

Commission on Homelessness and Housing for Volusia Flagler Counties

Volusia/Flagler FL-504 CoC 2020 Point in Time Count (PIT)

Validation Points

PIT 2019: Sheltered: 451 Unsheltered: 453 Total: 904

Facilitating the PIT Count: The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires local Homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) agencies to follow strict guidelines when planning and conducting the PIT. Locally, the Volusia/Flagler Coalition for the Homeless (VFCCH), is the CoC agency responsible for administering the PIT. Each year VFCCH strives to get an accurate count of homeless persons using guidance and strategies that have proven successful for our and other CoCs in the past.

- The preparation, planning, mapping of areas, and training of volunteers for the 2020 PIT was intensive, directive, informative, and exceeded preparation and training done in any of the prior years.
- More than 88 volunteers participated in the PIT this year. VFCCH continues to receive widespread support and participation from local non-profits and faith-based organizations who provide housing-related services, including the Veteran Administration, Salvation Army, Halifax Urban Ministries, SMA Healthcare, Neighborhood Center of West Volusia, City of Daytona Beach Housing Authority; and numerous professionals who are leaders in the community.
- VFCCH continues to assertively engage law enforcement in the PIT process to include the planning process and (in some areas) law enforcement volunteers for the PIT as well.
- VFCCH reached out to and engaged local colleges to assist with unaccompanied youth count, which increased our ability to identify this population.
- VFCCH strives to be inclusive rather than exclusive in the PIT count, while maintaining adherence to HUD's guidelines, reaching out to jails and institutions in an effort to identify those who came into the system as literally homeless on the night of the PIT.
- VFCCH planning process extends throughout the year from initial scheduling to planning meetings that run from July to October, trainings in December and January, the actual PIT count, Debriefing in March, and Lessons learned meeting in May. All of these efforts result in a more seasoned team that can assist newcomers with the engagement of the homeless and greater accuracy with surveying.

The PIT numbers for 2020 increased by 5% over 2019, which also saw an increase after a steady downturn in the previous 5 years (2014-18):

The Point In Time Count for 2019 totaled 875, and the PIT for 2020 totaled 904, an increase of 30% over the 2018 count of 683, which was the lowest count on record for the FL-504 CoC. Despite this increase, the number reflected in this year's count is still a 61% decrease from the highest PIT total on record of 2,384 in 2012.

The Point in Time Count is a reflection of what has been implemented over the last year and captures the rate of progression of our communities in addressing the efforts to prevent and end homelessness. Keep in mind it is a snapshot or an indicator of homelessness that can be compared over time. It does not reflect an absolute accurate count of the number of homeless individuals (this is an impossible task) but gives us a good idea of the direction we are moving. Factors which may have been a contribution to an increase in homeless numbers are as follows:

The Sheltered Count went from 368 in 2019 to 459 in 2020 (30% increase). This is the second year that sheltered housing has increased significantly, which is reflected by the rise in sheltered housing in our area, as outlined below:

- The Halifax Urban Ministries transitioned its Family Shelter from the North Street Star Shelter Location to “Hope Place” in May of 2018. The opening of Hope Place accounted for an additional 59 shelter beds, which was added to the CoC’s Shelter capacity. HUM also added 20 VA Grant Per-Diem Safe Haven Transitional Housing Shelter beds at the old Star center North street facility, and the Neighborhood Center of West Volusia added 12 transitional housing beds.
- With the awaited addition of the First Step Emergency Shelter, an additional 40 sheltered beds were added to the shelter count inventory of available beds. On the night of the count, 37 of the beds were filled, accounting for the some of the increase in the sheltered count.
- The increase in shelter beds capacity from all of these sources accounted for the significant spike in the sheltered homeless count.
- Neighborhood Center Emergency Shelters for single Individuals is scheduled to open this year, and it is anticipated that the **Sheltered** Point in Time count will continue to increase significantly.
- Review of the Sheltered count over time indicates a fairly large number of sheltered beds in 2013 (653 beds), which decreased significantly over the next several years. This decrease was due to several different factors, to include:
 - HUD’s discontinuing funding to transitional housing programs and the reallocation of five transitional Housing grants to permanent housing grants accounting for sixty-five (65) beds
 - Windward Behavioral Health closed its doors in 2015, which accounted for 102 beds that were earmarked as transitional housing in HMIS.
 - HUD’s guidance became more restrictive on counting substance abuse /mental health treatment disallowing substance abuse agencies and/or halfway houses such as Avenues 12, who were previously counted as transitional housing accounting for approximately forty (40) beds.
 - Ormond Alliance Church closed its doors in 2018, accounting for twenty five (25) additional emergency shelter housing beds that were lost.
 - NOTE: Shelter beds include Emergency Shelter, Safe Havens, and Transitional Housing. The makeup of these beds are fluent and change from year to year depending on funding from all sources to include philanthropic sources, community focus, changes in the Continuum of Care strategic plan, changes in HUD’s strategic plan, new agencies that participate and agencies leaving the housing system.

The Unsheltered Count went from 507 in 2019 to 453 in 2020 (11% decrease):

- A significant percentage of the decrease in unsheltered count could be attributed to the increase in the shelter beds.
- VFCH also partnered with the Housing Authorities to implement the mainstream voucher program, which provided housing choice vouchers to non-elderly homeless/at-risk homeless families and individuals with a disability. Any increase in available housing for homeless individuals equals a decrease in homelessness. Individuals and families with the head of household who have a disability that are in sheltered housing are viewed as literally homeless and therefore would qualify for mainstream vouchers giving them an added outlet for transitioning into permanent housing.
- Flagler County decreased its total count by 56 individuals. The decrease could be attributed to Flagler County's concerted efforts to assist those in homeless encampments get linked to Outreach and Coordinated Entry to be connected to housing solutions.
- Additional assistance from law enforcement was also noted as a contributing factor to a better count and more accurate numbers in all communities.

Additional Factors:

- The preliminary 2020 Gaps Analysis Tool (provided by Lutheran Services to the North East Regional CoC's) has indicated that there was an increase in the inflow of newly homeless into the Volusia/Flagler County CoC from 2019-20 which in effect will increase our homeless numbers by about 1506 (newly homeless) individuals over the course of the year.
- Rapid Rehousing throughout the Communities:
After experiencing a substantial increase in state Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) RRH funding (for non-entitlement areas) and through the County (entitlement) ESG programs from 2016-18, the Commission on Homelessness and Housing has seen the maximum allocations for these dollars (Challenge Grant and ESG) decreased by over \$150,000 over the last two years. These funds were used to implement Rapid Rehousing. It has become increasingly more challenging to keep up with the increasing demand for Rapid Rehousing with decreasing funding assistance and be expected to maintain stable housing resulting in increased rates of homelessness and shelter admissions.
- Affordable or Attainable Housing is at the forefront of concerns for our communities. With the continuing rise of Fair Market Rents and wages for workers below the poverty level (59,783 individuals in Volusia and 9,975 in Flagler are below the poverty level) or for low wage workers (45,744 for Volusia and 8,263 for Flagler), homelessness becomes a real threat.
- Veteran Homeless Count: The veteran homeless count experienced a slight increase, from 60 to 70. The COHH has several mechanisms to assist homeless veterans and maintain our status as effectively ending homelessness for veterans. To assist with accomplishing this, it is necessary to link veterans to shelter or housing within 30 days of identification. The Salvation Army reopened the Ballough Road facility following completion of renovations from damage caused by Hurricane Michael that necessitated serving a limited number of veterans in a non-congregate shelter. The reopening

allowed the veteran program to resume serving veterans at full capacity resulting in an increase in shelter beds. Halifax Urban Ministries also saw their Veteran Safe Haven Low- demand program with 20 beds available at near capacity for 2020, which assists veterans with immediate shelter and linkage to permanent housing solutions. Finally, Changing Homelessness of Jacksonville implements the Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program in Volusia and Flagler Counties. It has been successful in assisting veterans with RRH opportunities, which in effect assists with maintaining the status of ending veteran's homelessness.

What we continue to do well:

- The number of clients served through Permanent Supportive Housing in Volusia/Flagler over the past year increased from 147 in 2018-19 to 151 in 2019-2020; our participating agencies continue to work to flow individuals and families through PSH units which allows newly identified chronically homeless families to enter subsidized housing. Additionally, the local housing authorities have begun utilizing their homeless preference and mainstream vouchers in partnership with the CoC to place homeless and chronically homeless individuals into permanent housing units provided by these vouchers.
- The number of de-duplicated individuals and families provided with prevention services as tracked in HMIS was 2,166 up significantly over the previous years total of 1,491. Prevention services may include case management, assistance with rent, utilities, emergency food, and rapid rehousing into another unit before an actual eviction.
- The number of individuals and families served through CoC and ESG RRH in Volusia/Flagler from January 23, 2019, to January 24, 2020, totaled 539 an increase of 65 persons over the 2018-19 total of 474 clients. The COHH continues to see an increasing trend in clients served through Rapid Rehousing, as evidenced by the significant increases from 340 individuals served in the 2017-18 cycle, 236 individuals served in the 2016-17 cycle, and 135 clients served in 2015-16 grant cycle. This continued increase demonstrates the growing level of expertise in facilitating Rapid Rehousing for homeless individuals and families in our area despite the downward trend in State Rapid Rehousing funding.
- Our CoC continues to improve our ability to track all homeless populations through the Coordinated Entry process. Coordinated Entry via the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) provides for a single point of entry for referrals into housing solutions or prevention services. Coordinated Entry uses a prioritization and placement process whereby the clients referred to the system are matched with available housing solutions. From October 1, 2018, to September 30, 2019, there were 3,162 clients referred to Coordinated Entry. Of these, 2,166 were referred to prevention resources, and 990 were linked to permanent housing solutions. This is an increase of 321 over the 2018-19 total of 669 persons linked to housing solutions.

Racial Disparities:

The COHH continues to be conscious of racial disparities that may exist within our systems of care, therefore we continue to analyze our CoC's racial equity on an ongoing basis. We utilized the Racial

Equity Tool created by the National Alliance to End Homelessness and applied it to the 2020 PIT numbers with HMIS data for those who entered Emergency Shelters, Transitional Housing and Safe Havens on the night of the PIT with the following results:

Enter the total number of homeless for each group / Total Homeless

White	African American	Native American	All Other Races	Total
579	272	12	41	904
64%	30%	1.3%	4.5%	

Who Gets into Crisis Housing?

Enter the total number of each group entering Emergency Shelter

White	African American	Native American	All Other Races	Total
105	111	1	6	223
47%	49.7%	.04%	.26%	

Hispanic	Not Hispanic	Total
12	211	223
5.3%	94.3%	

Enter the total number of each group entering Transitional Housing/Safe Haven

White	African American	Native American	All Other Races	Total
107	102	0	19	228
46.9%	44.8%	0%	8.3%	

Hispanic	Not Hispanic	Total
26	202	228
11.4%	88.6%	

3-Who is unsheltered?*

Enter the total number of exits to Permanent Housing from all project types by group

White	African American	Native American	All Other Races	Total
367	59	11	16	453
81%	13%	2.5%	3.5%	

Hispanic	Not Hispanic	Total
244	209	453
53.8%	46.2%	

Of particular note, we discovered that African Americans enter every project type at a higher rate than their overall percentage of homelessness. Also, we determined that clients who identify as Hispanic actually account for a higher number of unsheltered homeless that are identified during the PIT.

Conclusion: The direction we are going in clearly indicates that, as a Continuum of Care, we have made substantial progress in reducing homelessness. With the increase of emergency and transitional housing shelter services and bed capacity, there is a continued need to focus on initiating Diversion programs, increase RRH, PSH, and Prevention efforts and address the development of attainable housing for all populations which will ultimately assist the populations we serve to remain in housing. The numbers speak for themselves. RRH and PSH have proven effective nationwide, and their validity as tools to effectively end homelessness is being demonstrated locally as well.

It is becoming clear that the current state of the Coronavirus Pandemic will substantially change our housing and homeless landscape. While we intend to continue to fully implement our existing resources dedicated to the communities at large, the COHH has been planning and continues to collaborate on strategies to best combat COVID-19 and implement funding in the most meaningful ways.

In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the COHH will be implementing CARES Act ESG-CV funding in coordination with the county ESG-CV funding to address the economic and other impacts of COVID-19 on our Community. The COHH plans to pursue a strategy of implementing a "Housing Surge" Model, which is similar to the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program that the Salvation Army used to end veteran homelessness in 2015. It will take the collaboration and cooperation of all agencies to work together as one continuum of care to be successful. While we are currently awaiting the release of CARES Act ESG-CV funding, the response from providers and stakeholders in addressing this crisis points towards absolute success for implementing this funding and meeting the needs of those who are impacted by this crisis.

A good percentage of the decrease in the unsheltered count was attributed to the increase in the shelter beds. With the addition of the First Step Emergency Shelter, an additional 40 sheltered beds were added to the shelter count inventory of available beds. On the night of the count, 37 of the beds were filled, accounting for the increase in the sheltered count.

More than 85 volunteers participated in the PIT this year. VFCCH continues to receive extensive support and participation from local non-profits and faith-based organizations who provide housing-related services, including the Veteran Administration, Salvation Army, Halifax Urban Ministries, SMA Healthcare, Neighborhood Center of West Volusia, City of Daytona Beach Housing Authority; and numerous professionals who are leaders in the community.

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