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- **DaJonee' Hale**, Alaska Coalition on Housing & Homelessness
- **Dave Rose**, Mat-Su Coalition on Housing & Homelessness
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- **Ginger Bear**, Family Promise of Mat-Su
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- **Todd Smoldon**, Office of the Governor
- **Wendy Dodge**, Mat-Su School District: Families in Transition

Additionally, we thank all of the people with lived experience who participated in this project and helped inform the outcomes.

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*Land Acknowledgement*

We acknowledge that we are on the traditional land of the Dena’ina and Ahtna peoples.
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Mat-Su Health Foundation: Homelessness Needs Assessment Summary Report, February 2022

Mat-Su Homelessness Needs Assessment: Executive Summary

December 2021

630
Households Experiencing Homelessness Annually in Mat-Su

340
290
Estimated number of households served by Mat-Su organizations each year
Estimated number of households not receiving services

Recommendations

Improve the System
1. Re-design the Partnership and Develop a Strategic Plan to End Homelessness
2. Convene Private, Nonprofit and Government Funders to Develop a Funding Plan
3. Increase Data Integration Among Providers

Fill The Gaps
1. Improve Access for Those Seeking Help
2. Expand Diversion so Fewer People Become Homeless
3. Invest in Supportive Housing
4. Convene Housing Developers and Property Owners

About this Report

This brief report offers a summary of the process, key findings and recommendations from the Mat-Su Homelessness Needs Assessment.

The report is accompanied by a comprehensive set of slides with additional information on the planning process, relevant data and community feedback. It also includes a set of best practices for crafting an effective community response to homelessness, detailed findings from the gaps model and focus group polling results.
1. Introduction

Project Purpose

In Spring of 2021, the Mat-Su Health Foundation hired Agnew::Beck Consulting to conduct a homelessness needs assessment for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Objectives

- **Better understand the trends and extent of homelessness in Mat-Su** | Due to the expansive geography and limited infrastructure of the Mat-Su Borough, homelessness looks different than it does in more urban settings. It might not take the form of someone panhandling on a busy street corner, or people gathering outside of an emergency shelter. It could be a combat veteran camping in the woods, far out of sight or mind of most residents. It could be a family living out of their car, or someone couch-surfing through a winter. Through this project, we developed an estimate of the population of people experiencing homelessness and broke them down into subcategories to better understand the scale of the problem.

- **Prepare a gaps model** | With this estimated population, we were able to analyze the current homelessness response system in comparison. The goal was to answer the question: is the capacity to house people experiencing homelessness meeting the demand for homeless services in Mat-Su? We found areas of insufficient services as well as an area that exceeded needs.

- **Reach out to stakeholders to gather perspectives** | We talked with providers directly serving the homeless population, as well as those more on the fringes, such as transportation providers and educators. We also talked with people with lived experience. In each conversation we asked about the efficacy of the current system to identify needs and areas for improvement.

- **Compile findings and share recommendations** | The end result is a proposed framework to address homelessness in Mat-Su. We developed three recommendations to improve the system, which largely center around better coordination between providers. We developed four recommendations to fill the gaps in the response system. These recommendations aim to bolster diversion; build an intake, assessment and referral system; and increase supportive housing capacity.

While this plan was commissioned by the Mat-Su Health Foundation, it is intended to be a communitywide resource that can only be fully utilized when all providers, funders, governments and community leaders work together to address homelessness in the Mat-Su.

Experiences of Homelessness in Mat-Su

From interviews with individuals who have experienced homelessness in Mat-Su

“I just found out I qualified for a voucher. I am excited and terrified to have my own place. I’m excited to get off the streets, to set my own schedule. Having control of my space will be a treasure. I’m terrified because I have alcohol and drug addiction and go through periods of sobriety and relapse.”

“I came out to Mat-Su to escape a bad domestic violence situation in Anchorage. Everything and everyone has been so helpful. Childcare has been an issue – I don’t have a job, and it’s hard to participate in job interviews if I have my kid with me.”

“I finally got sober from a heroin addiction... My pregnancy was motivation to get sober. But once COVID-19 hit, I was struggling to pay rent. My case manager has been really helpful, I got his number from a friend. I don’t know what agency he works for but he is so helpful and responsive. He’s helping me with rent.”

“I have a daughter living at my aunt’s house. I’m trying to win her back. It’s hard because I’ve been living in my car for the past four months. I don’t know what I’m going to do now that it’s getting colder.”

“I moved here to be with my dad. Shortly before arriving I ruptured my Achilles; my leg was in a cast so I couldn’t work right away. The money I saved was dwindling. Then I was diagnosed with cancer – I had five surgeries in 2020. I had two part time jobs but was not making enough to get by. Then I got COVID-19 and was hospitalized... I’m not used to needing help, so it’s been hard.”
Methodology

- **Data Collection.** Agnew::Beck started by compiling data. This ranged from economic and population data from the U.S. Census Bureau to Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data collected by local providers and shared by the Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness. The numbers offer broad context and emerging trends, although the lack of comprehensive homelessness data reporting remains a challenge for Mat-Su.

- **Interviews and Focus Groups.** The research, analysis and recommendations in this report were informed by service providers, partners and people with lived experience in the Mat-Su Borough. We conducted eight focus groups with a total of 56 participants. We also conducted 20 interviews, with a total of 23 participants. In total, we talked to 79 people through interviews and focus groups.

- **Steering Committee.** The project was guided by a steering committee. The steering committee included local service providers who assist people experiencing homelessness; it also included partners representing local and state agencies, housing developers and persons with lived experience. The steering committee offered input on emerging findings, helped identify key stakeholders to engage and supported outreach efforts. The steering committee met three times between March and November 2021.

- **Final Presentation.** In December 2021, Agnew::Beck facilitated two community presentations to share back the key findings and recommendations. In total, about 100 people attended the meetings.
About the Region

Project Location

This project is focused specifically on homelessness in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (Mat-Su). The Mat-Su covers approximately 24,000 square miles. In 2020, the U.S. Census Bureau counted 107,305 residents of the Mat-Su Borough. The Mat-Su is the fastest growing region of Alaska, and the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development projects continued growth through at least 2045.

The Mat-Su, with its expansive geography and mix of urban and rural areas, is not a monolith. For this reason, we broke the borough up into six sub-regions for much of the data analysis: Wasilla, Palmer, South Parks Highway, Knik Goose Bay, Upper Susitna and Glenn Highway.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Region Name</th>
<th>Areas Included</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wasilla</td>
<td>Foothills, Seldon, Tanaina, Wasilla, Fishhook, Bogard, South Lakes</td>
<td>39,941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmer</td>
<td>Fishhook, Gateway, Palmer, Butte/Lazy Mountain, Farm Loop</td>
<td>31,619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Parks Highway</td>
<td>Houston, Big Lake, West Lakes, West Meadow Lakes, East Meadow Lakes</td>
<td>15,076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knik Goose Bay</td>
<td>Fairview, Knik Arm, Point MacKenzie</td>
<td>13,598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Susitna</td>
<td>Western Mat-Su, Talkeetna, Willow, Case, Petersville, Skwentna, Susitna, Trapper Creek</td>
<td>5,448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenn Highway</td>
<td>Matanuska River, Buffalo/Soapstone, Chickaloon, Eureka, Glacier View, Lake Louise, Sutton Alpine</td>
<td>1,623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total population</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>107,305</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census, 2020

Housing Characteristics of the Mat-Su

- Mat-Su has newer housing stock than Anchorage or Fairbanks.
- Mat-Su has high rates of home ownership (77%)
- Most housing units are single-family homes (84%)
- Rent is lower in Mat-Su than statewide averages
- More than half of Mat-Su renters are cost-burdened by the amount paid to rent each month
- The Mat-Su vacancy rate is the lowest in the state

Source: U.S. Census. For more detailed information about the Mat-Su, including sub-regional data and comparisons to Anchorage and Fairbanks, see the slide deck in the appendices.

Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Mat-Su

- Property values, average income, educational attainment and even amenities like plumbing and electricity vary significantly by sub-region throughout the borough.
- Median income for the Mat-Su overall is $75,493, lower than Anchorage and Fairbanks. However, much of that wealth is concentrated in areas like Wasilla and Palmer, and immediately adjacent unincorporated communities. Outlying areas of the Mat-Su, such as along the Glenn Highway, have a median income close to half that of Anchorage.

Source: U.S. Census, 2020
2. Gaps Model

For detailed inputs and assumptions used in the gaps model, see the appendix.

Overview

A key element of this project included the creation of a gaps model to determine whether Mat-Su is meeting the demand for services. The model starts by estimating total demand, or total number of households experiencing homelessness annually in Mat-Su. It then calculates supply, based on the current availability of supportive housing and services. It then compares these two figures to estimate the gap, or unmet need, in the homelessness response system.

To calculate the demand, Agnew::Beck used a comprehensive analysis including inputs from the Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) data for Mat-Su, poverty numbers from the U.S. Census and public eviction data. To calculate the supply, our team used numbers from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)’s Housing Inventory Count, supplemented with information directly from Mat-Su providers. To calculate the gap, the model subtracts current supply from overarching demand to identify the unmet need.

Findings

Overall, the gaps model estimates there are 630 households experiencing homelessness in Mat-Su annually. An estimated 340 of these households are currently being served by Mat-Su organizations, while an estimated 290 households are not being sustainably housed through existing services.

Household Gaps by Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adults only</th>
<th>Families with children</th>
<th>Youth Up to age 24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demand</strong></td>
<td><strong>Supply</strong></td>
<td><strong>Gap</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>310</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: The numbers above show households, not individuals. For the Adults only category, adult couples are counted as one household. The Families with children category includes any household with at least one parent and at least one child. In the “youth” category, all households are households of one, since a parenting youth would be classified in the “families with children” category. The model counts households instead of individuals in alignment with how the data are stored in HMIS.
Gaps by Population and Intervention Type

The gaps model both estimated the total number of households demanding housing services and the type of intervention the household is likely to require. The estimates of which intervention would apply to which population group were provided by trends in local HMIS data, distribution of demand in nearby Anchorage, national best practice and confirmed through local key informant interviews.

The gaps model assumes something very important and clarifying: what intervention would end homelessness for a household? There are several services and programs that can work with a household, but not directly lead to stable and affordable housing, and are therefore excluded from the interventions below. For instance, emergency shelter is considered an “access strategy” in the Best Practices appendix. This means that it’s a crucial part of a homeless response system but does not qualify as a housing intervention that ends with a household in stable, long-term housing.

Also, the gaps model table below is specifically considering those households that are literally homeless, meaning they are living on the streets or a place not meant for human habitation. Because of this, the gaps model below does not quantify the number of households whose homelessness could have been prevented each year. It’s possible that the number of households qualifying for a “diversion” intervention could have had their homelessness prevented, if a homeless response system intervened sooner.

To learn more about how households were allocated to the different interventions, see Appendix 4. A definition of each intervention is provided in the Best Practices Appendix 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACCESS</th>
<th>HOUSING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversion</td>
<td>Rapid Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult-Only</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families with Children</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth/Transition-Aged Youth</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A negative number here suggests the Mat-Su is overprescribed on transitional housing beds and is currently serving clients better fit with a different intervention.

Limitations of the Gaps Model

Having quality data is essential to craft an effective community response to homelessness. Homelessness data in Mat-Su is not centralized in one coordinated data system, which makes it difficult to identify exact population estimates and analyze trends. These numbers should be considered broad estimates. Only some providers are using shared data collection tools like HMIS, which is why this report supplemented the model with publicly available data, such as poverty and eviction data. While the gap numbers are approximate, preliminary reactions from Mat-Su providers confirm these numbers appear consistent with what they see in the community. As data collection and data sharing improves, the estimates in the model can be further refined.
3. Key Findings

**Strengths of the Mat-Su Homelessness Response System**

Overall, service providers in the Mat-Su have a remarkable track record of working together to find solutions, improve the level of service and find new, innovative ways to approach problems. This is most clearly seen in the youth homelessness response, where providers have developed programs that are respected throughout the state and were repeatedly celebrated during interviews and focus groups. Using HUD Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) funds, the community developed a Mat-Su Coordinated Community Plan to End Youth Homelessness and there is an active Mat-Su Alliance to End Youth Homelessness. Homelessness prevention programs are also successfully connecting vulnerable residents with needed resources to maintain housing. However, much of the collaboration in Mat-Su is happening informally between providers and without shared intake processes, centralized data collection, or a communitywide strategy.

The Mat-Su Coalition on Housing and Homelessness offers a forum for providers to work together on specific efforts such as a warming shelter in winter and an annual one-day Project Homeless Connect. There is a need for expanded work on deeper systems and collaborative solutions. Providers are also working to increase community awareness of homelessness in a region where the issue isn’t always visible.

**Misconceptions about Homelessness in Mat-Su**

Misconceptions about homelessness remain prevalent in the Mat-Su. In interviews and focus groups, participants were asked to share misconceptions they hear about homelessness. Persons with lived experience also shared what they wish others knew and understood about the experience of homelessness in Mat-Su.

The most common misconceptions shared by participants are that homelessness is a choice and that people experiencing homelessness do not want to receive services.

Additionally, some thought homelessness doesn’t exist in the Mat-Su, is very minimal or exclusively the result of people experiencing homelessness in Anchorage moving north to get out of the city.

Some people lack a clear understanding of what homelessness is and are under the impression that people couch-surfing or living in vehicles aren’t actually experiencing homelessness.

“No one wants to be homeless. They have no resources, no other options, life hasn’t been kind to them. People look at them with such a disgusted, non-interested view. My friend has been looking for a job for 6 months, but they won’t accept him because of his history. How is he supposed to make a life for himself when everything and everyone is against him?”

“Rural homelessness looks much different from urban homelessness. In Anchorage it is more visible and easier to count.”

“I was homeless for 5 years, but I have accomplished my goals. I bought a house last year. Just because someone is experiencing homelessness at a specific moment, doesn’t mean they will be there forever.”
Lack of Low-Barrier, Short Term Housing for Households

There are very few locations in Mat-Su where people can seek shelter on a short-term basis to connect with housing and services. Low-barrier, short term shelter is an integral part of a homelessness response system and can serve people who are in crisis, those recently discharged from a medical facility without a place to stay, those waiting on an intake process for another program, or anyone without a current place to sleep.

During the planning process, providers and community members expressed a desire for some sort of short-term, low-barrier shelter option. However, given Mat-Su’s vast geography, and the reliance on shelter that is occurring in neighboring Anchorage, many participants expressed concerns about the establishment of a single, large congregate shelter. Providers suggested exploring alternative options and access points that meet the need for low barrier and short-term care without the establishment of a large shelter site. These temporary shelter options would offer households a safe and reliable stay until their crisis resolves or until they are connected with more targeted housing and supportive services available in Mat-Su.

Limited Availability of Affordable Housing

As the Mat-Su population has grown and southcentral Alaska residents seek more affordable housing alternatives outside of Anchorage, new housing continues to be built in Mat-Su. The Mat-Su has a much younger housing stock compared to Anchorage and Fairbanks.

However, the vast majority (84%) of homes in the region are single-family homes. Building low-income and multifamily homes in the Mat-Su typically requires federal tax credits or other assistance, which is limited in Alaska. As a result, there is a shortage of housing for renters with lower incomes. More than half of Mat-Su renters are cost-burdened, and the Mat-Su has the lowest vacancy rate in the state. Just 23% of housing units in the Mat-Su are occupied by renters.

The lack of affordable housing contributes to homelessness in Mat-Su. Developers observe that current rates of low-income housing construction are not keeping pace with demand and without additional interventions and funding, the problem will continue and may even worsen. Addressing homelessness in Mat-Su will require ensuring there is an adequate supply of affordable housing.

Areas for Improvement for the Mat-Su Homelessness Response System

Lack of Low-Barrier, Short Term Housing for Households

“The more difficult a population is to work with (chronic homelessness, dual diagnosis, etc.), the less likely that they are to get care or to last with programming long-term with existing capacity/models in the Mat-Su.”

“We don’t want congregate shelter in the Mat-Su Valley for a number of reasons, but we need somewhere for under 18 clients to go to be able to be triaged and placed with the right service. Otherwise, they will resort to couch surfing and other settings that can be traumatic. Over the past 10 years, we have been unable to find funding for this sort of shelter.”

Limited Availability of Affordable Housing

“We need more affordable housing in general. You can’t work an entry-level job and pay rent. Builders say it doesn’t pencil out to build.”

“We need to get ahead of the housing need so we don’t end up like California… We need to make sure Mat-Su is keeping up with the need as the community grows.”

“The biggest barrier is that you can get these tax credit programs to work, but there is a limited amount of funds per year, and it doesn’t fill the need we have for housing… It will just get worse and worse. You see places outside where people get priced out. I think it would be wise for the state or the city to get involved. There are incentives, such as a 10-year tax break, that the city could do.”

1American Community Survey 2015-2019 Five-Year Estimates, U.S. Census. A household is cost burdened when it spends 30% or more of its household income on rent. In Mat-Su, 52% of renter households are cost burdened. See the data slides in Appendix 2 for more information.
Some Populations Face Unique Challenges and are Disproportionately Represented in the Homelessness System

Based on a review of Census data and Mat-Su Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data, there are clear disparities in the populations experiencing homelessness in Mat-Su.

- **People with disabilities:** 44% of households experiencing literal homelessness report having a disabbling condition.
- **People of color:** the racial composition of people experiencing homelessness in Mat-Su does not match the overall demographics of the region. Alaska Native people and Black people experience disproportionately higher rates of homelessness in Mat-Su, while white individuals were underrepresented in the homelessness response system.
- **LGBTQ+ individuals:** In interviews and focus groups, several participants spoke first- and second-hand of LGBTQ+ individuals being discriminated against while attempting to access resources, services and housing in Mat-Su.

These findings demonstrate a continued need to address issues around access, equity and structural bias in the design and delivery of both existing and new programs and services in Mat-Su.

Lack of a Formal System of Care

Service providers have taken initiative to work together to create a system where the sum is greater than its parts. However, Mat-Su’s homelessness response network is an informal system that is not guided by a comprehensive plan with a formalized leadership structure. Because of this informal nature, providers work closer with some organizations than they do with others.

The patchwork system also creates an environment where some community partners are unaware of the full suite of services available in the borough. Key partners such as transportation and health care providers identified a need for greater collaboration and involvement in the community’s homelessness response. Transportation and health care are not exclusively for people experiencing homelessness but are vital parts of the system and can be entry points to the service network. In interviews and focus groups, some of these providers said they regularly encountered situations where they had a client experiencing homelessness who needed assistance, but the provider did not have enough knowledge of the community services to refer the client.

A formal system of care creates established point(s) of entry where the client can receive an assessment and referral to the correct service provider that can best meet their unique needs. It also can help identify gaps in the continuum so resources such as funding and staffing can be directed where they are most needed.
Behavioral Health and Substance Use Disorder Supports

Mat-Su lacks a coordinated, trauma-informed system of care for behavioral health. Providers shared they sometimes see clients who are unable to stay in housing because they were unable to access needed case management and wraparound services.

The Mat-Su community has worked hard over the past decade to increase the availability of treatment options for those experiencing substance abuse. However, there remains a need for improved coordination and communication between providers to ensure clients in need are successfully accessing resources.

Mat-Su also has limited crisis care options, although there are efforts underway to expand crisis care in the region, including through the Crisis Now efforts (learn more here). Implementation of the Crisis Now project will hopefully improve care coordination and establish tools to match individuals with the right level of treatment.

“We need to deal with underlying reasons of why people are homeless. You can put people in housing but if they can’t resolve their other issues, they won’t be able to sustain it.”

“We have amazing partnerships for substance abuse treatment and find the wait times tolerable, peer support available and most of the time we can get assessments for either behavioral health or substance use disorders within 24 hours. There has to be good communication and coordination of services, but the treatment beds have increased tenfold over the past six years.”

Based on our experience with Bridgeway and the success we are having with a group of hard to house individuals, supportive services on-site is critical to success for some people with substance abuse disorder and/or behavioral health issues. It is not low-cost but the savings over time are there if we are able to keep people housed.”

Geographic Scale of Mat-Su and Transportation Challenges

The Mat-Su is a large and diverse region. Services available in the Mat-Su urban core of Palmer and Wasilla may not be accessible to those in outlying areas, and the relatively low population density limits public transportation options. The large geography also creates challenges that can make it harder for households to meet basic needs such as traveling for groceries, getting to work, and attending appointments. Transportation was repeatedly cited as a barrier for accessing services, and existing transportation support services appear to be underutilized based on conversations with transportation providers.

“As transportation providers, we are reaching some of the most remote and hardest to reach parts of the Mat-Su. We can pass on information, help make connections. Right now it feels like all the attention is on Wasilla and Palmer, but there are those experiencing homelessness in other areas.”

“Being able to keep people in their home communities feels really important too.”

“Last year we had our warming center. The valley is big, so it was difficult to get people there.”
4. Recommendations

Through this process, our team developed seven recommended ways to improve the homelessness prevention and response system, broken into two categories. The first category of recommendations, “improve the system,” focuses on creating a stronger network and structure for providers. The second category of recommendations, “fill the gaps,” focuses on how to address holes in the system and ways to increase services.

These recommendations are designed to bring transformational change to how the Mat-Su approaches homelessness. Successful implementation will require engagement and participation from the entire community, including providers, partners, funders, government and residents.

1. Re-design the Partnership and Develop a Strategic Plan to End Homelessness

The coalition of providers and leaders in the Mat-Su have an opportunity to re-design the partnership to better align with best practices, more clearly establish roles among agencies and to develop a system of care that effectively works to end homelessness. This would create an adaptive public-private partnership that guides the work of service providers, government agencies, funders and community leaders. It would lead to the development of a strategic plan that creates focus areas and actions that pave a pathway to ending homelessness for all populations in Mat-Su. This is the process of formalizing the existing, informal collaboration between providers.

2. Convene Private, Nonprofit and Government Funders to Develop a Funding Plan

Upon re-designing a partnership and developing a strategic plan to end homelessness, we recommend convening strategic funders with an alignment to the work in Mat-Su to develop a funding plan, which will address how the most effective interventions can be appropriately scaled over time to achieve the goals of the strategic plan to end homelessness.

3. Increase Data Integration Among Providers

We recommend improving the adoption of HMIS among all homeless service providers. This is crucial upon launching a coordinated entry system where centralized access depends on an integrated data system. This will enable Mat-Su to track the impact of various strategies over time to see what is working and what is not. It will allow community leaders and service providers to prioritize the most vulnerable clients, to better understand how a household interacts with the partnership and to understand where improvements should be made throughout the system.
Develop and launch a “coordinated entry” system that centralizes all intake, assessment, and referrals for people in a housing crisis seeking to end their homelessness. Convene stakeholders to determine the best location and service model to shelter high-risk populations on a nightly basis. Having a dedicated place or places where clients know they can go for a warm place to sleep builds trust in the system and increases the likelihood of a client leaving their tent in the winter to make the journey to seek services. This creates reliability within the system while allowing providers to assess clients and refer them to the correct service more efficiently.

Diversion is a strategy where the response is tailored to each individual’s current situation and how to divert them from falling into homelessness. Diversion comes in many forms, and sometimes is as simple as assisting someone in discussions with their landlord or calling family members to see if there is a place they can stay for a night or two. We recommend a coordinated system of diversion across all access strategies. This would include an extensive training of all provider staff who work in homeless prevention, accessing care, triage, homeless outreach, or other relevant staff. With a robust diversion program, the Gaps Model indicates an additional 90 Mat-Su households can be diverted from homelessness each year.

Invest heavily in supportive housing programming, such as rapid rehousing (RRH) and permanent supportive housing (PSH) using a Housing First approach. This is subsidized housing paired with wraparound services. This is designed for people who are not candidates for diversion and often have multiple underlying needs that are contributing to being unhoused, such as substance use disorder, medical fragility or behavioral health needs. Based on the Gaps Model, we estimate there is demand to house an additional 180 households per year using supportive housing (RRH, PSH) programs.

Ending homelessness requires housing, which means it involves collaboration with people and organizations beyond providers specifically serving people experiencing homelessness. Convening a working group of housing developers, property owners, property managers, service providers, and community leaders will assist in development of a pipeline of supportive housing that designs the pathway to launching multiple permanent supportive housing projects in the Mat-Su over the next decade.
Initial Response to the Recommendations

These recommendations were shared with participants during two virtual community presentations in December 2021. Combined, 52 people participated in a poll soliciting levels of support of the recommendations. Overall, the polls indicate broad support for the recommendations among attendees.

When asked about interest level in involvement of implementation of the plan, 36 participants said they were interested, 17 said they were not interested and three said might be interested.
## Appendices

### Mat-Su Homelessness Needs Assessment; December 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Title (hyperlinked)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Best Practices</td>
<td>A community guide with recommendations on how to craft an effective homeless response system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Data Slides</td>
<td>Comprehensive set of data slides with population, socioeconomic, housing, and homelessness data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Final Presentation Summary</td>
<td>Includes the final slide set used to present project findings and proposed next steps to community partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Gaps Model Methodology</td>
<td>A description of the process and inputs used to develop the gaps model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Focus Group Summary</td>
<td>A summary of focus group poll results</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

This document is a guide for communities working to improve a homeless response system. It identifies key concepts, offers a proposed governance and operations structure, and contains recommendations for partners seeking to work together to successfully craft an effective homeless response system.

This summary synthesizes best practices and years of practical experience from Agnew::Beck (regional strategists and implementors), National Alliance to End Homelessness (national best practice experts and organizers), Corporation for Supportive Housing (experts on evidence-based housing solutions), FSG (founders of collective impact model for social services), and Pathways to Housing (founders of Housing First and service provider).

Work from these communities informed this guide:

- Anchorage, AK
- Arlington County, VA
- Boise, ID
- Montgomery County, PA
- Philadelphia, PA
- Idaho Balance of State
- Alaska Balance of State
- Montana Balance of State
1. What are the key elements of an effective homeless response system?


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Elements</th>
<th>Process to design an effective Homeless Response System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Common Vision</strong></td>
<td>- Establish a local <strong>public-private partnership</strong> dedicated to ending homelessness, including service providers, government, funders, housing developers, community leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Create a vision for the partnership and a strategy for each population experiencing homelessness (adult-only households, families with children, veterans, chronic homelessness, youth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shared Measurement</strong></td>
<td>- Agree on the outcomes to achieve the vision (examples: # of clients housed; time from assessment to housing; % of clients housed a year later; etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Establish a <strong>centralized database</strong> (Homeless Management Information System), sign data agreements with all relevant providers, ensure widespread usage and data input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Publish a <strong>community dashboard</strong> so that leaders, public, and media can track the progress of the partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mutually Reinforcing Activities</strong></td>
<td>- Design a flow for the system around a Housing First orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Launch a <strong>triage team</strong> for preventing and diverting homelessness for those at risk of losing their housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Launch a <strong>coordinated entry system</strong> for accessing housing services for people experiencing literal homelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Continuous Communication</strong></td>
<td>- Establish a <strong>case conferencing meeting</strong> of case managers who can review the coordinated entry list and determine referrals and monitor case progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Host a regular, <strong>public-facing summit on homelessness</strong> to educate the community about the issue and about the partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Backbone Support Agency</strong></td>
<td>- Dedicate a <strong>staff member (or a team)</strong> to work on the homeless response system full-time. Ideally, this person will not work for a service provider, but a neutral entity or a 501c3 established to house the partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Assign an organization to be the <strong>lead agency of coordinated entry</strong>, managing the access point to all homeless services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. How should the partnership be governed and managed?

After designing an effective homeless response system, a structure is needed to govern the partnership. This section offers a possible governance and management structure. This structure should be modified to meet the scale and needs of the community.

**Executive Committee** – the governing body of the local homeless response system. The membership should include executive-level staff representing key social service partners, local governments, funders, housing developers and owners, and people with lived experience. The committee will be staffed by the Homeless Response System Lead.

- **Areas of Influence**: funding decisions, system evaluation and monitoring, coordination with other partnerships, educating community leaders, and designing system changes.

**Homeless Response System Lead** – an effective system needs to have a strong and skilled staffer dedicated to the partnership. Ideally, the staffing would expand to include a dedicated team of staff. The staff lead should be well-versed in evidence-based practices, be a strategic thinker, and comfortable working in large, intersectional partnerships. Ideally the lead is housed in a neutral organization.

- **Areas of Influence**: system and program coordination, staff to committees, represent the partnership in meetings, develop and manage strategy and tactics for system.

**System Flow Teams** (**Triage, Access, Housing**): teams of relevant service providers that will design, implement, monitor, and update the programs and tactics for each phase of the homeless response system.

- **Areas of influence**: Triage team (prevention and diversion), Access team (coordinated entry, outreach, shelter), Housing team (rapid resolution, transitional housing, rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing)

**Resource Team**: the team responsible to identify funding streams, especially privately sourced funds, that address the needs of the homeless response system. This will include the need for a concentrated community engagement effort.

- **Areas of Influence**: fundraising, donor recognition, marketing, and public relations.
3. How should people flow through the system?

This section offers a summary of how to craft a system flow that works for the community, beginning with a review of the current state and then working toward a desired future state.

**Current state:** convene a series of work sessions with key providers, representing all available interventions in the homeless response system. Facilitate a mapping exercise that shows how critical populations (adult-only households, families with children, and transition-aged youth) flow through the current housing system.

Review the “current state” of how a household uses the system. Look for “leverage points,” the opportunity areas to streamline the response and make it simpler for a household to interact with the system and to rapidly get placed in housing.

**Future state:** Address the opportunity areas by designing a new flow through the homeless response system, one that prioritizes rapidly housing a household, lessening their trauma, reducing the paperwork needed, and ensuring that all on the street are eligible for housing services. This is the new system flow.

**Recommended Categories of Program System Flow**

As you design a new “future state” of your program system flow, it should conform to these broad categories of interventions, each with increasing level of services and support.

- **Triage Phase**
  - One phone line for anyone in a housing crisis
  - Prevent your housing loss, whenever possible
  - Interventions: Prevention and Diversion

- **Access Phase**
  - If you’re literally homeless, head to Coordinated Entry to be assessed and access housing services
  - Outreach team works with you, while you stay in shelter
  - Interventions: Coordinated Entry, Shelter, Outreach

- **Housing Phase**
  - Let’s get you housed stably and affordably as quick as possible
  - Interventions: Rapid Resolution, Transitional Housing, Rapid Rehousing, Permanent Supportive Housing
4. What evidence-based practices should inform our work?

There are number of evidence-based practices that are central to an effective homeless response system. The most important practices are listed here.

These practices often act at two levels simultaneously. They are a **lens** (a service philosophy that informs all decision-making) and a **service model** (a programmatic strategy and structure to design a system around). Click on the name of each to read more.

- **Equity** – The work of homelessness must be centered on the principles of equity, recognizing the historical and current traumas that our country, community, and service network have created and nurtured for the most marginalized communities. Homelessness is a social ill that disproportionately impacts Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. Recognizing this is crucial to implementing a response system that ends homelessness.

- **Housing First** – a philosophy and service model that centers all action around stably and affordably housing a client with as little barriers as possible. In addition to housing, the model is based on the pillars of choice, recovery, support, and community. Housing First has been widely acclaimed and supported by research as the most effective model to end homelessness.

- **Trauma-Informed Care** – a service approach that changes the modality from “what’s wrong with you” to “what happened to you?” It recognizes the impactful role of trauma in our journey and avoids any re-traumatization during our service relationship. By recognizing trauma, providers are better able to walk alongside clients and co-create a service plan that is effective and long-lasting.

- **Harm Reduction** – Overcomes the shame of illicit substance misuse by recognizing that there is a multi-faceted and complex continuum of use and of non-use. Through a non-judgmental service relationship, works to minimize the harm of drug use. Affirms the worth and dignity of those who struggle with addiction and allows them to remain in control of their service journey.

- **Systems Thinking** – A homeless response system is inherently an ecosystem, where one incentive creates both positive and negative outcomes. It is dynamic, ever-changing. Designing and deploying effective solutions to homeless starts and ends with thinking about a community as a system.

- **Collective Impact** – We can only end homelessness by designing, implementing, and sustain robust public-private partnerships. Applying strategies inspired by the simple and effective Collective Impact model is the surest way to achieve that collaborative change.
5. What interventions should be available in the community?

This section summarizes the key intervention types that typically make up the continuum of housing and homelessness programs and services. Ideally a community’s homeless response system includes all components, with individuals served by the intervention most appropriate to their needs.

Types of Interventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Triage</th>
<th>Activities that keep people housed; safety net services.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Prevention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Diversion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Resources and supports for those in need of housing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Emergency Shelter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>• Rapid Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Transitional Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Rapid Rehousing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Permanent Supportive Housing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coordinated Entry is the tool used to connect people with the appropriate intervention.

How We Connect People with the Appropriate Intervention: Coordinated Entry

Coordinated entry is a systems approach that provides one centralized access point to all homeless interventions in the community. It makes sure people are connected with the right resources at the right time.

Why is coordinated entry important? Without coordinated entry, each agency and program must host their own access points to services. This can make it traumatic and confusing for households trying to navigate the system, and people may not connect with the program that best meets their needs. Coordinated Entry helps match people to programs in an efficient, transparent, and equitable way.

An effective coordinated entry system typically includes these six factors:

1. **Centralized Access** - The centralized access is often provided both remotely (phone and/or online) and through one or more physical locations. Ensuring equitable access to these locations is important.
2. **Housing Assessment** – Upon accessing the coordinated entry, the staff will assess the household to understand their needs and triage immediate housing solutions.
3. **Prioritized Queue** – After completing the housing assessment, the client will be entered into the prioritized queue. This will ensure that the most vulnerable are served by housing-based referrals. For those lower on the queue, they will be offered rapid resolution and diversion to ensure their homelessness does not linger.
4. **Housing Referrals** – All housing-based interventions should use the coordinated entry systems by accepting referrals only from the list created by the prioritized queue.
5. **Coordinated Data** – Centralized access creates an opportunity for collective data collection, providing critical information to inform the homeless response system on the effectiveness of its interventions. This is often accompanied by a community dashboard for the public to review progress.
6. **Dedicated Staff** – The coordinated entry should be supported by dedicated staff at a lead agency in the homeless response system.
**Triage**

**Prevention**

Homelessness prevention focuses on retaining housing for households at-risk of losing their housing. There are two broad program designs for prevention services:

1) **Universal/primary prevention** – this program model focuses on all households at-risk of losing their housing and focuses on a broad range of services, including education, rental assistance, light case management, food services, and more. Research is inconclusive on the effectiveness of this model. It is generally not advised for preventing homelessness, because the target population does not identify those most at-risk of entering the homeless services system. However, universal poverty reduction strategies and efforts to increase availability of affordable housing in a community can ultimately help reduce the number of households at risk of homelessness.

2) **Targeted prevention** – this program model focuses on those with an eviction notice (either formal or informal), knowing that this population is more likely to experience homelessness. It works with this population by providing three key services: mediation (mediating between the tenant and the landlord and/or between the tenant and the eviction court judge), rental assistance (assisting with rental arrears and/or utility arrears and/or another expense causing financial distress), and light case management (navigating to mainstream resources to prevent the next financial crisis). Services can be delivered remotely, home-based, or directly in eviction court. Ideally, prevention offers the minimum assistance necessary for the shortest time possible to achieve a positive outcome for a household, which ensures program resources are used as efficiently as possible.

**Diversion**

Diversion is not considered a program. It is a problem-solving approach that should be taught to all service staff in a homeless response system. The approach seeks to understand from the client what led to their housing crisis and to explore what immediate solutions to the crisis may be possible. It recognizes that entering shelter and the homeless response system is a traumatic process and comes at a great cost to the community. It is preferred to divert from the system, if possible. This could include a negotiated return to their previous housing, a short-term housing accommodation, shared housing, return to family or friends, or a permanent housing solution. Diversion has been shown through research to be incredibly effective and lessens the strain of the homeless response system.
Access

Emergency Shelter

Emergency shelter plays the critical role of managing the night-by-night crisis of households experiencing homelessness. The National Alliance to End Homelessness has identified the following features as essential for a shelter to be effective:

1. **Housing First approach** – an effective shelter embraces a Housing First approach of recognizing that housing ends homelessness and that shelter is not a home.

2. **Diversion** – a shelter’s first role for a household is to divert them from staying at the shelter, if there are other resources or options available to the family. This is done through a problem-solving approach.

3. **Immediate and Low-Barrier Access** – the shelter will offer 24/7 availability to clients and will have few eligibility criteria or burdensome processes to ensure that clients can easily access the shelter.

4. **Housing-Focused Services** – all services should be dedicated to ensuring that households do not stay long in shelter. All support staff should be trained as housing specialists. A dedicated fund for ‘rapid resolution’ should exist for clients.

5. **Data to Measure Performance** – data is crucial to understanding the evolving trends of the shelter population and the effectiveness of services.

Housing

Rapid Resolution

Rapid resolution focuses on housing people with few barriers to stable housing by prioritizing three components.

1. **Housing identification** – provide housing listings to client and assist in the housing search process. Assist in advocacy for the client to property managers, as needed.

2. **Move-in assistance** – rapid resolution funds the move-in and security deposit costs to aid in the stability of the client. This short-term intervention is not designed to provide on-going rental assistance.

3. **Resource navigation** – connect the client to mainstream resources that can aid in stabilizing the client long-term.

Transitional Housing

Transitional housing is designed to serve households for up to 24 months with temporary housing and wrap-around supportive services:

1. **Temporary housing** – transitional housing offers two models of housing: facility-based – one complex of housing units where services are delivered on-site for up to 24 months or transition-in-place – where housing units are scattered across the community and services are mobile for up to 24 months.
2. **Wrap-around services** – supportive services are designed to focus on special needs populations such as domestic violence, those in recovery from substance misuse, and unaccompanied youth. Accordingly, services should be designed for the target population served through the program, including intensive case management, housing navigation, recovery services, financial stability, and mentorship. Today, transitional housing is no longer recommended as an intervention for all populations not listed in the ‘target populations,’ because all other populations are more effectively and less expensively served by rapid rehousing.

**Rapid Rehousing**

Rapid rehousing focuses on housing and stabilizing households quickly through three core components:

1. **Housing identification** – assist families and adult-only households in finding stable and permanent housing with a 12-month lease in the household’s name. The program should assist with application fees, security deposit, and move-in costs.

2. **Rental assistance** – the program will fund the rent for a short-to-medium-term period, likely on average 6 months, while the household works on a case plan.

3. **Case management** – intensive case management services will meet with household weekly to work through a case plan that addresses the trauma the household has experienced, connect the family to resources and promote financial stability.

**Permanent Supportive Housing**

Permanent supportive housing ends homelessness by combining affordable housing with intensive supportive services. Both the housing and the services are considered timeless – they are available to the client until the client choose to vacate the apartment. Core components include:

1. **Housing** - the housing unit is matched with permanent rental subsidy – like a Housing Choice Voucher – where the household only pays 30% of their income to afford the apartment.

2. **Supportive services** – the services are considered the most intensive of any intervention in a homeless response system. They are often accompanied with a team-based approach that includes a case manager, a nurse practitioner, a psychologist, a recovery specialist, an employment specialist, and maybe more.
Mat-Su Homelessness Needs Assessment

Data Deck

2021
Project Data Collection & Analysis
Research Questions

• **Evidence-Based Practices**
  - What are the evidence-based practices to address homelessness?

• **Key Trends**
  - What key trends exist for people experiencing homelessness in Mat-Su?
  - What key trends exist for the housing market in Mat-Su?

• **Upstream**
  - Who is at risk of experiencing homelessness?

• **Gap Model**
  - Do we have enough supply of appropriate housing and supports to meet demand from people experiencing homelessness in Mat-Su?

• **Communities Comparison**
  - How does homelessness in Mat-Su compare to communities of similar size and characteristics?
Mat-Su Housing and Socioeconomic Landscape
The Mat-Su Population is Growing

Source: Alaska Dept. of Labor % Workforce Development
Two-Thirds of the Population live in Wasilla or Palmer

**Population by Sub-Region, 2020**

- **Wasilla, 37%**
- **Palmer, 29%**
- **S Parks Hwy, 14%**
- **Knik Goose Bay, 13%**
- **Upper Susitna, 5%**
- **Glenn Hwy, 2%**

**Growth Rates, 2010 - 2020**

- **Wasilla**: 17%
- **Palmer**: 20%
- **S Parks Hwy**: 20%
- **Knik Goose Bay**: 48%
- **Upper Susitna**: 11%
- **Glenn Hwy**: -21%

*Knik Goose Bay area has seen the fastest growth*

*Source: U.S. Census*
Mat-Su has slightly lower incomes compared with Anchorage and Fairbanks

**Median:**
- **Mat-Su:** $75,493
- **Anchorage:** $84,928
- **Fairbanks:** $76,992

*Source: U.S. Census*
Median Incomes Higher in Wasilla, Palmer and Knik Goose Bay Sub-Regions

Median Income for Mat-Su and Sub-Regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Median Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wasilla</td>
<td>$77,699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmer</td>
<td>$84,712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S Parks Hwy</td>
<td>$60,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knik Goose Bay</td>
<td>$81,582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Susitna</td>
<td>$51,504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenn Hwy</td>
<td>$45,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mat-Su</td>
<td>$75,493</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census
Slightly Higher Poverty Rates in Mat-Su compared to Anchorage, Fairbanks but lower than Alaska and U.S. Overall

Percentage of population below the poverty line for Mat-Su and comparable communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mat-Su</th>
<th>Anchorage</th>
<th>Fairbanks</th>
<th>Alaska</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of population below the poverty line</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census
Overview of the Mat-Su Housing Market

- Mat-Su has much newer housing stock than Anchorage or Fairbanks
- Mat-Su has high rates of home ownership (77%)
- Most housing units are single-family homes (84%)
- Rent is lower in Mat-Su than statewide averages
Mat-Su has Younger Housing Stock

Source: U.S. Census
High Rates of Home Ownership in Mat-Su

Owner versus rental-occupied units for Mat-Su and comparable communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Owner-occupied</th>
<th>Renter-occupied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairbanks</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anchorage</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mat-Su</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census
Most Housing Units are Single-Family Homes

Mat-Su has more single-family homes than comparable areas:
- Anchorage: 47.8%
- Fairbanks: 61.5%

Source: U.S. Census
Median Home Values are Slightly Lower in Mat-Su

Median home value for Mat-Su and comparable communities

- Mat-Su: $249,000
- Anchorage: $314,800
- Fairbanks: $240,000
- Alaska: $270,400

Source: U.S. Census
The Mat-Su Borough has the lowest vacancy rate in the state.

Vacancy rates for various locations in Alaska are as follows:

- Anchorage: 4.3%
- Fairbanks: 9.5%
- Juneau: 5.5%
- Mat-Su: 2.5%
- Alaska: 5.9%

Source: Alaska Housing Finance Corp.
Rent in Mat-Su is Lower than the State Average

Median Rental Cost for Mat-Su and Comparable Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Median Rental Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mat-Su</td>
<td>$1,127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anchorage</td>
<td>$1,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairbanks</td>
<td>$1,305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>$1,244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>$1,062</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
More than Half of all Renters are Cost-Burdened in Mat-Su

Percentage of gross rent of household income for Mat-Su and comparable communities

- U.S.: 41% (35%), 9% (10%)
- Alaska: 35% (30-34.9%), 9% (10%)
- Fairbanks: 37% (30-34.9%), 9% (10%)
- Anchorage: 36% (30-34.9%), 10% (10%)
- Mat-Su: 42% (35 or more), 10% (30-34.9%)

Source: American Community Survey 2015-2019 Five-Year Estimates (Census)
Some Mat-Su Homes Lack Plumbing, Kitchen Facilities

Select Housing Characteristics for Mat-Su and Comparable Regions

- Lacking complete plumbing facilities
- Lacking complete kitchen facilities
- No telephone service available

Source: U.S. Census
Some Disparities between Mat-Su Subregions in Housing Features such as Plumbing and Kitchens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Lacking complete plumbing facilities</th>
<th>Lacking complete kitchen facilities</th>
<th>No telephone service available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wasilla</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmer</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S Parks Hwy</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knik Goose Bay</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Susitna</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenn Hwy</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census
What is Homelessness? What the State of Homelessness in Mat-Su?
Response Continuum: Defining Key Elements

Homeless Response Continuum

Prevention
Diversion + Resource Navigation
Outreach
Emergency Shelter + Day Services
Transitional Housing (TH)
Rapid Rehousing (RRH)
Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)

Infrastructure + Backbone
To understand people experiencing homelessness
• Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) using data from 2018-2020
• Housing Inventory Count (HIC) from 2019

To understand households at-risk of homelessness
• 211 data from 2018-2020
• Connect Mat-Su data
• Mat-Su Borough School District
## HMIS Data Findings (FY18-FY20)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Population (2020)</th>
<th># of HMIS Encounters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mat-Su</td>
<td>107,305</td>
<td>2,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anchorage</td>
<td>288,970</td>
<td>108,067</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: HMIS, FY 2018-FY 2020

Anchorage has **2.7 times the population** of Mat-Su, but **42 times the number of Mat-Su HMIS entries**.  
*This suggests HMIS data coverage is limited for Mat-Su.*
Count of Encounters by Mat-Su Provider

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blood N Fire Ministries</td>
<td>683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Promise Mat-Su</td>
<td>561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley Charities</td>
<td>485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Army Mat-Su Valley</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasilla Homeless Coalition</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MYHouse</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daybreak</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Social Services</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley Residential Services</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: HMIS, FY 2018 - FY 2020
## Heads of Household

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Heads of Households</th>
<th>1,052</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disabling Condition</td>
<td>44% have a disabling condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Age</td>
<td>39 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Violence</td>
<td>33% report fleeing domestic violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, 13.8% of Mat-Su residents 18 and over are veterans

Source: HMIS, FY 2018 - FY 2020
**Ages of Head of Households**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5 yrs</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-17 yrs</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24 yrs</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-35 yrs</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45 yrs</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-55 yrs</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56-65 yrs</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66+ yrs</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66+ yrs</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Avg Age of Head of Household**: 39

**Avg Age of Children**: 8

**Number of Children (under 18)**: 832

*Source: HMIS, FY 2018 - FY 2020*
People Experiencing Homelessness by Race of Head of Household, compared to population

Source: HMIS, FY 2018 - FY 2020 and U.S. Census
Number of Mat-Su Households Experiencing Homelessness by Project Type

Source: HMIS, FY 2018-FY 2020
## What’s the primary reason people are asking for assistance?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homelessness Prevention</th>
<th>% of 546 Interventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Wages</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness or Injury</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Job/Paycheck Delay</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours of Work Cut</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car Trouble or Accident</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literal Homelessness</th>
<th>% of 1,188 Interventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Wages</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness or Injury</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative/Friend Asked Me to Leave</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Job/Paycheck Delay</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discuss: Does this align with what you see? Does anything surprise you?

These individuals are currently in housing but at risk of losing it.

These are individuals on the streets, working with a homeless service provider.

*Source: HMIS, FY 2018-FY 2020*
What are the key categories of reasons that people are experiencing homelessness in Mat-Su?

Almost half of households report that an economic reason drove them to seek assistance.

Source: HMIS, FY 2018-FY 2020
Where are households coming from prior to working with a Mat-Su Provider? (categorized by zip code)

- Mat-Su: 83%
- Anchorage: 9%
- Rest of Alaska: 5%
- Lower 48: 2%

Source: HMIS, FY 2018-FY 2020
Overlap Between Mat-Su and Anchorage CoC

# of Times a Household Worked with Both a Mat-Su AND Anchorage Service Provider: 137
# of Households that Overlapped: 114 (11% of all Mat-Su households in HMIS)

% of Overlap that was Single Adults: 50%
% of Overlap that was TAY: 17%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which Project Type Did the Overlap Population Touch in the Mat-Su?</th>
<th>% of 137 Entries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Housing</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness Prevention</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapid ReHousing</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discuss: As a part of your work, do you see people seeking assistance who move between Anchorage and Mat-Su?

This is over a two-year period

Source: HMIS, FY 2018-FY 2020
At-Risk of Experiencing Homelessness
Different Views of the At-Risk Population

Poverty

# of Households earning less than $24,999 per year:

• 4,927

Evictions

Average # of eviction filings per year:

• 153

# of households “informally evicted” each year:

• 269

Source: U.S. Census and Palmer Court public filings
Calls from Mat-Su to 211 (housing-related needs)

**# of 211 Housing-based Calls from the Mat-Su**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Calls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>1843</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

110% increase

**Top 3 Reasons for Call**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>% of Calls (2020)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rental Assistance</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utility Assistance</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs Low-Income Housing</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Top Zip Codes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zip Code</th>
<th># of Calls (2020)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>99654 (Wasilla)</td>
<td>1,092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99645 (Palmer)</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99623 (Wasilla)</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Alaska 211
Students Experiencing Homelessness

3.5% of the Mat-Su Borough School District students experienced homelessness*

3.8% of the Anchorage School District students experienced homelessness*

*FY19 numbers

Source: Mat-Su Borough School District and Anchorage School District
Services Offered to Students

In FY19, the Mat-Su Borough School District provided 4,131 services to students in need, including:

- 704 (17%) clothing services
- 691 (16%) free breakfasts or lunches
- 557 (13%) transportation services
- 436 (10%) hygiene services
- 432 (10%) shoe cards

Source: Mat-Su Borough School District
**Populations Served (2019-2020)**

- **Adult-Only**: 309
- **Families with Children**: 222
- **Youth/Transition-Aged Youth**: 18

**Households Served**

- **FY19**: 313
- **FY20**: 220

*Source: HMIS, FY 2018-FY 2020*
Literal Homelessness
Residence Prior to Seeking Assistance (for people experiencing literal homelessness)

This is almost 50% of all households. This suggests a large number of homeless episodes could be prevented or diverted with the right systems approach.

Source: HMIS, FY 2018-FY 2020
Length of Time Experiencing Homelessness Prior to Project Entry

Likely the most vulnerable clients.

Target population for diversion

- 0 - 3 months
- 4 - 6 months
- 7 - 9 months
- 10 - 12 months
- Greater than a Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Time</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 3 months</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 6 months</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - 9 months</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 12 months</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than a Year</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Median Length of Time: 2.5 months
Average Length of Time: 9.5 months

Source: HMIS, FY 2018-FY 2020
Did our housing programs inspire a positive housing outcome for our clients?

Over 2 years, 446 households entered a Permanent Supportive Housing, Rapid Rehousing or Transitional Housing program.

What was the reason for exiting the program?

**Positive outcome:** Housed and completed program

**Neutral outcome:** Unknown exit reason, relocated outside of community, referred to another program, and other

**Negative outcome:** Non-compliance with program, broke program rules, criminal activity

Source: HMIS, FY 2018-FY 2020
Vulnerability by Population

NOTE: The numbers provided are from another analysis and will be updated for Mat-Su

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Low Vulnerability</th>
<th>Medium Vulnerability</th>
<th>High Vulnerability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Adults</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Easier to Serve ➡️ More Complex Needs
Known Quantitative Data Challenges

- No coordinated entry into homeless services in Mat-Su
- Limited contact with unsheltered populations; limited emergency shelter and street outreach
- Not easy to quantify how many Mat-Su residents need services and are receiving homelessness services in Anchorage

Proposed Approach to Address Challenges:
- Synthesize multiple datasets to help address data gaps
- Look at overlap of Anchorage and Mat-Su data
- Check Mat-Su numbers against comparable communities
Mat-Su Homelessness Needs Assessment

What We Learned and What Comes Next

December 6 and 7, 2021
WELCOME
Project Purpose

• **Better understand homelessness in Mat-Su through data collection and stakeholder input.**

• **Prepare a gaps model** to answer the question: *is the capacity to house people experiencing homelessness meeting the demand for homeless services in Mat-Su?*

• **Reach out to stakeholders** to identify needs and areas for improvement.

• **Compile findings and share recommendations** to address homelessness in Mat-Su.
Meeting Guidelines

• Introduce yourself by writing your name and affiliation in the chat.
• Stay muted when you are not talking.
• If you have joined by video, don’t forget – everyone can see you.
• Use the chat to share comments, questions, and ideas. We will also invite discussion at the end of the presentation.
Land Acknowledgement

*We acknowledge that we are on the traditional land of the Dena’ina and Ahtna Peoples.*

A Land Acknowledgement is a formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories.

http://convention.myacpa.org/nashville2020/inclusion/land-acknowledgement/
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Agenda Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>Welcome and Key Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>Outreach and Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>Summary of Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>Recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>Q&amp;A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What causes homelessness?

- COVID-19
- No Affordable Housing
- Violence, Abuse and Neglect
- Not Enough Jobs
- Low Wages
- Skills & Education
- Criminal Justice System
- Discrimination & Stigma
- Isolation & Lack of Connection
- Physical Health
- Trauma
- Behavioral Health
The Reason Why – Experiences of Homelessness in Mat-Su (from interviews with adults with lived experience)

“I finally got sober from a heroin addition... My pregnancy was motivation to get sober. But once COVID-19 hit, I was struggling to pay rent. My case manager has been really helpful, I got his number from a friend.”

“I came out to Mat-Su to escape a bad domestic violence situation in Anchorage. Everything and everyone has been so helpful. Childcare has been an issue – I don’t have a job, and it’s hard to participate in job interviews if I have my kid with me.”

“I have a daughter living at my aunt’s house. I’m trying to win her back. It’s hard because I’ve been living in my car for the past four months. I don’t know what I’m going to do now that it’s getting colder.”

“I moved here to be with my dad. Shortly before arriving I ruptured my Achilles; my leg was in a cast so I couldn’t work right away. The money I saved was dwindling. Then I was diagnosed with cancer – I had five surgeries in 2020. I had two part time jobs but was not making enough to get by. Then I got COVID-19 and was hospitalized... I’m not used to needing help, so it’s been hard.”

“I just found out I qualified for a voucher. I am excited and terrified to have my own place. I’m excited to get off the streets, to set my own schedule. Having control of my space will be a treasure. I’m terrified because I have alcohol and drug addition and go through periods of sobriety and relapse.”

“I came out to Mat-Su to escape a bad domestic violence situation in Anchorage. Everything and everyone has been so helpful. Childcare has been an issue – I don’t have a job, and it’s hard to participate in job interviews if I have my kid with me.”
KEY FINDINGS
Key Findings: What We Learned

Homelessness exists in Mat-Su

- Estimated number of households experiencing homelessness in Mat-Su each year: 630
- Estimated number of households served by Mat-Su organizations each year: 340
- Estimated gap: the number of households not receiving services: 290

Mat-Su has a strong network of providers, but the community is not able to meet the full need.

With some improvements, Mat-Su can create a system that can better meet community needs.
Key Findings: What Comes Next

**Improve the system:** redesign the partnership, convene funders, and increase data integration

**Fill the gaps:** improve access, increase diversion and housing options, bring partners together around building more housing
Steering Committee (alphabetical order)

- Alissa Zank, Alaska Veterans Health Administration
- Ashley Peltier, Connect Mat-Su
- Barbara Mongar, Mat-Su Re-Entry Coalition
- Cameron Johnson, AMG
- DaJonee' Hale, Alaska Coalition on Housing & Homelessness
- Dave Rose, Mat-Su Coalition on Housing & Homelessness
- Francis Seals, youth representative
- Ginger Bear, Family Promise of Mat-Su
- Jennifer Smerud, Alaska Housing Finance Corporation
- John Rozzi, Valley Charities, Inc.
- John Weaver, Valley Residential Services
- Kelsey Anderson, Mat-Su Planning Department
- Kevin Crozier, Private Developer
- Kristin Clark, Choosing Our Roots
- Lisa Wade, Chickaloon Village Traditional Council
- Michelle Overstreet, My House
- Polly Beth Odom, Daybreak, Inc.
- Stephen Adams, Knik Tribal Council
- Todd Smoldon, Office of the Governor
- Wendy Dodge, Mat-Su School District: Families in Transition

Assessment process facilitated by Agnew::Beck Consulting
Who We Talked To
(Spring → Fall 2021)

Focus Groups
• 8 virtual conversations
• 56 total participants
= 79 individuals have participated in the process so far

Interviews
• 20 interviews
• 23 total participants

Adults with lived experience
Youth with lived experience
Providers
Tribal representatives
Crisis Intervention Team

R.O.C.K. Mat-Su
Transportation representatives
Mat-Su Re-Entry Coalition
Church representatives
Housing developers

Wasilla Homeless Committee
City of Wasilla
Mat-Su Regional Medical Center
United Way of Mat-Su
Mat-Su Office of Children’s Services
SUMMARY OF THEMES

WHAT ARE THE KEY THEMES THAT HAVE EMERGED FROM THE DATA, INTERVIEWS, FOCUS GROUPS AND STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT?
Strengths

• Providers work together to find solutions and are eager to improve, innovate
• Homelessness prevention programs
• Youth homelessness providers repeatedly highlighted for their good work
• Slowly increasing community awareness of homelessness as an issue in Mat-Su

“Our community does a great job at prevention. There are a lot of services set up to assist individuals who are at risk of losing their housing.”

“I love seeing our agencies work together. We all have a common goal.”

“We’re trying to own our issues and not send people to Anchorage. We used to have to do that more, but I think we’re getting closer to meeting the need.”
Misconceptions about Mat-Su Homelessness

- Homelessness is a choice
- Homelessness doesn’t exist in Mat-Su
- Only people sleeping outside are homeless, not those couch-surfing, living in vehicles, etc.
- Individuals experiencing homelessness cannot be helped

“No one wants to be homeless. ..My friend has been looking for a job for 6 months, but they won’t accept him because of his history. How is he supposed to make a life for himself when everything and everyone is against him?”

“I was homeless for 5 years, but I have accomplished my goals. I bought a house last year. Just because someone is experiencing homelessness at a specific moment, doesn’t mean they will be there forever.”

“Rural homelessness looks much different from urban homelessness. In Anchorage it is more visible and easier to count.”
Of 1,502 referrals made since Connect Mat-Su launched, the top issue/concern was housing, with 41% of all referrals.

Connect Mat-Su provided services to 231 individuals in Q3 of 2021, a 99% increase from the previous quarter.

- The majority of cases were related to housing
- The majority of system gaps (e.g., staff were unable to meet the need with a referral) were also related to housing

Source: Connect Mat-Su
Areas for Improvement

Lack of Low-Barrier, Short Term Housing for Households

- There are very few Mat-Su locations where people can go on a short-term basis to connect with housing and services
  - People who are in crisis
  - Those waiting on an intake process
  - Anyone without a current place to sleep
- As a result, some people end up in Anchorage shelters

“The more difficult a population is to work with (chronic homelessness, dual diagnosis, etc.), the less likely that they are to get care or to last with programming long-term with existing capacity/models in the Mat-Su.”
Areas for Improvement

Limited Availability of Affordable Housing

- Over 50% of Mat-Su renters are cost-burdened by the amount paid to rent each month
- The Mat-Su vacancy rate is the lowest in the state
- Low-income housing and multifamily construction is typically only financially feasible to build with the assistance of tax credits, which are limited in Alaska

Vacancy rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Vacancy Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anchorage</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairbanks</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juneau</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mat-Su</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Alaska Housing Finance Corporation
Areas for Improvement

Some Populations Face Unique Challenges and are Disproportionately Represented in the Homelessness System

• Almost half (44%) of people experiencing homelessness report a **Disabling Condition**

• **LGBTQ+** individuals face added discrimination and challenges accessing resources

• **People of Color** experience disproportionately higher rates of homelessness in Mat-Su

“We have done a terrible job at responding to LGBTQ+ people. We do not have the resources to respond to this population... There is discrimination in housing in our community.”
Areas for Improvement

Lack of a Formal System of Care

• Collaboration is happening informally but not formally
• Many community partners (transportation, health care, etc.) are unfamiliar with the services offered by providers
• Need clearer entry points to services and housing

“Someone came into City Hall asking about housing…I called 7 different services. And was told they don’t qualify. There was no real solution for them.”

“Seems like we have so many people struggling but they don’t know about the resources. Rental relief took me 2-3 months, I didn’t know where to go or where to start.”
Areas for Improvement

Behavioral Health and Substance Use Disorder Supports

- Treatment beds in Mat-Su have increased but there remains a need for improved coordination, case management and peer support
- Limited crisis care
- Lack of a coordinated, trauma-informed system of care for behavioral health

“The number of people addicted or on drugs in Mat-Su is insane, and treatment is so limited. I couldn’t find inpatient treatment and had to get sober on my own... We need to deal with underlying reasons of why people are homeless. You can put people in housing but if they can’t resolve their other issues, they won’t be able to sustain it.”
Gaps Model

Demand (+): What is the need?

Supply (-): What do we have now?

= Gap: What additional supports do we need to meet demand?

Sources: Housing Inventory Count, Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), Census, eviction court filings, service providers
Annual Need in Mat-Su

Estimated number of households experiencing homelessness in Mat-Su each year (DEMAND)

630

Estimated number of households served by Mat-Su organizations each year (SUPPLY)

340

Estimated number of households not receiving services (GAP)

290

Sources: Housing Inventory Count, HMIS, Census, eviction court filings, and service providers
Annual Need in Mat-Su, by Population

*number of households*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Demand</th>
<th>Supply</th>
<th>Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Adults</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families with children</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Up to age 24</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Housing Inventory Count, HMIS, Census, eviction court filings, and service providers
Key Findings: Data Limitations

• Homelessness data is very limited in Mat-Su.
  – While these gap numbers are approximate, preliminary reactions from Mat-Su providers confirm these numbers appear consistent with what they see in the community.

• Having quality data is essential to craft an effective community response to homelessness.
  – As data collection and data sharing improves, the estimates in the model can be further refined.
RECOMMENDATIONS
Recommendations – Two Types

**Improve the System**
- How can we modify the processes in our community to better respond to homelessness?
  - *3 recommendations*

**Fill the Gaps**
- What next steps are needed to help us address the gaps in the gaps analysis?
  - *4 recommendations*
Improve the System: Recommendations

1. Re-design the Partnership and Develop a Strategic Plan to End Homelessness

2. Convene Private, Nonprofit, and Government Funders to Develop a Funding Plan

3. Increase Data Integration Among Providers
Fill the Gaps: Recommendations

1. Improve Access for Those Seeking Help
2. Expand Diversion so Fewer People Become Homeless
3. Invest in Supportive Housing
4. Convene Housing Developers & Property Owners
We want to hear from you! Use the polls to tell us...

Please indicate whether you agree that the recommendations are the right direction for Mat-Su

- Agree with all recommendations
- Agree with some recommendations
- Disagree with all recommendations
- I don’t know

Would you like to be involved in implementation of the recommendations? (e.g., participating in strategy meetings, collecting and sharing data, providing funding, etc.)

- Yes
- Maybe/I Don’t Know
- No
Recommendations - Discuss

- Questions?
- Does this seem like the right approach for Mat-Su?
- What other ideas, thoughts, suggestions do you have?

Improve the System

1. Re-design the Partnership and Develop a Strategic Plan to End Homelessness
2. Convene Private, Nonprofit, and Government Funders to Develop a Funding Plan
3. Increase Data Integration Among Providers

Fill the Gaps

1. Improve Access for Those Seeking Help
2. Expand Diversion so Fewer People Become Homeless
3. Invest in Supportive Housing
4. Convene Housing Developers & Property Owners
Thank you!

- Closing Comments
- Additional questions, comments? Contact us:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jim Beck</td>
<td>Senior Program Officer, Mat-Su Health Foundation</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jbeck@healthymatsu.org">jbeck@healthymatsu.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molly Mylius</td>
<td>Project Manager, Agnew::Beck Consulting</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mmylius@agnewbeck.com">mmylius@agnewbeck.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

907.748.4777  jbeck@healthymatsu.org  
907.782.8787  mmylius@agnewbeck.com
Appendix 4: Gaps Model Methodology

Summary of methodology used in develop the gaps model for the Mat-Su Homelessness Needs Assessment

Calculating the Overall Demand

1. To estimate initial demand, our team quantified the number of households that flowed into literal homelessness, as captured by the Homelessness Management Information System. The estimated number of households was based on an annual average of 2018-2020 data.

2. Since HMIS is only used by a small subset of homelessness response providers in Mat-Su, and not all households experiencing homelessness are served by the system, we used additional inputs to more fully capture demand. This included adding in the following:
   a. Adding an estimate for the number of families that are either formally evicted (based on data from the Palmer Eviction Court filings), or informally evicted (using a multiplier that assumes only 24% of evictions make it to the legal process, a number supported in “Evicted” by Matthew Desmond).
   b. Added an estimate for the number of households in Mat-Su that earn less than 30% of the area median income. (Minus the 'literal homelessness' and 'eviction' number with the assumption of 100% overlap of these populations).

3. Since the HMIS and other input data we relied on in steps 1 and 2 above represents pre-pandemic estimates, we added a 15% multiplier to account for an expected increase in the at-risk population due to economic impacts of COVID-19.

4. An additional 0.9% multiplier was added to account for annual population growth in Mat-Su. To derive the 0.9% multiplier, we used an average of population growth of over the past three years, according to the Census.

5. Steps 1-4 created a sum of all households at risk of experiencing homelessness. However, not all at-risk populations will ultimately experience homelessness, so our team took an estimate (11%) of the total at-risk population to estimate the number of households experiencing literal homelessness annually in Mat-Su. This number was derived based on national research that suggests that between 3% and 12% of populations at-risk of eviction will end up in a homeless response system. Through local conversations with providers, the 11% estimate was decided upon.

Calculating the Distribution of Demand by Population

1. Relying on data from HMIS over the last three years, our team estimated the allocation of inflow into three population groups: 1) adult-only households; 2) families with children under the age of 18; 3) unaccompanied youth and transition-aged youth from 0-24 years old. The total of these three populations equals 100% of the expected literal homelessness inflow.

2. As quality assurance, our team used HMIS data from the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness and the Boise City/Ada County Continuum of Care to evaluate the population breakdown and ensure that the Mat-Su assumptions were roughly tracking with expectations.

3. Our team hosted a conversation with local providers on the demand by population and adjusted the proportions to match local assumptions.

Calculating the Distribution of Demand by Intervention Type

1. There is not one intervention that is suitable for every household experiencing literal homelessness. Therefore, our team required a way to distribute the demand for each intervention type. Interventions included: diversion, self-resolution (no intervention), rapid resolution, transitional housing, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing. One way to consider the intervention breakdown is to consider the level of vulnerability of a given client, understanding that the more vulnerable a client, the more intensive the intervention demanded.
2. Our team leaned on best practices and the distribution from other communities, including Anchorage and Boise City/Ada County, to derive the estimated distribution of demand by intervention type.
3. Our team hosted a conversation with local providers on the demand by intervention type and adjusted the proportions to match local assumptions.

Calculating the Supply
1. To estimate supply, our team compiled program-level data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)’s Housing Inventory Count (HIC), which communities report into annually. We also referenced the annual average households served through different programs as recorded in HMIS. Since the numbers between these two platforms were inconsistent and generally counted beds instead of households, we conducted follow up data requests with major homeless providers to refine the estimated inventory available in Mat-Su by intervention type.

Calculating the Gap
1. To calculate the gap between the demand for an intervention by population group and the supply of that intervention, the supply was subtracted from the demand figures. The gap represents the number of households underserved by population group and by intervention type in the Mat-Su in a given year.
Appendix 5: Focus Group Results

Summary of results to polls used in focus groups for the Mat-Su Homelessness Needs Assessment

Response to the Question, “How familiar are you with the continuum of homelessness programs and services in Mat-Su?”

Total votes: 46

How familiar are you with the continuum of homelessness programs and services in Mat-Su?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Very familiar</th>
<th>Familiar</th>
<th>Somewhat familiar</th>
<th>Not familiar at all</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Steering Committee</td>
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<td>4</td>
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Response to the Question, “Please select the statement that most closely aligns with your organization's beliefs.”

Total votes: 39

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<th>Tribal Representatives</th>
<th>Crisis Intervention Team</th>
<th>Providers</th>
<th>Re-Entry Coalition</th>
<th>Steering Committee</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Housing should be available to everyone in the community, including those experiencing homelessness, without prerequisites or conditions</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Individuals experiencing homelessness should be required to demonstrate they are making efforts toward self-sufficiency before they can be housed</td>
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Response to the Question, “Reflecting on our Mat-Su system of homelessness programs and services, how would you rate the community’s level of collaboration?”

Total votes: 52

Reflecting on our Mat-Su system of homelessness programs and services, how would you rate the community’s level of collaboration?

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Response to the Question, “How would you rate our current combined efforts in Mat-Su at preventing homelessness?”

Total votes: 34

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Response to the Question, “How would you rate our current combined efforts in Mat-Su at supporting those experiencing homelessness?”

Total votes: 33

How would you rate our current combined efforts in Mat-Su at supporting those experiencing homelessness?

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
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Response to the Question, “Would you be interested in participating in an expanded coalition/advisory group that helps guide the Mat-Su community's response to homelessness?”

Total votes: 38

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