



2021

Douglas County Homelessness Interim Needs Assessment

Acknowledgments

This report represents the preliminary phase of data collection and analysis for the needs assessment was made possible by the service providers, stakeholders, and advocates who contributed their feedback and insights to strengthen and improve the response to prevent and end homelessness.

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About this Project

Douglas County, Kansas, and the City of Lawrence, Kansas, have a mission of ending chronic homelessness in the community over the next three years. Affordable and safe housing is the foundation of health and well-being. All people deserve to flourish in their community in stable housing. The experience of homelessness severely diminishes the potential to thrive, the quality of life, and health for hundreds of individuals and families across Lawrence and Douglas County. Leadership at the County and city level is poised to make the appropriate investments needed to keep individuals and families in housing permanently. By infusing the community with the resources required for every community member to thrive, we can overcome persistent homelessness' causes and conditions.

As part of that mission, Douglas County has contracted with the University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research (KU-CPPR) to conduct a needs assessment to inform and assess the system-wide conditions and needs related to the goal of ending chronic homelessness. This needs assessment aims to present the current state of homelessness in the County and to help equip leaders with the knowledge needed to make investments to

address homelessness permanently. This report represents the preliminary phase of information gathering and analysis for the needs assessment. The information provided below consists of initial quantitative data collected from multiple sources on the scope of homelessness in the community and qualitative data from conversations with stakeholders within the community. A final, more comprehensive needs assessment report, which includes the voices of individuals with lived experiences of homelessness, will be produced in the spring of 2022.



Executive Summary

A preliminary look at the issues around homelessness in Lawrence and Douglas County using available quantitative data reveals some initial vital takeaways.

Homelessness is felt differently across the community. Analysis across multiple data systems showed disparities for several groups in the community. Data on the racial makeup of individuals experiencing homelessness in Lawrence and Douglas County consistently showed that minorities make up a more significant proportion of those experiencing homelessness than they do for the general population. Groups experiencing substantial disparities include Black or African-Americans, whose representation in the population experiencing homelessness is nearly 5 times higher than in the general population. Likewise, American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous people represent a disproportionately high percentage of those experiencing homelessness, with representation 3 to 4 times higher than in the general population.

Data on the gender identity of people experiencing also display disparities, not because the proportions are not in line with the general population but because they do not align with the typical gender makeup of the population experiencing homelessness regionally and nationally. In Lawrence

and Douglas County, just over 50% of the population experiencing homelessness is female. This proportion of females in the homeless population is counter to the national and regional trends, which see female representation among those experiencing homelessness below 40%.

The current state of housing in Lawrence and Douglas County does not meet the community's needs. An increase in supportive housing, especially permanent supportive housing, is needed to serve community members who have the most difficulty remaining housed. Data from this preliminary report points to a sizable portion of the population experiencing long-term and often cyclical bouts of homelessness. Over 40% of this population had experienced homelessness 3 or more times in the past 3 years, and almost 50% had been homeless for over 12 months in the past 3 years. In combination with a high incidence rate of health and substance use issues within the population, preliminary data analysis and conversations with community providers indicate that over 150 individuals would benefit from supportive housing and help them break the chronic homelessness cycle.

Beyond supportive housing needs, there is also a real need to address housing affordability for newly homeless or at-risk individuals. Data on housing affordability indicates that wages have not kept pace with the cost of housing in Lawrence and Douglas County. Individuals making a minimum wage in Douglas County would still find the market rate for a one-bedroom apartment over \$200 higher than what is affordable at their income. This is before dealing with the difficulties many encounter with the application, requirements of the rental process, and a tight rental market.



Continued collaboration and shared client data are needed amongst community providers to serve best and understand individuals experiencing homelessness. Community providers currently collect adequate information on the populations they serve. However, the data collection remains compartmentalized across several different data systems, limiting access to the whole population experiencing homelessness. Since no one provider has access to the entirety of the population, continued collaboration across providers will help the community understand the unique needs of those experiencing homelessness to better target interventions and services.

Collaboration and data sharing between the County, city of Lawrence, Balance of State CoC, and service providers will be critical as the community uses the Coordinated Entry and By-Name list. Having all of those serving the population at the table to share information and appropriately prioritize those in need of housing is essential because not all data goes into a single system, and not all housing supports run through a single provider.

Data Collection

Methodology

Researchers analyzed several sets of data to accurately count and characterize homelessness in Douglas County, including U.S. Census data, Point-in-Time (PIT) count, Housing Inventory Count (HIC), Kansas Balance of State Continuum of Care (CoC) Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) and Coordinated Entry System (CES) data, U.S. Department of Education EDFACTS data, National Low Income Housing Coalition data, and local program data from service providers in the Lawrence and Douglas County community.

Point-In-Time Count (PIT)

The [PIT](#) is an annual count of people experiencing homelessness in the Douglas County region of the CoC on a single night in January. The PIT count includes unsheltered individuals, those in emergency shelters, and individuals in transitional housing. The local CoC is responsible for PIT planning, coordination, and execution. Data collected during the 2018-2020 PIT counts informed this needs assessment.

Housing Inventory Count (HIC)

The HIC is a point-in-time inventory of all the housing programs within the CoC provides beds and housing units dedicated to individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The inventory is categorized by four program types: emergency shelter, transitional housing, Rapid Re-housing, and Permanent Supportive Housing. Researchers examined 2021 HIC data to inform this needs assessment.



Both PIT and HIC are mandated by the Department for Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and provide baseline data for the CoC to understand the extent of homelessness in Lawrence and Douglas County and strategically inform and plan specific interventions accordingly.

HMIS

The [Homeless Management Information System \(HMIS\)](#) is designated by the Kansas Balance of State Continuum of Care (K.S. BoS CoC) to comply with HUD's data collection, management, and reporting standards. HMIS collects data on individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness enrolled in intervention or prevention services.

HUD, policymakers, and the CoC can use HMIS data to better understand the extent and nature of homelessness in a community over time. An HMIS system can be used to produce an unduplicated count of individuals experiencing homelessness, understand patterns of service use, and determine the effectiveness of programs. The HMIS system can also improve service coordination among community providers over time. Only programs that receive HUD funding are mandated to use HMIS. For programs that do not receive HUD funding, participating in the HMIS system is entirely optional. Therefore, no organization currently has a complete picture of the population experiencing homelessness.

U.S. Department of Education

Researchers analyzed data collected on Douglas County from [EDFacts](#), a U.S. Department of Education (E.D.) initiative to collect high-quality, school-district-level counts of students enrolled in a K-12 school who had experienced homelessness at any point, for any length of time, during the 2019-2020 school year. While children and youth experiencing homelessness are also counted in the PIT count, each data source defines homelessness differently, for example HUD data sources do not count families who are doubled-up but without their own housing, whereas E.D. data sources do count this as an indicator of homelessness. Examining a secondary data set offers a more robust-understanding of the scope and depth of youth and family homelessness. It may also provide insight on how resources might be targeted most effectively.

National Low Income Housing Coalition

Douglas County's housing affordability numbers were obtained from the [National Low-Income Housing Coalition's](#) rental costs and wages report. The report compiles data from HUD's Fair Market Rent dataset, the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, and the U.S. Department of Labor wage statistics.

Coordinated Entry System

The Kansas Statewide Homeless Coalition provided researchers with anonymous data from their Coordinated Entry System. This system consists of data on individuals determined to need housing after an assessment using the Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT). Coordinated Entry System data includes demographics, VI-SPDAT scores, and lengths of stay.

Community Conversations

Researchers conversed with service providers and stakeholders who provide services and supports to individuals and families currently experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing a housing crisis to understand their assessment of the homelessness response system and the progress toward ending homelessness in Douglas County. Request for further data about each provider's service provision was made to understand their unique populations. Throughout the conversation, researchers welcomed ideas and insights on making homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring. The conversation was divided into two categories:

What is going well?	Gaps and Opportunities
What are the strengths of the current landscape of housing and supportive service programs? How are programs and services preventing and addressing homelessness?	What are the gaps in improving housing programs and supportive services? What are the opportunities to advance the goals of preventing and ending homelessness?

Community Data Review: Initial Findings

To characterize and describe the population of individuals experiencing homelessness in Douglas County, researchers studied data from several sources: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Point-in-Time Counts, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Homeless

Education, HUD's Housing Inventory Count, National Low Income Housing Coalition's affordability reports, K.S. BoS CoC's Homeless Management Information System and Coordinated Entry System, and data from numerous service providers in Douglas County. The data shows that individuals are entering the system and being counted inconsistently across agencies. Likewise, some groups navigate the path of homelessness towards re-housing more quickly than others. The impact of homelessness also appears to be experienced differently across demographic groups, as described below.

Census Data for Douglas County, KS

The ACS (American Community Survey) 2019 estimates the population in Douglas County is 122,259. The median household income is \$64,233. In Douglas County, 18% of the population and 15.7% of children under 18 years old live below poverty. The ethnicity and racial breakdown of Douglas County include 7% Hispanic/Latin(x), 78% White, 6% Asian, and 4% Black as part of the population.ⁱ



Point in Time (PIT) Count Data

The 2021 count of individuals experiencing homelessness taken from the PIT experienced disruptions because of the ongoing pandemic. However, data on the three previous years indicates an increase in the total number of individuals counted in Douglas County. The number of unsheltered individuals increased significantly from 48 individuals in 2018 to 75 individuals in 2020 (see [Table 1](#)). The upward trend in unsheltered individuals is likely to have continued into 2021 as the PIT is conducted

each January, so 2020 data do not include the impacts of COVID-19, which reduced the capacity of many congregate living facilities, including the Lawrence Community Shelter.

Race and ethnicity data from both the PIT and U.S. Census indicate a higher proportion of white and non-Hispanic/Latin(x) in the general population than in the population experiencing homelessness. However, data suggest that minority groups make up a disproportionately high percentage of individuals experiencing homelessness. Groups experiencing this discrepancy include African-Americans, who make up only 4% of Douglas County's population but constitute 17% of the County's homeless (see [Table 2](#) and [Table 3](#)).

Lawrence and Douglas County also see differences in the proportion of females in their communities and those experiencing homelessness. In the most recent U.S. Census, women are 51% of County's population but account for 45% of the homeless population in the 2020 PIT. Comparing that proportion to state and federal data shows that the County has more females experiencing homelessness than the state or nation in general. (See [Table 4](#))

According to the PIT count, more children have been experiencing homelessness over the past 3 years. In 2020, more than 25% of individuals experiencing homelessness were children. (See [Table 5](#))

While information reported on the annual PIT count is essential for HUD funding and reporting, it represents a limited, single timepoint snapshot of individuals experiencing homelessness in a community, likely leading to an undercount of individualsⁱⁱ. The tendency to undercount individuals experiencing homelessness -may be particularly challenging for some populations, including unaccompanied children.

HMIS Data

Data from the HMIS utilized by the K.S. BoS CoC is continuously collected on individuals experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness within the community and includes additional demographics and characteristics those individuals and the services they receive. HMIS data from October 2020 through September 2021 showed that 668 people experienced homelessness or were enrolled in homelessness prevention programs in the County. Many of these individuals engaged with multiple agencies and programs. The most common type of utilized programs were emergency shelters, rapid re-housing, and street outreach. (See [Table 6](#) and [Table 7](#))

Data from HMIS also indicated that individuals belonging to a minority experienced disproportionately high levels of homelessness, with Black or African-Americans being represented at almost 5 times the rate in population than can be expected for Douglas County(4% Census, 19.2% HMIS). Likewise, American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous people see an over-representation amongst those experiencing homelessness in the HMIS data (2% Census, 5.9% HMIS). (See [Table 8](#))

Gender continued to be in line with the county demographic breakdown based on the U.S. Census but diverged from proportions seen at the state and federal levels for individuals experiencing homelessness. HMIS data included 51% female individuals above the 45% collected for Douglas

County during the 2020 PIT and even further above the 39% federal and 37% state rates for females experiencing homelessness. (See [Table 9](#))

The majority (84%) of the HMIS clients were heads of households, and more than half were single adults. Fewer than 1% of individuals (N=668) were veterans.

Youth and Children

Younger adults (18-24) and middle-aged groups (25-54) made up the majority of HMIS client data(61%). While HMIS data shows 94 youth in Douglas County experienced homelessness last year, the U.S. Department of Education data indicated that far more youth (n=203) were reported as experiencing homelessness suggesting an undercount of youth in HMIS which could impact services. (See [Table 10](#), Table 11, and [Table 12](#))

Chronic Homelessness and Additional Characteristics

Nearly one-third of individuals had experienced homelessness four or more times in the past three years (see [Table 13](#)). Almost half (47%) had experienced homelessness for more than 12 months, and 41% had experienced homelessness 3 or more times in the past 3 years (see [Table 14](#)). More than half reported not having any income (see [Table 17](#)).



About three in ten individuals indicated fleeing violent situations (N=130), and 36% experienced domestic violence (N=382). Most individuals (65%) indicated having a disability or mental health issue. About a quarter reported chronic health problems (see [Table 15](#)). Nearly one-third of individuals in HMIS reportedly had alcohol use or drug use disorders, or both, and 60% experienced mental health concerns (see [Table 16](#)).

Despite the high reported rates of chronic diseases, more than half indicated that they did not have any health insurance.

A little more than half (n=381) of individuals in HMIS exited the program last year. 244 had a completed exit reason, with only about half leaving to permanent housing with others exiting to less permanent situations (see [Table 18](#)).

Non-HMIS Programmatic Data

Not all organizations providing services to individuals experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness in Lawrence and Douglas County participate in the HMIS. Organizations that do not receive funding or only receive part of their funding through HUD often develop and keep their system for managing data. Because of this, there are still many individuals who cannot be accounted for in the community solely by relying on PIT or HMIS data, making these individuals challenging to identify in an unduplicated manner. However, despite the risk of data duplication, examining different data systems can yield information about the wider community experiencing homelessness and be compared to the information provided by HMIS.

One such example is Bert Nash's city-funded Homeless Outreach Team program data collection. Bert Nash's city-funded Homeless Outreach Team program engages with individuals experiencing homelessness to connect them to community resources. Individuals participating in the outreach program do not need a mental health diagnosis to receive services. The homeless outreach team partners with the City of Lawrence and receives federal grant funding. For data collected from October 2020 through September 2021, this program served an average of 139 people per quarter and 274 new clients. Of these, 14% were Black or African-American, and 64% were White, reflecting the racial disparities in homelessness in the County. 45% were female, whereas 54% were male, and 1% were transgender individuals (see [Tables 26, 27 and 28](#)), paralleling the findings from the PIT and HMI.

Developing Caring Communities Committed To Action, (DCCCA), Inc provides in-patient and outpatient substance use disorder treatment programs, prevention, behavioral health court and drug court, and family preservation services for families involved in the child welfare system. They served 1,050 clients across their outpatient and residential treatment programs from October 2020 to September 2021. According to DCCCA, individuals arrive for services after attempting many other systems that were unsuccessful in meeting their needs. DCCCA prides itself on its team's ability to engage people afraid and shameful of getting individuals into recovery programming. DCCCA had slightly different proportions from other data sources in the racial breakdown of the clients they serve, with 8% indicating Black or African American. DCCCA also has a high percentage of female clients (68%) but does offer programming explicitly targeting women, which may account for their high representation. (see [Tables 26, 27 and 28](#))

Family Promise provides services for families experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness. From October 2020 through September 2021, they served 840 different families for a total of 1957 individuals through their Diversion, Prevention, Shelter, and Stabilization case management programs. They offer a continuum of services, including shelter, transitional housing, prevention, diversion, and stabilization programs. In 2021, 87% of households served by Family Promise did not qualify under the federal HUD definition as experiencing homelessness, because they did not meet the stringent criteria set by HUD; therefore, they are not being captured and identified in HMIS. They are families experiencing homelessness who are doubled up with other relatives, sleeping in cars, staying at a motel, or "couch surfing." Due to this lack of eligibility, families and other populations may have little or no interaction with the homelessness response system and are not eligible to receive service offered by response systems that do not consider their status homeless. Of the individuals served by Family Promise, 14% were Black or African American, with an additional 12% indicating a multi-racial identity. Focusing their services on families with children, females made up 37% of their clientele, with 49% of those served to be children 17 and under. (see [Tables 26, 27 and 28](#))

Willow Domestic Violence Shelter provides shelter for individuals fleeing domestic violence in addition to wrap-around services to help guests achieve self-sufficiency and to meet their individual goals. The shelter is a nine-bedroom, 30-bed residence. The Willow also provides transitional housing and outreach, court advocacy, support groups, and emotional support through survivor access

advocates. While Willow uses the HMIS system to collect information on program participants staying in a shelter because they meet the federal HUD definition of homelessness, program participants staying in shelters only represent 9% of total clients served. Willow served about 70 residential clients. It also provided non-residential services to over 600 individuals in 2021. Black or African Americans made up 10% of those receiving service, with an additional 4% indicating a multi-racial background. Willow also served 75% female clients, which aligns with its focus on serving individuals experiencing domestic violence.

Despite the known limitations in the data of potential duplication across programs and differing approaches to data collection, the pooled data from community providers yielded similar results to the HMIS data.

Coordinated Entry System Data

A Coordinated Entry System aims to simplify access to housing and supportive services while prioritizing the most vulnerable individuals for housing placement first and improving overall system efficiency.

Spearheaded by the Kansas Balance of State CoC, the coordinated entry system is the entry point for housing and supportive services for those experiencing homelessness in the Douglas County region of the CoC. Seven area organizations operate as coordinated entry access points, or hubs, where individuals experiencing a housing crisis assess their strengths and needs. If the individual meets the federal definition of homelessness, a Homeless VI-SPDAT is conducted. The VI-SPDAT is a triage tool intended to determine of potential housing and support needs for people experiencing homelessness.ⁱⁱⁱ

The assessment is used to make a prioritization determination for housing based on service needs and levels of vulnerability.^{iv} The VI-SPDAT establishes scoring criteria that translate the person's current living situation and barriers impacting their ability to obtain and/or maintain housing into a numerical score that can inform the prioritization process. The assessment process is uniform among all access points to have consistent processes across the region and provide equal and equitable opportunities to access services.

Once individuals have completed the assessment, they are placed on a "By-Name" list. The By-Name list is a real-time, up-to-date list of all individuals experiencing homelessness within Douglas County that have completed an intake assessment through a coordinated entry access point. Prioritization for housing from the By-Name list is based on an individual's score on the VI-SPDAT, which measures the relative vulnerability of adults experiencing homelessness. Additional susceptibility is determined by other factors, including medical risks, the presence of domestic violence or further victimization, unsheltered status. The higher an individual's vulnerability score, the higher they are prioritized for housing placement on the By-Name list. All housing referrals to participating agencies are made through the By-Name list. Regional coordinators bring partners together to case conferences, review the list, and refer referrals to housing and other services. The regional coordinator collaborates closely with housing providers, the referring agency, and participants to move program participants from homelessness to stable housing. All programs receiving HUD Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG)

funding must participate in the Coordinated Entry process. All programs participating in the coordinated entry process must adhere to the Housing First model, which is an approach that views housing as the foundation of life improvement and enables access to permanent housing without prerequisites or conditions beyond those of a typical renter. vvi

From October 1, 2020, to November 17, 2021, 325 individuals were recorded in the Coordinated Entry System. Among them, 51% were female, 48% were male and another less than 2% were transgender or a gender other than singularly female or male (e.g., non-binary, genderfluid, agender, culturally specific gender). Data from the Coordinated Entry System also shows that 21.3% of individuals were Black, African American, or multi-racial, 8.7% were Hispanic or Latinx (see [Table 19](#)), 17% of them experienced domestic violence, and about 1% were veterans. The average age of these individuals was 40 years old. Nearly all individuals (98%) entering the Coordinated Entry System were assessed with moderate to high needs for housing support. Out of the 325 individuals, only 19% were housed. The average number of days they waited to be accommodated was 97 days (about 3 months). For the rest who were not housed, they waited for an average of 188 days (ranging from 5 to 406 days (about 1 year 1 and a half months) 406 days (about 1 year 1 and a half months).

At the time of the analysis, 61 had been able to find housing, with most finding a rental via Rapid Rehousing or an equivalent voucher (see [Table 21](#)). The gender ([Table 22](#)), race ([Table 23](#)), and VI-SPDAT score ([Table 24](#)) composition of the housed individuals are like those of all clients in HMIS ([Table 20](#)).

Permanent Supportive Housing

The Corporation for Supportive Housing is conducting a concurrent needs assessment specifically focused on permanent supportive housing needs in the Lawrence and Douglas County community.

Housing Affordability in Douglas County

Data on the affordability of housing from [The National Low Income Housing Coalition](#) also points to the difficulty in finding affordable units in Douglas County. The 2021 fair market rent in Douglas County was \$756 for a one-bedroom and \$950 for a two-bedroom. The annual income needed to afford one and two-bedroom units would be \$30,240 and \$38,000, respectively. That equates to an hourly wage of \$15.54 for a one-bedroom and \$18.27 for a two-bedroom. The minimum wage in Douglas County is currently less than half of that at \$7.25. An individual would need to work over 100 hours (about 4 days) per week, earning minimum wage in Douglas County to afford a two-bedroom unit. Even when comparing the average renter's salary to the amount needed to afford a two-bedroom, renters in Douglas County do not make enough to affordably rent housing without working more than 40 hours (about 1 and a half days) a week. Considering that individuals experiencing homelessness or in a housing crisis are often lower-income, the rental market in Douglas County makes it exceedingly difficult to obtain and maintain affordable housing.

Additionally, there are significant gaps in the availability of affordable rental homes. The National Low Income Housing Coalition collects information on the shortage of affordable and available rental homes to the lowest income households, or a household whose income is at or below the poverty

guideline or 30% of their area median income. In Kansas, there is a shortage of 55,461 rental homes that are affordable and available for extremely low-income renters.^{vii} (see [Table 25](#))

The Lawrence-Douglas County Housing Authority

The Lawrence-Douglas County Housing Authority is a primary housing provider for low-income households in the community and is responsible for Section 8 and general housing voucher administration. There are 815 households actively using a voucher for housing, and an additional 320 households on a waitlist to receive a voucher. At the time of this report, the Housing Authority estimates the average time spent on the waitlist to receive a voucher is anywhere from 18 to 24 months (about 2 years).

When a voucher is issued, the household has 120 days (about 4 months) to find a private property owner or property manager who will accept the voucher. If they cannot find a place to lease after 120 days, the voucher will expire, and the household will have to wait 6 months to reapply. The amount of time it takes for voucher holders to lease-up varies, but 36% lease-up within 30 days, 26% within 60 days, 16% within 90 days, 14% within 120 days, and 8% over 120 days. Currently, the success rate for voucher holders, that is, the percentage of new vouchers issued that result in a lease, is 96%.

While housing authority vouchers offer clients consistent support to pay rent, there are barriers to qualifying for a voucher. The applicant must have no prior evictions and pass a background check going back five years, excluding many individuals and families who have experienced a housing crisis. If a household does manage to qualify for a voucher, there are additional challenges to overcome in finding a place to live. There is a severe lack of property owners and property managers willing to accept vouchers, making it difficult for voucher holders to lease within 120 days (about 4 months) before the voucher expires.

Revisiting the requirements through the Lawrence Douglas County Housing Authority may increase access to housing and rental vouchers/assistance. Requirements currently include an excellent residential history and lack of eviction for the individual or family member for the past three years.

Community Conversations

For this preliminary report, researchers conversed with service providers and stakeholders who provide critical services and support to individuals and families currently experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing a housing crisis. Discussions focused on understanding their assessment of the homelessness response system and making progress towards ending homelessness in Douglas County. Researchers reviewed and analyzed programmatic data from providers to learn about their service provision and derive knowledge about the nature and extent of homelessness in the area. Throughout the conversation, researchers welcomed ideas and insights on making homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring. The feedback in this section is divided into two categories:

What is going well?	Gaps and Opportunities
<p>What are the strengths of the current landscape of housing and supportive service programs? How are programs and services preventing and addressing homelessness?</p>	<p>What are the gaps in improving housing programs and supportive services? What are the opportunities to advance the goals of preventing and ending homelessness?</p>

What is going well

- ▶ There was consensus among service providers and stakeholders that there is a robust community response to emergent crises or pressing needs. The management of homelessness and the County and City's infrastructure to "put out fires" is reliable.
- ▶ The enhanced community focus on addressing the needs of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness was lifted as a bright spot. The organizations providing services are collaborative and communicative, coming together to-brainstorm solutions and help each other creatively. Additionally, service providers are resourceful and adaptive within their organizations, many using funding and other resources to develop housing units and programs to meet the needs of the specific populations they serve.
- ▶ The newly formed United Way Housing Stabilization Collaborative fosters relationship building and collaboration across agencies. The collaborative has worked hard to share information and resources to keep individuals and families housed during the COVID-19 pandemic. They have also invested deeply in relationship building with property owners and property managers in the community, with the intent of helping more families stay stably housed.

The Gaps, Opportunities, and Biggest Unmet Needs

- ▶ There is not enough affordable housing
Every stakeholder interviewed told researchers that affordable housing is the single most needed resource to prevent and end homelessness in the County. Currently, there is not enough affordable housing available to everyone in the community. Community stakeholders estimate that there are only 40 vacant properties in the entire County at any given time.
- ▶ In addition to free market-rate affordable housing, there is a need for housing to meet the needs of specific populations
While community providers expressed the sentiment that the principles of the Housing First model should drive the community model of housing, they also acknowledged that a continuum of housing and wrap-around support must be present to ensure the program's success.

One example of this is supportive housing with trauma-informed design elements for individuals who have experienced chronic homelessness, require supportive services, and/or have behavioral health concerns. The trauma-informed design supports a "wrap-around" recovery environment that includes the physical environment in addition to supportive services.^{viii} The trauma-informed design may help lower the levels of stress a person is experiencing, decrease maladaptive coping behaviors, increase feelings of safety, promote healing, and reduce the likelihood of re-traumatization. Designing the physical environment

with trauma-informed considerations can help put an individual on the path to recovery and improve mental health outcomes.^{ix}

► **Current requirements, including a history with no residential evictions or a drug-related criminal record, run counter to the Housing First Housing principles**

Notably, Douglas County currently has no permanent supportive housing units. Stakeholders see individuals fall out of housing back into homelessness because they do not have the supportive services they need to remain housed.

Transitional housing units are lacking as well. Many service providers interviewed for this assessment indicated there are not enough transitional housing units, and the COVID-19 pandemic has only been exacerbated the need.

► **Increased engagement with property owners and property managers are needed to increase available, affordable housing stock**

Researchers learned from community conversations that households who receive a voucher from the Lawrence-Douglas County Housing Authority have a challenging time leasing up, despite having a guaranteed source of income. Trouble obtaining leases is attributed to a lack of property managers and owners willing to lease households with vouchers. Community advocates have learned that property owners tend to be concerned with the “quality” of tenants attached to the voucher suggesting that they view voucher holders as problematic tenants. Community advocates continue to build relationships with property owners, listening to their concerns about leasing to individuals with vouchers and providing education and support necessary so local property owners and property managers feel comfortable and confident in accepting vouchers.

Advocates communicated a strong desire for rental properties to be owned and managed by individuals who are locally based and invested in the health and well-being of the local community. Additionally, advocates noted a worrying shift from local property owners to out-of-state, corporate property owners. Community stakeholders recognize that if local property owners cannot afford their property, housing units may end up in the hands of those with no personal stake in creating affordable, safe housing opportunities in the community. The Housing Authority is working to engage with local property owners to be a resource to keep their units safe, affordable, and the other supports necessary for local property owners to stay in business. The Housing Authority is also engaged with workgroups working to develop incentives to property owners who engage with the Housing Authority, including access to listings, networking opportunities, and financial incentives.

► **Determining how to identify and count the “invisible” populations experiencing homelessness**

There is a strong effort and community focus on identifying and meeting the needs of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. Those experiencing chronic homelessness represent some of the community's most vulnerable members. Community stakeholders indicated that many individuals and families, who, due to their housing situation, do

not meet the federal HUD definition of homelessness and therefore are not eligible for many programs and services geared towards people experiencing a housing crisis. Due to their lack of eligibility, they may not interact with the homelessness response system and are therefore not identified as needing formal response systems.

HMIS is an adequate system to identify difficult-to-house people who have frequent interactions with the homelessness response system. Still, it is not a sensitive instrument for capturing those who do not meet the HUD federal definition of homelessness, including many families. An incomplete picture of who is experiencing homelessness in Douglas County impedes our ability to use HMIS most effectively.

Limitations

This report is preliminary and relies heavily on quantitative data from data sources with their own unique limitations. The current HMIS and CES data collection systems have only been in place since the summer of 2020. This truncated timeframe reduces the ability to observe individuals experiencing homelessness across time and the patterns of homelessness in the County.

HMIS and CES provide robust data collection tools for providers participating in those systems. However, multiple and inconsistent data collection approaches are still used across providers in the community, with some providers entering information into only their non-HMIS system and others entering clients into various systems. For this reason, it is challenging to count unduplicated numbers of individuals experiencing homelessness. Concurrently, the numbers of individuals in the HMIS analysis are unduplicated but do not capture the full breadth of those experiencing homelessness in the community. For example, HMIS data only point to an unduplicated count of around 100 children experiencing homelessness in Douglas County. In comparison, data from the U.S. Department of Education lists over 200 children/students experiencing homelessness. Other children are likely being captured in non-HMIS data systems being used by providers but not producing an unduplicated count for the community leads to an incomplete picture of those experiencing homelessness.

Since this is a preliminary report, data collection remains ongoing as part of the needs assessment process. Researchers are still receiving data from community providers for inclusion in the final report. That data will provide a more comprehensive picture of addressing homelessness in Lawrence and Douglas County.

Next Steps

This report represents a preliminary data collection phase, and work is continuing toward a comprehensive needs assessment examining homelessness in the Lawrence and Douglas County community. Additional quantitative and qualitative work will inform the final needs assessment, including the community's voices of individuals experiencing homelessness. The final needs assessment will be completed in May of 2022.

- ▶ Analysis of all data will continue to be refined for a more in-depth review of the characteristics of the population and how the system of community resources and services meets the needs of those experiencing homelessness. Researchers will conduct a more in-depth look at quantitative data, including analyzing interactions of demographic characteristics. Integration of additional community program data and information from the [*MyResourceConnection*](#) database, which tracks frequent users of system services, is planned. This data will help create a complete look at individuals experiencing homelessness in the community and the patterns of chronic homelessness.
- ▶ KU-CPPR will continue to expand the qualitative data collection initiated by the community conversations that have already taken place. Stakeholders will come together to help determine which questions will best inform community action. This information will be utilized to form the critical research questions for the upcoming qualitative data collection rounds, including focus group discussions with community stakeholders, including housing advocates, renters, faith leaders, and service providers, and individuals with lived experiences of homelessness and structured interviews with individuals from key groups. Analyzing this data will allow researchers to go beyond quantitative reporting and represent the voices of those using the system, and report on its strengths and flaws.

Analysis

Preliminary Findings and Considerations

This preliminary look at the issues around homelessness in Lawrence and Douglas County using available quantitative data and initial community conversations reveal some early key findings:

★ **A more complete picture of the population experiencing homelessness is needed**

HMIS is adequate to identify those with frequent interactions with the homelessness response system. Still, it fails to capture individuals who broadly do not meet the strict HUD federal definition of homelessness, including many families. An incomplete picture of who is experiencing homelessness in Douglas County is a barrier to implementing effective homelessness interventions.

★ **Race impacts homelessness**

There are racial disparities in who experiences homelessness in Douglas County, with minority groups experiencing higher proportional representation amongst the homeless community.

★ **Gender impacts homelessness**

The gender distribution of individuals experiencing homelessness is different than the national average. In Douglas County, approximately 51% of individuals experiencing homelessness identify as female (HMIS & CES), with the national average being only around 39%.

★ **Continued and increased collaboration across providers is needed**

Consistent, universal way of providers coming together to do Coordinated Entry and the By-Name list is needed. All providers must communicate and collaborate to discuss the entirety of everyone in need."

★ **More options for affordable housing needed**

There is not enough affordable housing for everyone who needs it. Property owners do not widely accept rental assistance. There are not enough property owners willing to take vouchers and other forms of rental assistance. Increased engagement with property owners to educate about vouchers and other housing subsidies is needed to create more housing opportunities for low-income renters.

★ **Permanent supportive housing options are needed**

There is currently no permanent supportive housing in Douglas County, which is needed to address the needs of individuals who experience chronic homelessness.

Appendix

Table 1. PIT count by year

PIT DATA	2018	2019	2020
Unsheltered	48	73	75
Emergency Shelter	152	188	148
Transitional Housing	94	135	185
Total	294	396	408

Table 2. PIT count by race

Race	Census	2020 PIT
American Indian or Alaska Native	2%	9%
Asian	6%	<1%
Black or African-American	4%	17%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	<1%	1%
Multiple Races	6%	18%
White	82%	55%

Table 3. PIT count by ethnicity

Ethnicity	Census	2020 PIT
Hispanic/Latin(x)	7%	14%
Non- Hispanic/Latin(x)	93%	86%

Table 4. PIT count by gender

Gender	2020 US PIT	2020 KS PIT	2020 D.G. Co. PIT
Female	39%	37%	45%
Male	61%	63%	55%
Transgender	<1%	<1%	<1%
Gender Non-Conforming	<1%	<1%	<1%

Table 5. Children (Under 18) Experiencing Homelessness

PIT DATA	2018	2019	2020
Unsheltered	0	2	0
Emergency Shelter	32	39	33
Transitional Housing	52	62	81
Total	84	103	114

Table 6. Number of Clients Served by Agency/Provider between Oct 2020 to Sept 2021

Agency	n	%
Bert Nash CMHC	355	41.0
Catholic Charities NEK – Lawrence	131	15.1
City of Lawrence	100	11.5
Kansas Statewide Homeless Coalition	83	9.6
Lawrence Community Shelter	138	15.9
Lawrence Douglas County Housing Authority	9	1.0
Tenants to Homeowners, Inc.	50	5.8
Total	866*	100

*Counts are duplicated. These agencies served a total of 668 individuals.

Table 7. Number of Clients Served by Program Type

Program	n	%
Emergency Shelter	280	32.3
Homeless Prevention	147	17.0
PH - Permanent Supportive Housing (disability required)	9	1.0
PH - Rapid Re-Housing	217	25.1
Street Outreach	213	24.6
Total	897*	100.0

*Counts are duplicated. These programs served a total of 668 individuals.

Table 8. Client Race (comparing to Douglas County Black population 4%)

Client Race	n	%
American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous	38	5.9
Asian or Asian American	5	0.8
Black, African American, or African	124	19.2
White	437	67.8
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	3	0.5
Multi-Racial	38	5.9
Total	645	100.0

Table 9. Client Gender

Gender (N=661)	%
Female	51%
Male	48%
Transgender	<1%
A gender other than singularly female or male	<1%

Table 10. Number of Clients by Household Type

Household Type	n	%
Household with Children	187	28.0
Household without Children	60	9.0
Indeterminable Household	36	5.4
Single Adult	385	57.6
Total		100

Table 11. Client Age

Client Age	n	%
0 to 17	94	14.1
18 to 24	62	9.3
25 to 34	142	21.3
35 to 44	146	21.9
45 to 54	117	17.5
55 to 64	61	9.1
65 or above	11	1.6
Undefined	35	5.2
Total	668	100

Table 12. U.S. Department of Education Student Population

City	Unsheltered	Sheltered	Hotel-Motel	Doubled-up	Total
Baldwin City	0	0	0	42	42
Eudora	0	0	3	21	24
Lawrence	7	53	8	69	137
Total	7	53	11	132	203

Data source: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/edfacts/data-files/school-status-data.html>

Table 13. Number of Times Clients Were Homeless in The Past Three Years

Homelessness	%
One time	38%
Two times	20%
Three times	10%
Four or more times	31%

N=347

Table 14. Total Number of Months Clients Were Homeless in The Past Three Years

Number of months	Number of Clients
1 month	63
2 months	36
3 months	27
4 months	10
5 months	7
6 months	18
7 months	8
8 months	7
9 months	9
10 months	7
11 months	3
12 months	26
More than 12 months	198

Table 15. Client Health Conditions

Client Health Conditions	Percentage of Clients
HIV/AIDS	1%
Any disability	64%
Chronic health issues	26%
Disability condition	53%
Child development delays	11%
Mental health issues	60%

N=420-599

Table 16. Clients Alcohol or Drug Use

Disorder	Percentage of clients
Alcohol use disorder	6%
Drug use disorder	7%
Both alcohol and drug use disorders	15%
No alcohol or drug use disorder	70%

N=507

Table 17. Client Income Source

Income Source	Number of clients
No income	421
Child Support	7
Earned Income	107
Employment Pension	1
Other Cash Income	2
Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)	27
Spousal Support	1
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	89
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	4
Unemployment Income	8
Veteran's Disability Payment	1
Total	668

Table 18. Number of Clients Exited the Program

Reason for exiting the program	Number of clients who exited program
Rental by client	120
Staying with family or friends	29
Place not meant for habitation (e.g., a vehicle, an abandoned building, bus/train/subway station/airport, or anywhere outside)	28
Emergency shelter, including hotel or motel, paid for with emergency shelter voucher, or RHY-funded Host Home shelter	26
Hospital or Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center	23
Transitional housing, including hotel or motel	7
Jail	4
Permanent housing or owned by a client	4
Deceased	3

Table 19. Client Race in CES (comparing to Douglas County Black population 4%)

Race	n	%
American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous	28	9.1
Asian or Asian American	2	0.6
Black, African American, or African	48	15.5
Multi-Racial	18	5.8
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	0.3
White	212	68.6
Total	309	100.0

Table 20. VI-SPDAT Assessment Scores for CES Clients

VI-SPDAT Score	n	%
Minimum (0-3)	7	2.2
Moderate (4-7)	100	30.8
High (8+)	218	67.1
Total	325	100

Table 21. Number of Housed Clients by Destination

Housed clients by destination	n	%
Moved from one HOPWA funded project to HOPWA PH	1	1.6
Owned by client, no ongoing housing subsidy	1	1.6
Rental by client, no ongoing housing subsidy	4	6.6
Rental by client, with Housing Choice Voucher (tenant or project-based)	2	3.3
Rental by client, with other housing subsidies	2	3.3
Rental by client, with RRH or equivalent subsidy	51	83.6
Total	61	100

Table 22. Number of Housed Clients by Gender

Housed clients by gender	n	%
Female	32	52.5
Male	29	47.5
Total	61	100

Table 23. Number of Housed Clients by race

Housed clients by race	n	%
American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous	4	6.8
Asian or Asian American	1	1.7
Black, African American, or African	14	23.7
Multi-Racial	3	5.1
White	37	62.7
Total	59	100

Table 24. Number of Housed Clients by VI-SPDAT Score

Housed clients by VI-SPDAT score	n	%
Minimum (0-3)	1	1.6
Moderate (4-7)	22	36.1
High (8+)	38	62.3
Total	61	100

Table 25: Housing Affordability in Douglas County, KS

Conditions	1-Bedroom	2-Bedroom
Fair Market Rent	\$756	\$950
Wage Need to Rent Affordably	\$14.54	\$18.27
Minimum Wage	\$7.25	\$7.25
Hrs. Worked/Week to Meet Fair Market Rent at Minimum Wage	80	101
Rent Affordable at Minimum Wage	\$377	\$377
Average renter's wage	\$10.66	\$10.66
Hrs. Worked/Week to Meet Fair Market Rent at Average Renter Wage	55	69
Rent Affordable at Average Renter Wage	\$554	\$554

Data Source: <https://reports.nlihc.org/oor/kansas>

Table 26: Demographics by gender from Non-HMIS Program Data
Bert Nash (n=274), DCCCA (n=1,018), Family Promise (n=1,701), Willow (n= 697), Total (n=3,672)

Gender	Bert Nash #	Bert Nash %	DCCCA #	DCCCA %	Family Promise #	Family Promise %	Willow #	Willow %	Total #	Total %
Male	133	49%	322	32%	846	50%	99	15%	1400	38%
Female	140	51%	691	68%	626	37%	511	75%	1968	54%
Transgender	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	0%	3	0%
Other	0	0%	5	0%	0	0%	2	0%	7	0%
Unknown/Refused	0	0%	0	0%	229	13%	65	10%	294	8%

Table 27: Demographics by race/ethnicity from Non-HMIS Program Data
Bert Nash (n=274), DCCCA (n=1,018), Family Promise (n=1,701), Willow (n= 697), Total (n=3,672)

Race/Ethnicity	Bert Nash #	Bert Nash %	DCCCA #	DCCCA %	Family Promise #	Family Promise %	Willow #	Willow %	Total #	Total %
White	191	70%	684	67%	598	35%	333	49%	1806	49%
African American	36	13%	85	8%	239	14%	71	10%	431	12%
Native American	7	3%	56	6%	67	4%	30	4%	160	4%
Alaska Native	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	3	0%	3	0%
Asian	2	1%	0	0%	3	0%	7	1%	12	0%
Multi-racial	0	0%	0	0%	208	12%	28	4%	236	6%
Other	0	0%	69	7%	6	0%	0	0%	75	2%
Unknown/Refused	0	0%	118	12%	499	29%	207	30%	824	22%
Hispanic	6	2%	4	0%	81	5%	26	4%	117	3%

*Table 28: Demographics by age from Non-HMIS Program Data
 Bert Nash (n=274), DCCCA (n=1,018), Family Promise (n=1,701), Willow (n= 697), Total (n=3,672)*

Race	Bert Nash #	Bert Nash %	DCCCA #	DCCCA %	Family Promise #	Family Promise %	Willow #	Willow %	Total #	Total %
0-17 yrs	0	0%	0	0%	838	49%	26	4%	864	24%
18-24 yrs	0	0%	312	31%	103	6%	104	15%	519	14%
25-59 yrs	0	0%	694	68%	317	19%	535	79%	1546	42%
60 or more yrs	0	0%	12	1%	6	0%	0	0%	18	0%
Unknown	274	100%	0	0%	437	26%	0	0%	711	19%

Endnotes

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- i <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US20045-douglas-county-ks/>
 - ii <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/who-experiences-homelessness/youth/>
 - iii https://www.kshomeless.com/uploads/1/2/9/8/129825788/single_adults_v1-spdat_v3_workbook.pdf
 - iv https://www.kshomeless.com/uploads/1/2/9/8/129825788/ces_policies_procedures - v 6.0.pdf
 - v https://www.kshomeless.com/uploads/1/2/9/8/129825788/ces_policies_procedures - v 6.0.pdf
 - vi <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/housing-first/>
 - vii <https://reports.nlihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/files/reports/state/ks-2021-oor.pdf>
 - viii <http://designresourcesforhomelessness.org/about-us-1/>
 - ix <http://designresourcesforhomelessness.org/about-us-1/>