youth Count process
- Review all data from the surveys on an annual basis and stay involved with the state commission to help identify ways to best use this information
- Establish criteria for housing prioritization that links homeless youth with appropriate housing
- Set a target for how many youth will be housed annually/quarterly/monthly
- Continue to participate in the statewide annual youth count and analyze the data
- Identify and Assess interventions targeted to youth – those aging out of foster care and those being released from the juvenile justice system – to determine appropriate support

Families

The Federal Goal is to end family homelessness by the end of 2020. From 2014 to 2015 PIT the decrease in Family homelessness was 11% in Bristol County

Goal: 2017 will see further reduction in the number of families who are homeless living in Bristol County and achieve at least another 10% decrease across the region.

Strategies

- Ensure all homeless families have access to and are using the CALL
- With support from the three CoCs ensure that case managers have the information they need about programs and systems currently in place to help with housing families experiencing homelessness or at risk of being homeless
- Review all data on a quarterly basis to ensure shorter lengths of stay thus reflecting positive placements and outcomes

- Look at ways to integrate a system similar to the one that SoCo has used for Veterans to create a by name list of families in an effort to more effectively assign permanent supportive housing
- Review quarterly all HomeBASE diversion data to enable tracking of successful placements and continued support services
- Address regionally the HUD standards around eliminating Transitional Housing and moving towards more Permanent Supportive Housing
- Recognizing the housing insecurities that the HomeBASE system poses, work to increase the affordable housing supply
- Develop relationships with public housing and with private landlords to increase re-housing success in Bristol County
- Continue to ensure that the Secure Jobs Initiative program is an integral part of each family's housing stability and economic self-sufficiency plan

Chronically Homeless Individuals

According to the USICH *Criteria and Benchmark for Achieving the Goal of Ending Chronic Homelessness* (June 2016) "To make sure all individuals experiencing homelessness are on a quick path to permanent housing, communities need robust, coordinated systems focused on the same shared outcomes." To that effort SoCo will work to ensure a robust, real-time tracking system and to develop a comprehensive outreach strategy.

From the 2014 PIT count to the 2015 PIT count, Bristol County saw a 10.5% decrease in individual chronic homelessness.

Goal: to see a 15% decrease in the upcoming year – 2017.

- Continue to integrate all chronically homeless individuals into the CALL and quickly directs them to needed resources based on established criteria for housing prioritization
- Develop guidelines to establish a by-name list of all chronically homeless people across agencies
- Review all data on a monthly basis to ensure and work to set a target for how many are housed on a monthly basis
- Identify ways to leverage all available resources – PHA, HOME, state resources – to create potential PSH for chronically homeless individuals
- Identify way to leverage other available supportive services – Medicaid, TPP, PATH – to address the many needs of the chronically homeless individual
- Continue to work with workforce development to incorporate work programs into each individual's rehousing plan

Stewardship and Accountability

SoCo will reach its' goals using the strategic approach identified in each population group. It will use a collaborative, data driven approach that is outcome oriented and accountability driven.

The SoCo Steering Committee will act as the oversight for all goals and strategies and will work to address the following:

- Sustainability of the Network
- Outreach and engagement of Bristol County Landlord groups
- Outreach and engagement of public housing authorities
- Ensuring regular review of data
- Identifying barriers to achieving goals and developing strategies to resolve those barriers

Additionally SoCo will continue to monitor and measure the effectiveness of THE CALL through bi-monthly meetings where all stakeholders have the opportunity for input on the implementation regulations, performance measures and standards. SoCo is committed to balancing the interests and needs of all stakeholders involved: individuals and families experiencing homelessness; service providers; case managers and end users; funders; and policymakers.

Data Quality

In an effort to improve data quality, SoCo will continue to work with and monitor the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and the Data Quality through the HMIS Data Monitoring Committee. Clear roles and responsibilities will ensure data accountability. It is important to note that standardized data monitoring tools and how best to incorporate these tools are important pieces of the policies and procedures.

In 2012 when we established the Policies and Procedures Manual for South Coast Regional Network HMS System, the SoCo Data Monitoring Committee was clear as to why we needed the manual and the policies it set forth. Those reasons are as follows:

- A. To protect the privacy of agency clients
- B. To comply with applicable laws and regulations
- C. To insure fair information practices as to openness, accountability, collection limitations, purpose and use limitations, access and correction, data quality, and security.

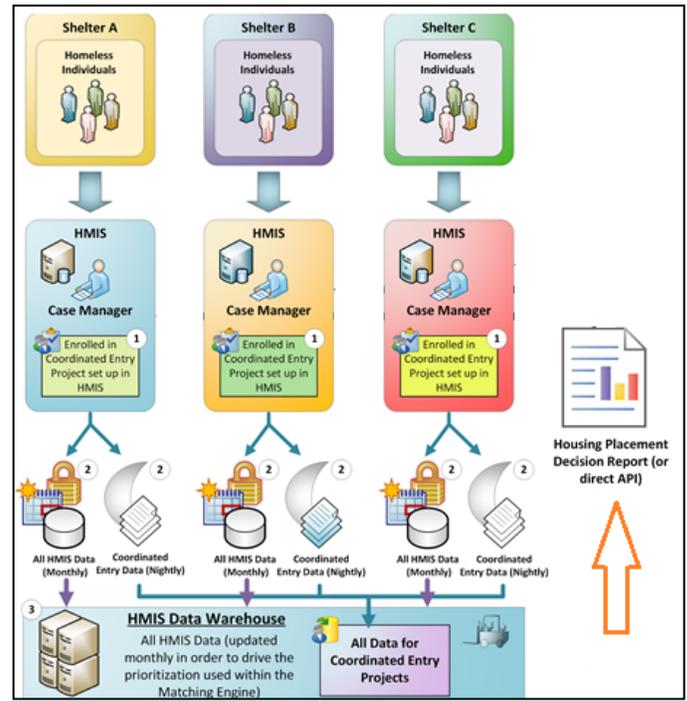
The proposed benefits of a robust HMIS system includes:

- Improved communication and coordination when information is shared among case management staff in several agencies (with written client consent) who are serving the same clients;
- Combined information can then be used to develop a more complete understanding of clients' needs and outcomes, and used to advocate for resources, conduct evaluations of program services, and report to funding agencies such as HUD;
- Increased capacity to generate all of the required HUD reports.
- Information that will assist in identification of gaps in services, as well as the completion of other reports used to inform policy decisions aimed at addressing and ending homelessness at local, state and federal levels.

Future Enhancements of a Coordinated Access System

The region has taken the initial steps by collaborating on The CALL, the region’s Coordinated Access project. As the region continues to come together on using data more effectively, there may be opportunities to integrate the program aspects of The CALL (i.e., staffing, buy-in, legal agreements, etc.) with a technical framework and HMIS such as depicted here:

A centralized data warehouse, such as Simtech’s HomelessData.com, which is already used in the region for reporting, can provide a platform for integrating data from multiple sources. This longitudinal view of a client record provides appropriate prioritization while still giving both organizations and CoCs the views into the data that they need to effectively manage their operations and meet a range of reporting requirements.



PROJECT TRACKING AND STRATEGIC REVIEW

SoCo Leadership Council and Steering Committee holds ultimate accountability for these goals and strategies. Implementation of Opening Doors for Opportunity will occur within each committee in the context of rich and productive dialogue and feedback on a regular meeting schedule and a quarterly reporting schedule as outline below:

- Annually:** Leadership Council reviews key indicators, assessing progress on the outcomes
- Bi-annually:** Steering Committee reviews commitments, indicators, target, and outcomes
- Quarterly:** Committees review goals and strategies and address performance success
- Bi-monthly:** Ongoing review and monitoring of THE CALL
- Monthly:** Committees will review data and performance on goals at each meeting.

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation is the responsibility of each committee. Assessment and adjustments if needed towards the goals and strategies will be addressed by the committees and shared with the SoCo Steering Committee.

In August 2017, this plan will be updated and benchmarks and goals reported to the Leadership Council and all additional stakeholders.

TOOLS TO SUPPORT THE STRATEGIES

Ongoing Data Quality Monitoring

In order to successfully measure anything, the data that is in HMIS has to be comprehensive, complete, and accurate. The roles described above, and under the oversight of the HMIS Data Monitoring Committee would support effective use of the tools. Ultimately, the Network and the CoCs need to have complete data for all projects so there is a comprehensive understanding of homelessness in the region.

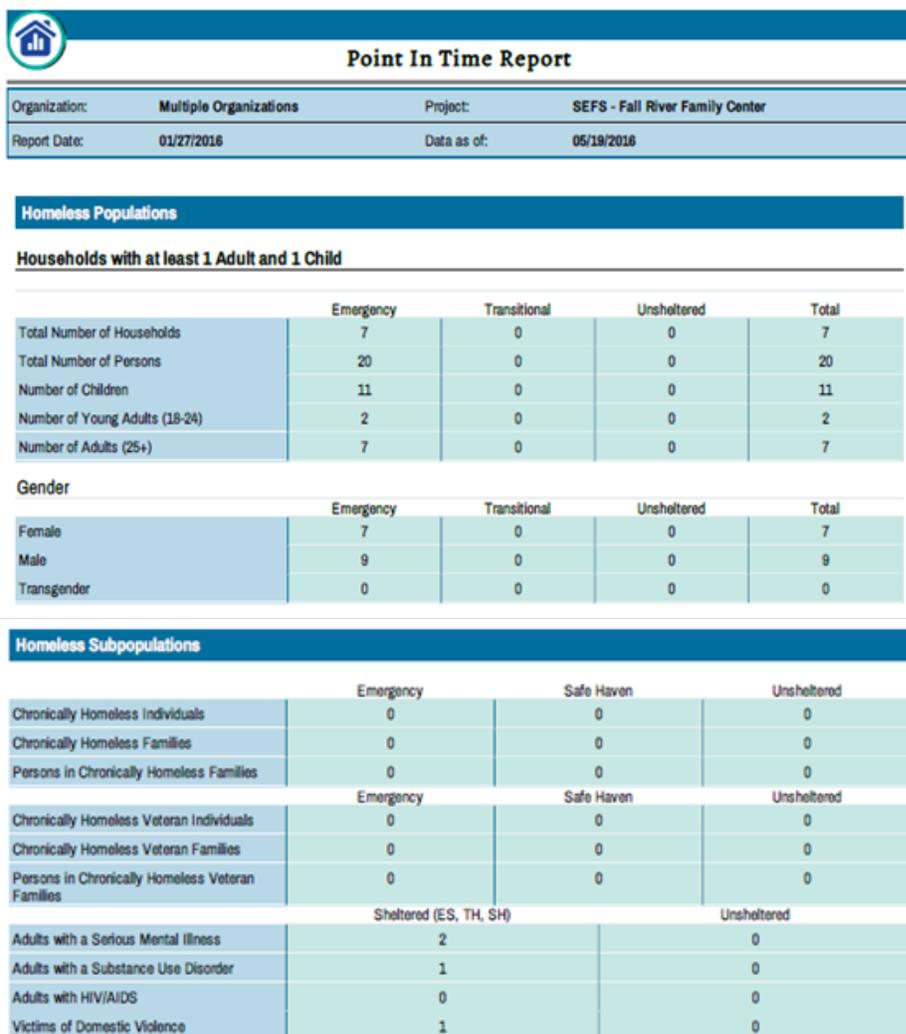
Below is a sample of a report that can be used by both organizations and CoCs to monitor and improve data quality of key client and project elements.



Taking a Snapshot

As described earlier, each of the working groups will set clearly defined goals towards “eliminating homelessness” (and having the rate of housing be faster than the rate of new homelessness). Once the goals and targets are established, then the committees will identify the measures that will track the progress towards meeting that goal. They will also identify the strategies that are needed to meet these goals.

The Point in Time Report can be used at any time to get a snapshot of people experiencing homelessness, as reflected in the HMIS data. This is useful to understand progress on goals for both general counts and subpopulation. It can be run for a particular project, a CoC, or the entire region and therefore useful to organizations, CoCs and other stakeholders.



Measuring Outcomes

The Annual Performance Report (APR) is a useful tool used by HUD to quantify the impact of a particular project during a period of time. This single report is comprised of thirty pages of detail containing a wealth of information about the people who were served and the outcomes of the services provided. This report can be run over any date range to see a variety of interesting details about the population served – who they are; where they came from; where they went; how their health and income changed over time; differences between people who left within the reporting period and those who were still in the project. Data warehouse solutions such as HomelessData.com can enable users to run APRs over multiple projects within a region or across regions. This feature allows communities to measure performance across a project type – for example, to determine the percentage of clients who exited to permanent housing from all individual emergency shelters.

Q6a. Report Validations Table

	# of Persons
Persons Served	219
Adults (age 18 or over)	219
Children (under age 18)	0
Persons with Unknown Age	0
Leavers	187
Adult Leavers	187
Stayers	32
Adult Stayers	32
Veterans	57
Chronically Homeless Persons	93
Adult Heads of Household	219
Child Heads of Household	0
Unaccompanied Youth Under Age 25	20
Parenting Youth Under Age 25 with Children	0

Q15. Residence Prior to Program Entry

Homeless Situations	Total
Emergency Shelter	26
Transitional housing for homeless persons	1
Place not meant for human habitation	48
Safe Haven	0
Institutional Settings	
Psychiatric hospital or facility	6
Substance abuse or detox center	63
Hospital (non-psychiatric)	4
Jail, prison, or juvenile detention	3
Foster care home or foster care group home	0
Long-term care facility or nursing home	1

Q23. Exit Destination - More than 90 Days

Permanent Destinations	Total
Moved from one HOPWA funded project to HOPWA PH	1
Owned by client, no ongoing subsidy	0
Owned by client, with ongoing subsidy	0
Rental by client, no ongoing subsidy	4
Rental by client, with VASH subsidy	0
Rental by client, with GPD TIP subsidy	0
Rental by client, other ongoing subsidy	1
PH for formerly homeless persons	0
Staying or living with family, permanent tenure	3

Measuring Performance

The HEARTH Act of 2009 establishes clear goals of ending homelessness and HUD recently stated, “A *critical aspect of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as amended, is a focus on viewing the local homeless response as a coordinated system of homeless assistance options as opposed to homeless assistance programs and funding sources that operate independently in a community. To facilitate this perspective the Act now requires communities to measure their performance as a coordinated system, in addition to analyzing performance by specific projects or project types.*”⁶

It is easy to see how every CoC requirement that HUD has imposed, or policy brief it has issued, has been a crescendo to measuring performance across a community – actually a drive towards making homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring. This is especially true regarding data collection and reporting in HMIS as well as for the annual PIT Count.

⁶<https://www.hudechange.info/programs/coc/system-performance-measures/>

HUD has developed the following seven system-level performance measures to help communities gauge their progress in preventing and ending homelessness:

1. Length of time persons remain homeless
2. The extent to which persons who exit homelessness to permanent housing destinations return to homelessness
3. Number of homeless persons
4. Jobs and income growth for homeless persons in CoC Program-funded projects
5. Number of persons who become homeless for the first time
6. Homelessness prevention and housing placement of persons defined by Category 3 of HUD’s homeless definition in CoC Program-funded projects
7. Successful housing placement

The purpose of these measures is to provide a more complete picture of how well a community is preventing and ending homelessness. HUD requires each of the CoCs to report on these measures at the local level. However, implementation of this Plan calls also for a regional view and approach. Details about these measurements can be found in HUD’s Systems Performance Measure Introductory Guide⁷ and below are images of these reports that are available on HomelessData.com.

The screenshot shows the HUD System Performance Measure 1 report. It includes a header with 'Region: New South Wales', 'Date Range: 1/1/2018 to 12/31/2018', and 'Organization: All Organizations'. Below this, there are two tables. The first table, 'Measure 1.1: Persons in CoC and SH', shows data for 'All Organizations' with columns for 'Persons', 'Avg Length of Time Homeless', and 'Number Length of Time Homeless'. The second table, 'Measure 1.2: Individuals Exiting CoC or SH', shows similar data for 'All Organizations'.

HUD - SPM 1 - Total Length of Homelessness

The screenshot shows the HUD System Performance Measure 2 report. It includes a header with 'Region: New South Wales', 'Date Range: 1/1/2018 to 12/31/2018', and 'Organization: All Organizations'. Below this, there is a table titled 'Measure 2.1: Return to Homelessness' with columns for 'Total Number of Persons who Exited to a CoC', 'Number Returning to Homelessness in Less Than 3 Months', '3 to 12 Months', and '12 to 24 Months'. The table shows data for 'All Organizations'.

HUD - SPM 2 - Return to Homelessness

The screenshot shows the HUD System Performance Measure 3 report. It includes a header with 'Region: New South Wales', 'Date Range: 1/1/2018 to 12/31/2018', and 'Organization: All Organizations'. Below this, there is a table titled 'Measure 3.1: Change in annual count of sheltered homeless persons in 2018' with columns for 'All Organizations', 'Category 1', 'Category 2', and 'Category 3'. The table shows data for 'All Organizations'.

HUD - SPM 3 - Number of Homeless Persons

The screenshot shows the HUD System Performance Measure 4 report. It includes a header with 'Region: New South Wales', 'Date Range: 1/1/2018 to 12/31/2018', and 'Organization: All Organizations'. Below this, there are two tables. The first table, 'Measure 4.1: Change in number of people who became employed during the reporting period', shows data for 'All Organizations'. The second table, 'Measure 4.2: Change in number of people who became employed during the reporting period', shows data for 'All Organizations'.

HUD - SPM 4 - Employment and Income Growth

The screenshot shows the HUD System Performance Measure 5 report. It includes a header with 'Region: New South Wales', 'Date Range: 1/1/2018 to 12/31/2018', and 'Organization: All Organizations'. Below this, there is a table titled 'Measure 5.1: Number of Persons who Became Homeless for the First Time' with columns for 'All Organizations'.

HUD - SPM 5 - Number of Persons who Became Homeless for 1st Time

The screenshot shows the HUD System Performance Measure 7 report. It includes a header with 'Region: New South Wales', 'Date Range: 1/1/2018 to 12/31/2018', and 'Organization: All Organizations'. Below this, there is a table titled 'Measure 7.1: Successful Housing Placement' with columns for 'All Organizations'.

HUD - SPM 7 - Successful Housing Placement

⁷<https://www.hudechange.info/resources/documents/System-Performance-Measures-Introductory-Guide.pdf>

CONCLUSION

Opening Doors for Opportunity: Report on Homelessness in Bristol County provides a comprehensive picture of homelessness in Bristol County. It is an effort to use existing data as the baseline for where we are as a region in preventing and ending homelessness. Using the tools and measures outlined here as our compass, and focusing on our themes of education, advocacy, and collaboration in our effort to reduce, prevent, and end homelessness, SoCo has positioned itself to make an impact on the lives of those identified in this plan.

Progress on ending homelessness in Bristol County has had its' ebbs and flows over the years as this document reveals. Ending homelessness here, in addition to understanding the population and the existing resources, will need the collaborative efforts of agencies, municipalities, and businesses coming together to make a difference.

This plan has identified the various components of the region's homeless system and invites all stakeholders to join us in the one common framework that gets individuals and families the help they need, when they need it most. The SoCo Leadership Council and Steering Committee, along with all sub-population committees, holds definitive accountability for these goals and strategies. The problems will continue, the funding will decline, and the region needs to take note.

Opening Doors for Opportunity lays the foundation for an effective approach so that Bristol County can work together to respond to homelessness. We will continue to evaluate and monitor all efforts, and will look at not only improvements in the lives of people served by these strategies, but also at how agencies collaborate and partner to facilitate those improvements.

SoCo continues to be committed to reducing, preventing, and eliminating homelessness and housing insecurities for all in Bristol County and empowering all to live as independently as possible.

GET INVOLVED:

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SUPPORT:

**visit www.uwgat.org
and **DONATE NOW!****



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