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Chesterfield County

Pictured: Homeward board member Kevin Hallock and Board Chair Guy Chapman volunteering at the July 2023 PIT Count.



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CENTERING VOICES OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



Point-in-Time Count

Single day counts conducted twice a year to understand the crisis of homelessness and track trends over time.



Homeward Community Information System (HCIS)

Shared database that facilitates service coordination, monitors demographic changes, service needs, and performance outcomes.





Focus Groups

Targeted opportunities to solicit input on programs or policies to address homelessness.



Data Matching Studies

Connections with other systems of care to identify opportunities for service coordination, shared programming, policy changes, or strategic investments.

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HOMEWARD COMMUNITY INFORMATION SYSTEM

The Homeward Community Information System (HCIS) is a HIPAA-compliant online database used to link households experiencing homelessness to resources; to better understand client demographics, service needs, service usage and trends; and, to facilitate community planning to reduce homelessness.

HCIS is the regional implementation of a federally mandated Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

In the Greater Richmond Continuum of Care (GRCoC), there are more than 155 individual HCIS users in approximately 14 partner agencies.

The GRCoC's HCIS implementation is also used by other CoCs in the Commonwealth: the Virginia Balance of State (which includes Petersburg), Western Virginia (which includes Harrisonburg and Winchester), and the Fredericksburg region. Homeward is the designated HMIS Lead for the GRCoC.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Latosha Johnson HMIS User Support Manager



Kavita TiwariHMIS Reporting Coordinator

Regulatory and Funding Framework for HCIS

The federal HEARTH Act (2009) required the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to ensure the operation of and consistent participation in HMIS. The HEARTH Act codified the Continuum of Care planning process and certain data collection requirements as well as operation of and participation in HMIS for certain funded programs and agencies. HCIS follows the HUD HMIS data and technical standards.

HUD and the Virginia Department of Housing Community Development, the primary public funding sources for homeless services, require the use of an HMIS for providers and localities receiving federal and state homeless assistance funds. Both agencies require that grantees be monitored for performance and submit reporting. These requirements are laid out in HUD notices and regulations including 24 CFR 576 for Emergency Solutions Grant funding and 24 CFR 578 for the Continuum of Care funding program.

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HCIS: REQUIRED DATA COLLECTION

Note that in addition to the elements listed below, HUD or other federal partners may have other requirements based on funding source or project type.

UNIVERSAL DATA ELEMENTS

- Name
- Social Security Number
- · Date of Birth
- Race and Ethnicity
- Gender
- Veteran Status
- Disabling Condition
- Project Start Date
- Project Exit Date
- Destination
- · Relationship to Head of Household
- Enrollment CoC
- Housing Move-in Date
- Prior Living Situation



PROGRAM SPECIFIC DATA ELEMENTS

- Income and Sources
- Non-Cash Benefits
- · Health Insurance
- · Physical Disability
- · Developmental Disability
- · Chronic Health Condition
- HIV/AIDS
- · Mental Health Problem
- Substance Use Disorder
- Domestic Violence
- Current Living Situation

LOCALLY REQUIRED DATA ELEMENTS

- · ZIP Code of Last Address
- · Locality of Last Permanent Residence
- · Use of hotline or crisis service
- Physical safety at risk
- · Require medical attention
- · 3+ months pregnant
- Interest in shelter referral

Homeless Connection Line Diversion Specialist Sonya Giles talks to and collects data from a person experiencing homelessness.

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FEDERAL SYSTEM-LEVEL REPORTING

As the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) lead designated by the Greater Richmond Continuum of Care (GRCoC), Homeward is responsible for fulfilling annual reporting requirements of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Point-in-Time Count (PIT)

The PIT count is a cross-sectional count and survey of people experiencing homelessness within the GRCoC on a single night. The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) coordinates a statewide date for the Commonwealth that occurs within the last 10 days of January. The GRCoC also conducts a summer count to quantify the differences related to shelter availability in summer and winter.

The PIT includes both people who are sheltered (in emergency shelters, transitional housing, and Safe Havens) and those who are unsheltered. Counts are provided for the total number of people, whether they are in households with adults only or households with children, as well as gender, race/ethnicity, and age, whether people have a serious mental illness, a substance use disorder, HIV/AIDS, or are survivors of domestic violence. In additional to reporting this information for all people experiencing homelessness on the night of the PIT, it is also provided separately for youth and veterans.

Housing Inventory Count (HIC)

The HIC reflects the number of beds for people experiencing sheltered homelessness in the CoC on the night of the January PIT count. The HIC expands upon the PIT count by including information about people who are housed and currently active in permanent housing projects (i.e., rapid re-housing, permanent supportive housing, and other permanent housing). Information reported includes the population served, whether the beds are for domestic violence survivors, the number of beds available for single adults, the number of beds and units available for families, the funding source of the project, whether beds are dedicated to a particular subpopulation (e.g., veterans, youth, people who are chronically homeless), whether the beds are recorded in HCIS, and whether the beds are year-round, seasonal, or overflow.

Longitudinal Systems Analysis (LSA)

The LSA is a part of HUD's annual report to Congress on homeless services. It provides annual estimates on the number of people served, as well as age, race/ethnicity, gender, household size and type, veteran and disability status, prior living situation, and length of time in prior living situation. The LSA includes emergency shelter, transitional housing, Safe Haven, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing project types.

System Performance Measures

System performance measures are used in scoring for the HUD funding process and by jurisdictions required to submit a consolidated plan. These performance measures include:

- · Length of time homeless
- Exits to permanent housing destinations
- Number of people experiencing homelessness
- · Employment and income growth in CoC-funded projects
- First-time homeless
- Successful placement from street outreach and successful placement or retention in PSH

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RICHMOND AREA AGENCIES THAT USE HCIS

- · Area Congregations Together in Service
- CARITAS
- Commonwealth Catholic Charities
- Daily Planet
- Flagler
- HandUp
- Henrico County
- HomeAgain
- Homeward
- · Housing Families First
- Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center

- Liberation Veteran Services
- Richmond Department of Social Services
- Richmond Behavioral Health Authority
- · Salvation Army of Richmond
- U.S. Vets
- Veterans Link
- Virginia Home for Boys and Girls
- · Virginia Supportive Housing







(Left) Beth Vann-Turnbull, Executive Director of Housing Families First and Homeward Board Member, at Homeward's Best Practices Conference. (Above) Homeward data wizards Latosha Johnson, Margot Ackermann, and Kavita Tiwari attend the National Human Services Data Consortium (NHSDC) 2023 conference.

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POINT-IN-TIME COUNT

POINT - IN - TIME COUNT FAQ

What is the PIT? The Point-in-Time Count (PIT) is a single day count provides a snapshot of changes and trends over time related to individuals and families experiencing homelessness in our region. PIT data are based on the actual numbers of people counted by experienced and trained volunteers.

Who is counted? Homeward staff partner with shelter providers, street outreach providers, and trained and experienced volunteers to count and gather information about people staying in shelter programs and those sleeping outside or in other places not meant for human habitation (such as in cars). They survey a sample of individuals about their experiences, which provides further insight directly from people with current lived experience of homelessness.

How do you define homelessness? The Greater Richmond Continuum of Care (GRCoC) uses the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) defintion of homelessness to conduct the PIT count. We use that definition because it is how the federal government sets policy and funding for community coalitions like the GRCoC. HUD defines people experiencing homelessness to include people staying in area shelters (i.e., emergency shelter, transitional housing, and Safe Havens), including shelters that assist people who are fleeing sexual/domestic violence, and people staying in places not meant for human habitation.



Homeward staff Choice East and HCL staff Sonya Giles at the Winter 2023 PIT.

How do you define unsheltered homelessness? The GRCoC uses HUD's definition of unsheltered homelessness, which includes individuals staying outdoors or in a place not meant for human habitation, such as a car, a tent in the woods, or on the streets.

How do you make sure you don't double count people?

Double counting is not an issue for people staying in shelters because we know that people can only be in one place at a time. For people who are unsheltered, we work closely with coordinated street outreach partner agencies and with local public sector partners who are familiar with the people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Outreach is planned to occur within a consistent window of time and locations are planned in advance so that we can have a fairly high level of confidence that we will not count someone more than once. We also include some survey questions (e.g., the first two initials of someone's first and last names, date of birth) that, along with other demographic information, allows us to identify and remove potential duplicates.

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POINT-IN-TIME COUNT

THANK YOU TO OUR PIT PARTNERS!

ACTS, Bridges of Change, CARITAS,
Colonial Heights, Chesterfield County,
Commonwealth Catholic Charities, Daily
Planet Health Services, Goochland
County, Hanover County, Hanover Safe
Place, Henrico County, HomeAgain,
Housing Families First, The James
House, Liberation Veteran Services,
Powhatan County, Richmond Behavioral
Health Authority, Richmond City, Safe
Harbor, The Salvation Army, Senior
Connections, St. Joseph's Villa, Virginia
Home for Boys and Girls, Virginia
Supportive Housing, YWCA



A volunteer assembles care kits that are distributed to people experiencing homelessness on the night of the count.





Staff, volunteers, and partner agencies find people experiencing homelessness in wooded areas.

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POINT-IN-TIME METHODOLOGY

How Do We Conduct the PIT Count?

The PIT count requires coordination with shelters and the Coordinated Outreach team. To understand how we conduct the PIT, it is helpful to consider the two different goals we have. Our foremost goal is to meet the HUD requirement, which is to count the people experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness in our community. Our secondary goal is to survey people to learn more about their characteristics and their experience of homelessness. To accomplish these goals, on the day of the PIT count, adults, youth and young adults, and children are counted; however, only adults or youth who are at least 18 years old are asked to complete the PIT survey.

The sheltered count is accomplished in two different ways. Providers that do not use the Homeward Community Information System (HCIS), including domestic violence providers, submit a bedcount form that provides information on the characteristics of clients served. For providers that use HCIS, Homeward staff run a PIT report from the system and give it to service providers to verify the numbers and characteristics of people who are in shelter on the night of the PIT. For the sheltered survey, service provider staff are provided with a link to the survey and verbally administer a voluntary, anonymous electronic survey that collects additional client information.

For people who are unsheltered, the count and survey align more closely. Unsheltered individuals are counted and surveyed through street outreach that occurs early in the morning after the night of the count. This outreach is conducted in Richmond, Henrico county, and Chesterfield county. Staff verbally administer surveys to unsheltered clients who agree to take the survey. For the further outlying counties in the CoC (Hanover, Goochland, Powhatan, Charles City, and New Kent counties), phone calls are also placed to Departments of Social Services to determine whether they are currently aware of any people experiencing homelessness within their counties who should be included in the census numbers.

General Survey Questions Collected During the Point-in-Time (PIT) Count:

- Household type (i.e., family with children, adults in adult-only household)
- Age
- Where staying (i.e., type of shelter or unsheltered)
- Gender
- Race/ethnicity
- · Locality of last permanent housing
- Veteran status
- Disability
- · Involvement with criminal justice system
- Education and employment
- Length of homelessness
- Disability information
- · Health insurance enrollment
- Domestic violence
- Childhood experiences (i.e., homelessness as a child, foster care)
- · Main reason for homelessness
- Eviction/Foreclosure
- Topical questions (see page 13)

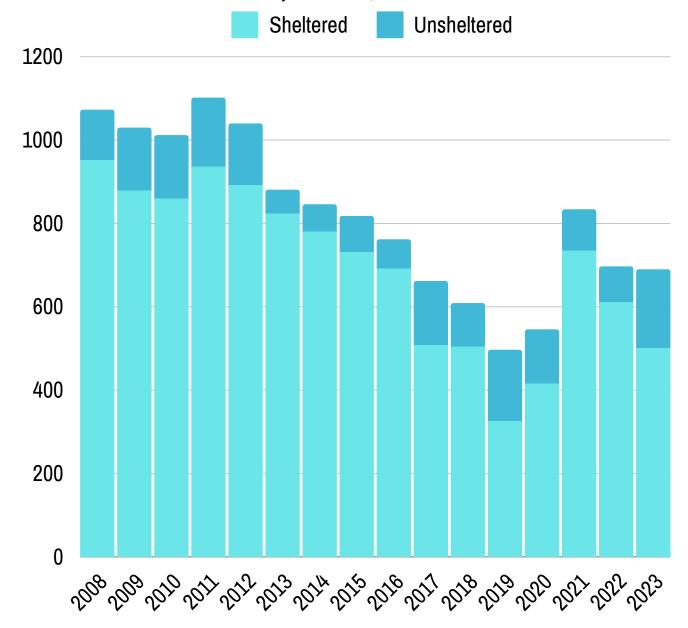


Homeward staff member Kavita Tiwari administers the survey to a person experiencing homelessness during a PIT Count.

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PIT TRENDS OVER TIME

Numbers of people experiencing homelessness during January PIT Counts, 2008-2023



Over the past 15 years, the number of people experiencing homelessness on a given night in the Richmond region has declined, although there was a rise in the midst of the COVID pandemic, and the repercussions are still being felt. In particular, the number of unsheltered homeless individuals remains much higher than our region's historic average before COVID. In response, the GRCoC – our region's coordinated and compassionate network of homeless service providers – launched a housing surge initiative that ran through December 2023. The goal was to move 50 people off the streets and into permanent housing by the holidays. **They surpassed the goal and got 100 people into permanent housing.**

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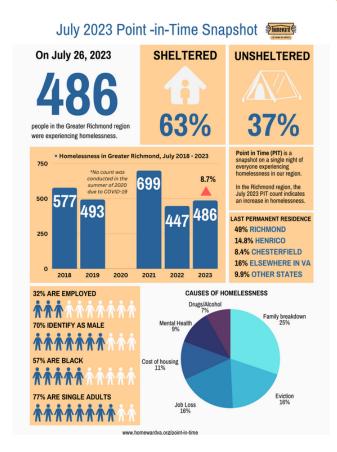
TOPICAL QUESTIONS FOR HOMEWARD POINT-IN-TIME SURVEYS: 2008 - 2023

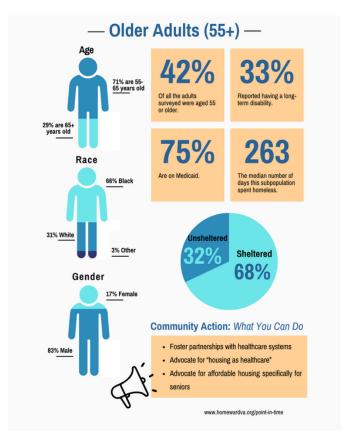
In addition to data elements required to apply for federal homelessness funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Homeward selects topical questions for each survey to learn more about issues impacting people facing homelessness in our region.

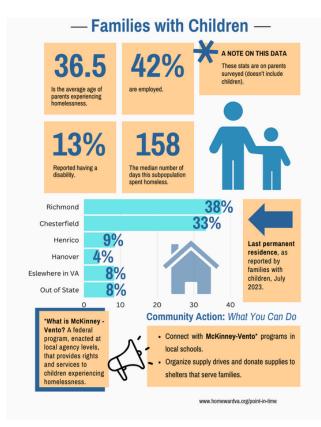
Year	January	July	
2023	Hotel use, shared housing	Extreme weather, health-related social needs	
2022	Impact of COVID	Food security, stress, health	
2021	No surveys αdministered due to COVID	Youth*, impact of COVID	
2020	Whether people have an ID, social isolation	No count/surveys due to COVID	
2019	Drug/opiate use	Actions people have taken to solve their housing crisis	
2018	Panhandling, social isolation, cell phone/technology use	Drug/opiate use, pets/service & emotional support animals; evictions	
2017	Housing history and stability	Housing stability	
2016	Employment barriers and needs	Health/Emergency department & hospital use	
2015	Experience with foster care	Use of community meal programs	
2014	Religiosity/interactions with faith-based providers	Perceptions of community support	
2013	Current and recent income sources	Belongingness	
2012	Transportation use	Transportation use and recent issues	
2011	Housing barriers	Cell phone/technology use	
2010	CAGE-AID (substance use)	K10 (psychological distress)	
2009	Symptoms of heart disease	Job experience	
2008	Housing barriers and symptoms of depression	Social support, foreclosures*	

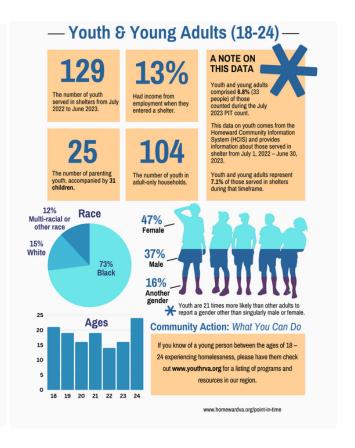
^{*}indicates that these questions carried over onto future surveys (and continue to be collected as of July 2023)

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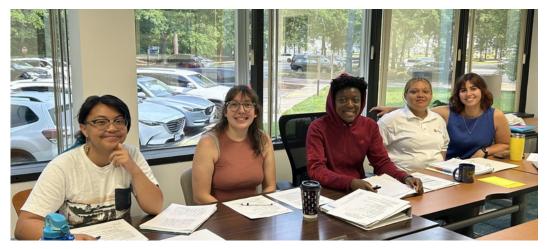




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FOCUS GROUPS

Homeward hosts focus groups comprised of people currently experiencing or with lived experience of homelessness to learn about homeless service needs directly from people most impacted by this crisis. All projects involving persons with lived expertise should honor and value the input of lived experience and ensure that the project has adequate funding for a person's time and involvement. A compensation policy approved by the Homeward Board of Directors in August 2022 lays out the specifics for payments. A budget for focus group participation is included in relevant funding solicitations. Recent focus groups include input on the development of a regional plan to address individuals and families experiencing homelessness with severe service needs and a review of regional policies governing access to homeless assistance.



Members of the Youth Action Board (YAB) meet to address the needs of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness, including organizing focus groups for youth/young adults.

RACIAL EQUITY

Homeward understands that African-Americans are significantly overrepresented in homelessness in our region and the country as a
whole. In order to address this racial disparity, Homeward disaggregates
program and system data by race and seeks to understand whether
African-Americans experiencing homelessness have different experiences
in the homeless services system than White people. Additionally, we
review outcomes and performance measures disaggregated by race and
partner with health disparities researchers to identify underlying issues of
racial disparities as it relates to health and wellness. We disaggregate
program and system level data and performance measures by race and
ethnicity and share findings on racial disparities with our community
partners and stakeholders for review, discussion, action, policy
development, and partnership in order to mitigate this significant area of
disparate impact. We use what we are learning from these equity analyses
to identify areas for partnership and training.



People of color are approximately **twice** as likely to experience homelessness than expected based on area demographics and poverty rates.

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PARTNER HIGHLIGHTS

Ending homelessness is a collaborative effort. Homeward is proud to support the Greater Richmond Continuum of Care, a coordinated and compassionate network of homeless service providers in our region. Below are just a few of our long-time partners who have dedicated their careers to using what we learn from our neighbors facing homelessness to ensure that everyone has a safe place to call home.



Denise BavaroProgram Manager, **Virginia Supportive Housing**

"I love to be a part of someone's journey from surviving to thriving."





Reggie Hill, Sr.
Outreach Specialist,
Richmond Behavioral
Health Authority

"We cannot solve today's problems if we are in the same mind set as yesterday when we created them."



Carson Cuppett
Homeless Services Program
Supervisor, Commonwealth
Catholic Charities

"Our focus to serve the most vulnerable helps us grow impact in our community by targeting efforts to serve individuals and families with greater needs and get them connected to permanent housing."

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PARTNER HIGHLIGHTS







Penny DortchShelter Staff, **CARITAS**

"A good change I've seen in recent years is more funding given to help people move into housing."

Katie Chlan Senior Director of Housing & Homeless Services, St. Joseph's Villa

"I'm excited to develop and expand community partnerships that address what we are hearing from our neighbors experiencing homelessness."

Robinette Reaves
Homeless Family Case Manager,
Richmond Behavioral Health
Authority

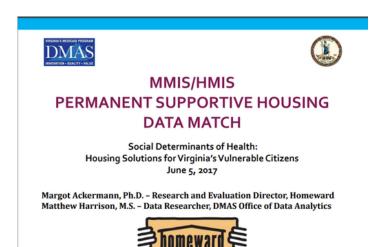
"For over thirty five years, it has been an honor to contribute to the fulfillment of restoring the human rights of thousands of families experiencing homelessness as well as restoring their hope and joy. I feel most energized when I provide services that help families experiencing homelessness move from the homeless experience to a point of stabilization. Everyone experiencing homelessness deserves decent, affordable housing. Housing is a human right."



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CROSS-SECTOR DATA MATCHING

Homeward uses this data to identify and develop cross-sector partnerships to address the issues revealed. A recent example includes studying the **connections between housing and healthcare**.

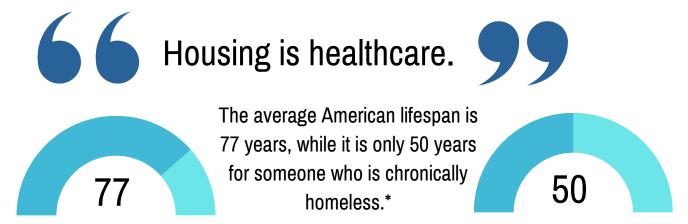


As a result of some statewide conversations on the connections between housing and healthcare and enhancements to the Medicaid expansion programs, Homeward has been in conversation with several of the Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) offering this health insurance. Many of the MCOs in Virginia have been working to address health-related soc and have partnered with housing and homeless organizations in other communities. Homeward has begun to pilot new service coordination efforts to link MCO plan members experiencing homelessness to services available under Medicaid.

Key activities include:

- Developing data sharing agreements to identify which plan people experiencing homelessness have.
- Connecting these individuals to the point of contact at each plan. This could fill a critical gap in resources.
- Educating and equipping homeless service providers to partner with Medicaid MCOs.

Homeless service providers continue to be under-resourced and serve a high volume of clients. Developing communitywide streamlined coordination and referral mechanisms could reduce the workload and frustration of case managers with high caseloads.



*United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH)

AWARD-WINNING



Dr. Margot Ackermann, Homeward's Director of Research and Evaluation, was the inaugural winner of the 2023 Virginia Governor's Housing Conference Housing **Leadership Award!** This award recognizes an individual whose work and dedication has stood out as truly remarkable. Over her 16 years at Homeward, Margot has raised the bar for data-driven decision-making. Margot's work is central in supporting more than **150** local practitioners in the Richmond area and an additional 100 practitioners around the Commonwealth to serve more than **8,000** individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness over the course of the year, each year. Most notably, Margot centers and uplifts our neighbors pushed into homelessness to ensure that everyone in Virginia has a safe place to call home. Learn more about her award on Homeward's website:

www.homewardva.org/margot-ackermann-receiveshousing-leadership-award-at-2023-virginia-governorshousing-conference



"Data helps us understand what direction we're headed and the resources that we need to provide a crisis response to homelessness as well as more permanent resources that our region needs." - Margot Ackermann

Homeward staff at the 2023 Virginia Governor's Housing Conference left to right: Margot Ackermann, Kelly King Horne, and Jen Johnson.

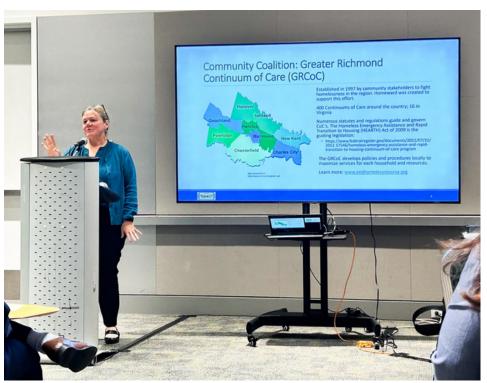
HOMEWARD'S RESEARCH INTERESTS

Current research interests of Homeward include:

- Racial equity and the disproportionate impact of homelessness on people of color
- · Healthcare and disabilities
- Older adults experiencing homelessness
- Youth and young adults experiencing homelessness
- · Workforce and employment issues
- · Affordable housing
- The impact of extreme weather and climate change on people experiencing homelessness
- · Community criminal justice
- · Health-related social needs including mental health



Homeward's Executive Director,
Kelly King Horne, gives a
presentation at the 2023 Virginia
Governor's Housing Conference
- an annual gathering of over
900 affordable housing
advocates, providers and policy
makers working to solve a host
of important issues that affect
Virginians.



HOMEWARD SYSTEM & PROGRAM CITATIONS

System Coordination

These articles and links include webinars on Housing First and cross-sector collaboration:

- January 2023, [Housing First] https://nlihc.org/resource/recap-19-homelessness-and-housing-first-webinar
- April 2023, [Housing First] https://www.huduser.gov/portal/event/quarterlyupdate-April2023.html · April 2023 (summarized) [Housing First], https://nlihc.org/resource/hud-pdr-hosts-virtual-quarterly-update-housing-first
- 2020, [Housing First], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVjhsBM3_MQ
- 2021, [Addressing Racial Equity in Older Adult Homelessness] https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10852352.2021.1930819
- 2020, [Homelessness and Healthcare] https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Homelessness-and-Health-Data-Sharing-Toolkit.pdf
- 2020, [Unsheltered Homelessness] https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/Implementing-Aprroaches-to-Address-Unsheltered-Homlessness-2020.pdf
- 2016, [Coalition building and support] https://ssir.org/articles/entry/second_generation_collective_impact
- 2014, [Employment], https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Partnerships_for_Opening_Doors.pdf

Data Used to Develop Strategic Partnerships

These articles highlight opportunities for strategic community partnerships to address the needs of households experiencing homelessness:

- 2020, [Data matching with Medicaid], https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Homeward-DMAS-Data-Match-Project.pdf
 2013, [Foreclosures] https://www.atlantafed.org/-/media/documents/news/conferences/2013/resilience-rebuilding/lazaryan.pdf
- 2023, [Cardiovascular health], https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/abs/10.1161/circ.147.suppl_1.P660

Program Innovations

These articles and blog posts highlight our community's adoption of best and promising practices to reduce homelessness and include discussions of family and veteran homelessness, rapid re-housing, coordinated entry, a collaborative pandemic response, and voter engagement:

- 2021, [Family homelessness], https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/09-30-2021-Immediate-and-Flexible-Crisis-Options.pdf · 2021, (summarized), [Family homelessness], https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/DOC_FamilyShelteringBriefFactSheet_Final_11-15-21.pdf · 2016, [Veteran homelessness], https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/docs/white-paper-VISN6.pdf
- 2014, [Veteran homelessness],
 https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Horne_and_Boyce_Expert_Panelists_Biogrophies_and_Briefs_12_18_1
 4.pdf · 2016, [Rapid re-housing], https://endhomelessness.org/blog/why-im-one-of-those-rapid-rehousing-people/ · 2016, [Rapid re-housing], https://endhomelessness.org/blog/this-work-is-hard-its-boring-and-were-moving-too-damn-slow/ · 2019, [Coordinated entry], https://hudexchange.info/programs/coc/toolkit/responsibilities-and-duties/coordinated-entry-community-samples-catalogue/
- 2021, [Pandemic response], https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/104529/richmond-virginia-response-to-homelessness-during-the-covid-19-pandemic.pdf · 2020, [Pandemic response], https://archives.hud.gov/local/va/goodstories/2020-05-21.cfm
- 2020, [Voter engagement], https://endhomelessness.org/blog/how-three-providers-are-conducting-voter-engagement-efforts/

TOGETHER, WE CAN END HOMELESSNESS









THANK YOU

Homeward would like to thank all of the individuals (unhoused and housed) and organizations who work together with us to ensure that homelessness becomes rare, brief, and one-time. To learn more about how you can join us in this work, please visit: www.homewardva.org.



Pictured: Homeward receives an official commendation from the Virginia House of Delegates, presented by Del. Betsy Carr, for 25 years of service to the Greater Richmond region (May 2023).

First row: Michael Rogers, Beth Vann-Turnbull, Del. Betsy Carr, Kelly King Horne, Karen O'Brien Second row: Jovan Burton, Chandra Hurst, Terri Lawson, Cindy Moussavou, Annette Cousins

This report was written, edited, & compiled by:

Kelly King Horne Margot Ackermann Kavita Tiwari Elizabeth Handwerk

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