

Greater Lansing Area Homelessness



ANNUAL REPORT 2017



Andy Schor, Mayor



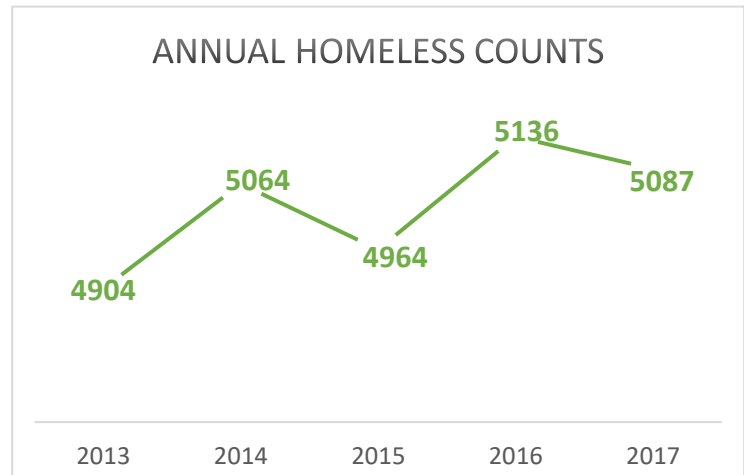
Our mission *is to serve the most vulnerable in our community with dignity and respect, valuing self-determination and choice while prioritizing services for those most in need.*

Homelessness in Ingham County

5,087 people experienced literal homelessness during 2017 in Ingham County, a decrease of 1% compared to last year. However,

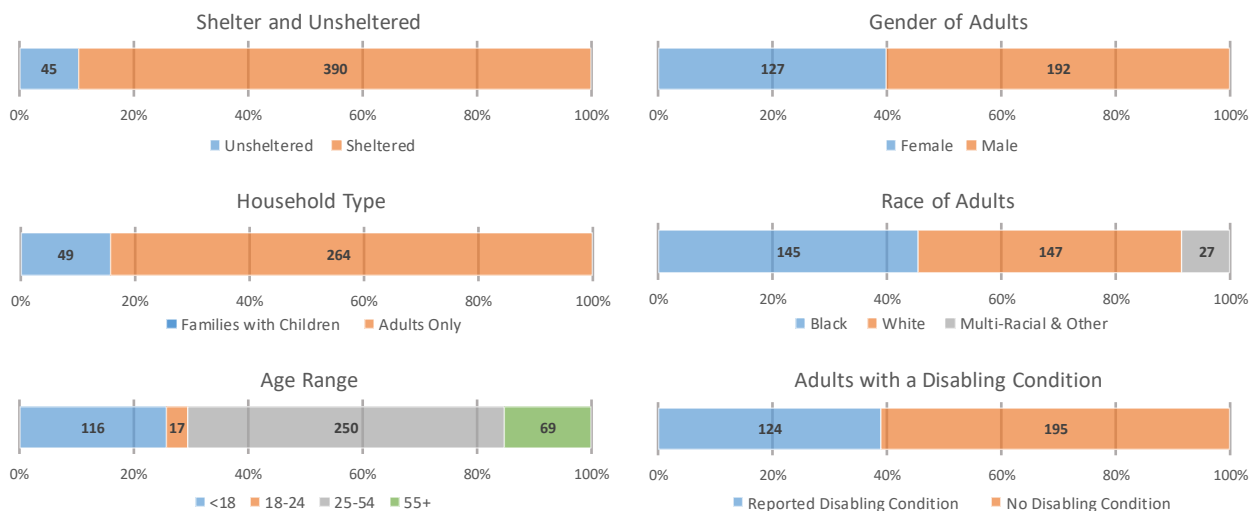
long-term trends show that, despite improved economic conditions locally and statewide, more people are in need of homeless assistance than five years ago. It can be difficult to recognize homelessness in a community because it does not affect any particular type of person or family. Our local data, collected through the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), demonstrates year after year that all types

of people, from young single mothers to unaccompanied youth to senior citizens, may experience homelessness and housing crises in Ingham County.

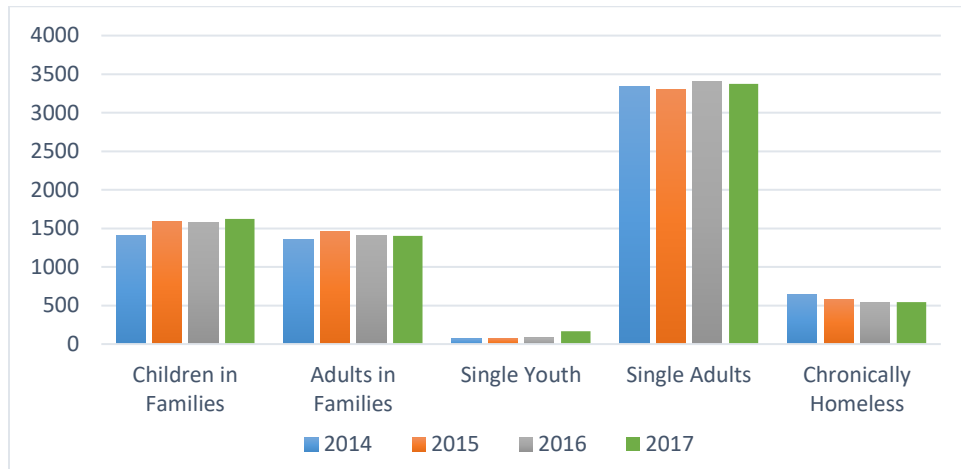


A Day in Ingham County

Every January human service agencies from across Ingham County come together for a “Point in Time”, or PIT, count to identify everyone who is homeless in the county. The PIT counts people staying in local shelters or on the streets on a single night. **Based on the results, on any given night one can expect that 435 people will be homeless in Ingham County. This represents a 7.6% decline from the 2016 count.** The count found 49 families, 297 individuals, and 6 minors. The vast majority of people were indoors at a shelter, warming center or in transitional housing. However, each year outreach teams find some people staying outside or in public places despite all our efforts to provide a safe and warm place for everyone in need.



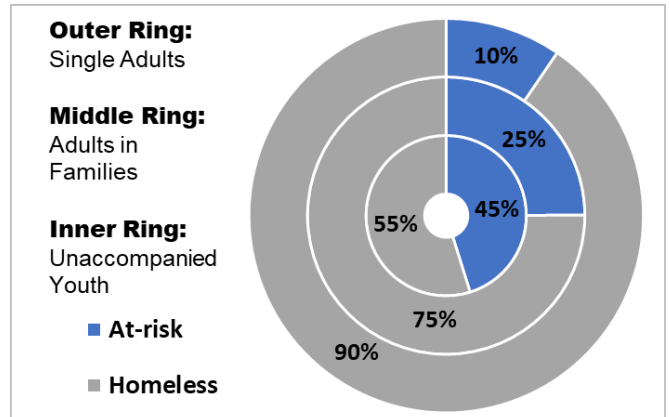
People Experiencing Homelessness or at Imminent Risk by Year 2014 - 2017



	Children in Families	Adults in Families	Unaccompanied Youth	Single Adults	Chronically Homeless	Total Literally Homeless
2014	1,410	1,355	72	3,334	640	5,064
2015	1,584	1,462	76	3,305	581	4,964
2016	1,577	1,413	81	3,410	535	5,136
2017	1,622	1,404	165	3,373	545	5,087

* A person may be counted in more than one grouping during a year so the sum of the categories is greater than the total unduplicated count of persons served.

- Surprisingly, just 55% of the 5,087 people who sought homeless assistance spent a night in a local shelter or transitional housing program that uses the Michigan Statewide Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Federal regulations prohibit domestic violence shelters from using the HMIS, so people utilizing those services are not included. In addition, the Homeless Angels, which offers about 70 beds nightly, also does not use HMIS, but the people they serve are connected to the Coordinated Entry System (CES) and are incorporated into the count. Other people experiencing homelessness, who did not spend time in a shelter, may have been assisted by a street outreach team or connected with the CES for housing assistance.
- Most people experiencing homelessness only interact with the shelter system, the CES and mainstream agencies such as MDHHS.
- The number of people seeking assistance who were at “imminent risk” of homelessness rose by 10% over 2016. A person is considered to be at “imminent risk” of homelessness if they are within 14 days of losing their housing and do not have resources to secure new housing. The largest increase in this category was among unaccompanied youth. The table above shows the number of single youth more than doubling from 81 last year to 165 in 2017, but that growth was primarily at-risk youth. This is an expected result of intensive youth outreach and reunification efforts aimed at preventing youth from

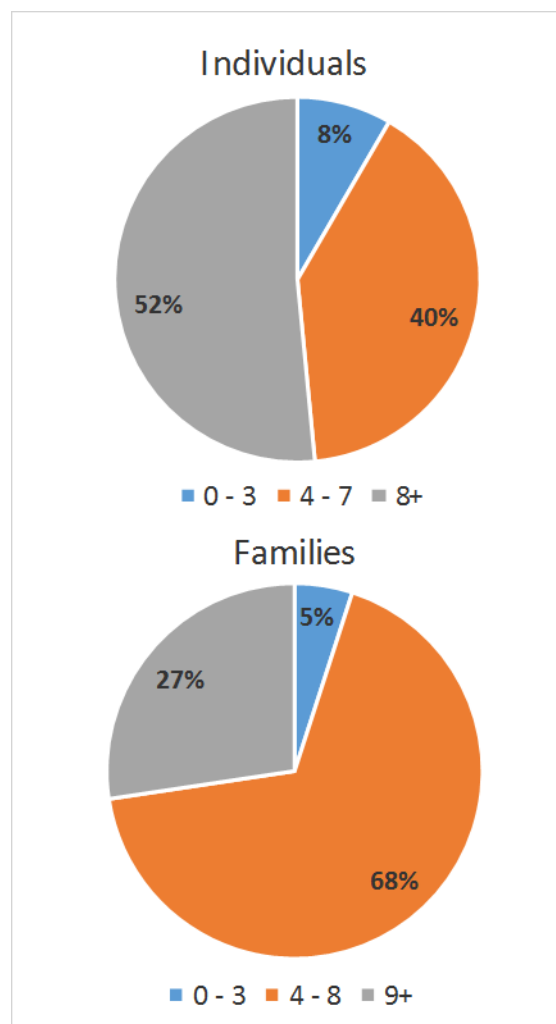


becoming homeless. The number of at-risk youth jumped to 75 in 2017, a four-fold increase from 2016.

- One of the fastest growing sub-populations of people experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk are senior citizens. As the baby-boomer generation continues to age, more older adults, often on fixed incomes, are facing housing crises. **Since 2012 the number of seniors, people aged 55 or older, seeking assistance for homelessness increased 55%. This represents an increase of nearly 300 seniors.** The increase is even more dramatic for older seniors. In the same period, the number of seniors 65 or older increased by 116%, from 70 in 2012 to 151 in 2017. Given their fixed incomes, many visit local service agencies for free meals and medical care in order to make ends meet. Seniors often have health concerns, with 40% reporting a chronic health condition, which may be exacerbated by housing instability. For many, independent living may not be an option without affordable or subsidized housing.
- Homelessness and poverty disproportionately affect African Americans in the County. **According to Census data, African Americans make up 15% of the Ingham County population, but are 52% of the people experiencing homelessness.** This is not unique to Ingham County. The State of Michigan's 2016 report on homelessness showed similar overrepresentation of African Americans in the homeless population compared to the state population. Whites represent 45% and other races account for the remaining 3% of homeless persons.
- Housing instability also disproportionately impacts households where a member has a disabling condition. Almost half (48%) of homeless single adults and 30% of adults in families reported a disabling condition in 2017. Mental health problems are the most commonly reported disability type. Mental health care access plays a critical role in reducing and preventing homelessness.

Prioritizing Those with the Most Urgent Needs

The VI-SPDAT, short for the Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assessment Tool, is a screening tool used across Michigan to help resource specialists assess the needs and severity of a household's housing crisis. Needs are evaluated on four domains: History of Housing and Homelessness, Risks, Socialization and Daily Functions, and Wellness. There are additional questions for families with minor children to better assess their needs. The higher the score on the screening, the greater the vulnerability. This tool suggests that the household may have needs that are more urgent, such as health and safety risks, and they likely need intensive services as well as rental assistance to achieve housing stability. Households that score high on the initial screening receive a more thorough assessment to gain a deeper understanding of specific challenges and to serve as a guide for targeted referrals.



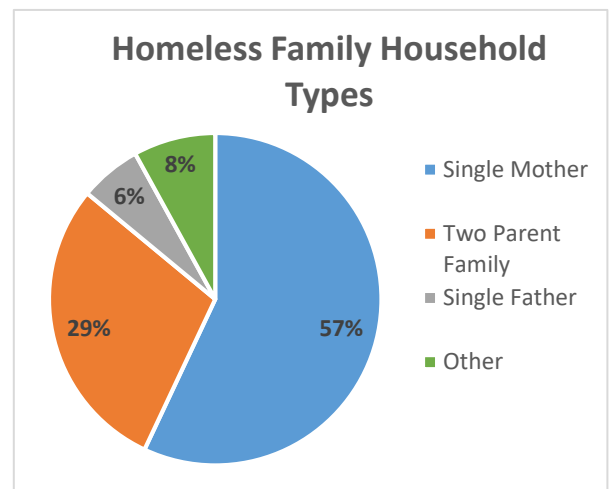
The VI-SPDAT assessment scores reveal that more single individuals have greater risks and service needs than families with children. More than half of the single individuals scored 8 or higher, which is on the upper end of the score range. Scores of 8 or more suggest a housing subsidy paired with supportive services as the best fit, but a more thorough evaluation is done before referring people. The larger proportion of individuals scoring 8 or higher on the assessment is indicative of other characteristics observed more frequently in individuals than in families with children, such as higher occurrences of disabling conditions and health concerns, particularly mental health problems, substance use, and longer histories of housing instability.

Most families score in the middle range, indicating a need for financial support to regain housing, but they may not require long-term supportive services or case management.

Families Facing Homelessness

A typical family experiencing homelessness would be hard to pick out of a crowd. They are often a single mother in her early 30's with two children. She has a high school diploma and some college, but is under-employed. However, even families with two parents are not immune to housing crises. Nearly 30% of families, more than 400, were two parent households. Most families had income, but were making less than \$1,200 per month on average; well below the poverty level, even for a family of two.

- Families of adults and minor children made up about half of all people (49%) who sought homeless assistance. **There were 11 fewer families seeking assistance than in 2016.** 1,215 families in total received some sort of assistance.
- 75% of families were literally homeless and 25% were “at imminent risk” of homelessness, seeking help to avoid an eviction.
- Most families (57%) were headed by a single female parent. 70% of adults in families were females and 53% were black or African American.
- Nearly 1 in 5 were young parents between the ages of 18 and 24.
- 17% of adults reported being a survivor of domestic violence.



Single Adults

- 3,373 adults without minor children were homeless or at risk of homelessness in 2017, a modest decline of 1% from 2016. They made up 55% of the people seeking assistance from Ingham County agencies last year.
- 91% were literally homeless and 9% were at risk of becoming homeless.
- Individuals are predominantly males (65%), have an average age of 43, and are more likely to be white (51%).
- Nearly half (48%) have a long-term disabling condition such as a mental illness or physical impairment. Access to health services, particularly mental health care, is critical for people working to regain stable housing.
- 1 in 8 males were US military veterans.

- More than half (52%) had experienced a prior episode of homelessness. Many have experienced chronic homelessness; 23% report being homeless on four or more separate occasions in the last three years.
- 36% had a high school diploma and another 33% have had at least some college or technical schooling/training. However, just 14% reported having a steady job at the time of their discharge from an assistance program and for many, income is seasonal or sporadic.
- **The number of seniors experiencing homelessness increased by 6% over last year. Individuals aged 55 or older make up nearly a quarter (24%) of all individuals that experienced or were at risk of homelessness.** More than one in four males and one in six females were aged 55 or older.

Homeless Veterans

Helping every veteran find a home is a priority in Ingham County and we have celebrated many successes moving veterans to housing. A workgroup dedicated to addressing the needs of veterans experiencing homelessness has been meeting since late 2015 and has worked successfully to improve coordination of services and resources dedicated to assisting veterans. Yet we continue to see new veterans coming into Ingham County for veteran-specific transitional housing opportunities unique to the region. In fact, 42% of veterans who stayed in this transitional housing program were from outside Ingham County.

256 veterans experienced homelessness in Ingham County, a 1% decrease from 2016 (259). Veterans considered chronically homeless dropped by 28% from last year, from 54 to 39. Conversely, the number of veterans at imminent risk seeking help to prevent homelessness almost doubled, increasing to 56 from 30 last year.

- 90% of homeless veterans were individuals and over half (55%) had a disability that impeded their ability to maintain stable housing.
- 94% of veterans were male and had an average age of 52. More than half (52%) were aged 55 or older.
- 17% sought prevention assistance and 83% were literally homeless.
- 107 veterans were either housed or assisted to prevent their homelessness in 2017, many with the assistance of veteran-specific housing resources.

Where Our Clients Come From

The majority of people who were in need of homeless assistance appear to be from Lansing, but homelessness affects households throughout Ingham County. People reporting their last permanent address as a Lansing zip code made up 79% of the adults who were literally homeless. Overall, people from Ingham County made up 82% of the total while 5% were from Clinton or Eaton County, 8% were from elsewhere in Michigan, and 5% were from outside of Michigan. While local agencies target their services to Ingham County residents, it is acknowledged that people often move to escape abuse or other harmful situations. People in need of emergency services are not turned away.

Top 10 Cities of the Prior Residence of Homeless Adults Served in 2017		
City	Person Count	% of Total
Lansing	2,906	78.9%
Holt	59	1.6%
East Lansing	51	1.4%
Detroit	31	0.8%
Mason	28	0.8%
Jackson	26	0.7%
Okemos	25	0.7%
Flint	20	0.5%
Grand Rapids	20	0.5%
Charlotte	18	0.5%
Subtotal	3,184	86.5%
All Other Cities	499	13.5%
Total	3,683	

- In 2017, 490 Michigander households came from outside Ingham County, a 4% increase. Another 178 households came from outside Michigan, a 30% increase.
- In some cases, the zip code of a Lansing-based shelter gets used as a person’s “last residence”, which may overstate the number “from Lansing”.

2017 Achievements

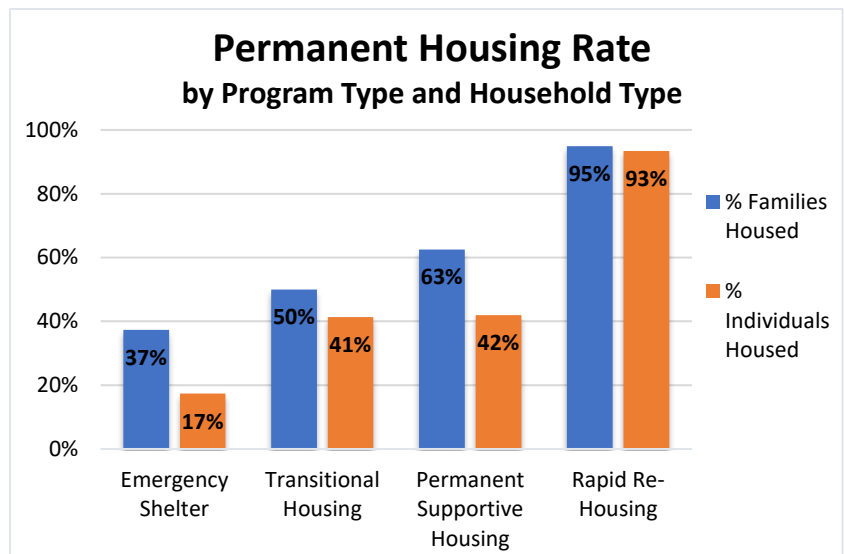
The City of Lansing HRCS Department, on behalf of the GLHRN, routinely reviews progress and outcomes of CoC agencies’ programs. This data-driven endeavor of reviewing and sharing agencies’ performance helps drive success and collaboration for the benefit of the people served. Local agencies are committed to providing effective, high quality assistance to those in need.

Engagement and Stable Housing

Safe and decent housing is a basic need and *the* top priority of our housing assistance programs. Knowing where a client goes after they leave a program is crucial in evaluating effectiveness. This is known as the “engagement rate”. For longer-term, more intensive programs the rate was 97% while shelters had a 79% rate. The target rate, excluding shelters, is 80%. Shelters may have a lower engagement rate due to the crisis-oriented nature of their services.

A related measure is the permanent housing rate that looks at how many clients leave a program for “permanent” housing. Subsidized and unsubsidized rentals and moving in with family or friends are the most common housing destinations.

- There is a higher rate of exits to housing for families, particularly from emergency shelters, in part because there are more housing resources dedicated to families with children, such as family Rapid Re-Housing programs and mainstream resources for families with children.
- Almost one in three people who left a shelter went to stay temporarily with family or friends. These situations may lead to permanent housing without additional assistance. However, temporary stays are not counted as permanent housing. For this reason, positive housing outcomes from shelters are believed to be under-reported. Additionally, people will leave shelters for other living arrangements without notifying agency staff of their plans. This is less common for other program types where staff have the opportunity to establish longer-term relationships with clients.
- 11.5% of people who stayed in shelters left for permanent housing within 30 days or less; up from 8.5% last year.
- The vast majority of transitional housing in Ingham County specifically serves unique populations, such as veterans, youth, and people in recovery.



- Permanent Supportive Housing programs serve the people with the longest histories of homelessness, long-term disabling conditions, and the greatest service needs. For some people, it may be difficult to transition from homelessness to staying in one place or living in an apartment on their own, so housing placements may not always be successful.

Rapid Re-Housing

- More than 250 households were served in Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) programs that provide short- and medium-term rental assistance and case management, intended to move individuals and families back into affordable housing as quickly as possible.
- Rapid re-housing is a promising program model, as evidenced by the high rate of success of participants moving into and remaining permanently housed. 94% of RRH participants remained in permanent housing when the program assistance ended. This is a 3% improvement over 2016, and 10% better than 2015.
- RRH programs help cover costs of application fees, deposits, rent and utilities, as needed, while the participants work to regain financial stability. In some cases, people only need a little help to pay a deposit or other up-front costs. Covering these upfront costs reduces the length of time a family is homeless and is more cost-effective than sheltering families for extended periods.
- Much of the RRH assistance is earmarked for families because of limited shelter space and the desire to minimize the disruption a shelter stay can have on children, particularly those in school. There are also veteran-specific RRH assistance programs in the County through VA funding.

Permanent Supportive Housing

- Permanent Supportive Housing, or PSH, combines a long-term housing subsidy with case management and supportive services for people with permanent disabling conditions and severe barriers to maintaining housing. Individuals and families with a history of chronic homelessness are prioritized for the majority of PSH units in the community.
- Similar to Housing Choice Vouchers, PSH units and the intensive, long-term assistance is limited and there is often a waitlist for admission. There are about 210 PSH units in Ingham County.
- Case managers with PSH programs work with participants to connect them with health care, substance use treatment, and benefits applications. Participants also receive help with essential life skills, such as budgeting, housekeeping and landlord-tenant relations, that support a stable housing environment and end the cycle of homelessness.
- 83 households moved into PSH units in 2017, an increase of 12 from last year. New funding allocations increased the number of PSH units in late 2016, which helped to house more people.
- 39 households discharged from PSH programs. Of those, 18 households successfully transitioned into other permanent housing, most often subsidized housing without supportive services.
- Regretfully, seven PSH residents passed away during the year. Fortunately, local housing agencies were able to get these vulnerable people off the streets or out of shelters and into supportive, independent housing before their passing.

Income and Employment

Helping people obtain stable income is critical to reducing homelessness. It is essential clients are assisted in locating jobs, and securing cash and non-cash benefits. This has been a positive trend for local agencies in the past few years.

- In 2017, 44% of adults who left a homeless assistance program, including shelters, had cash income. 14% of adults increased their income. However, on average, those who had income were making less than \$900 per month – that’s less than \$11,000 a year.
- Many people who experience homelessness are “working poor” who are not earning a living wage. About half (46%) of the people discharged with cash income were employed. Many others are not able to work and receive only SSI/SSDI income, which is indicative of the high incidence of long-term disabilities among people experiencing homelessness.
- Often housing subsidies are necessary for housing to be affordable for people with fixed incomes. People with disabilities or low incomes are eligible for public housing or Housing Choice Vouchers where rent is charged based on their income level, although these resources are limited.
- PSH targets people with long-term disabilities and therefore a large number of participants had SSI/SSDI income. In 2017, monthly SSI benefits were just \$735. Others may have pending cases or state disability benefits.
- Transitional Housing and Rapid Re-housing – both medium-term programs, see the most success.
 - Most adults (62%) leave temporary assistance programs with income that will permit them to maintain housing once the program assistance ends. Others may receive vouchers to make ongoing housing affordable.
 - Overall, 31% of all adults served were employed when they left a program. This rate jumps to 53% for adults in families with children. Single adults, often with disabling conditions, are more likely to qualify for SSI benefits.
 - 22% of adults increased their income while receiving housing assistance. The average monthly income for an individual was \$1,030 and \$1,602 for adults in families.
 - Incomes are often supplemented with mainstream benefits, such as food assistance and Medicaid. Local food pantries, community donations and other safety-net resources help families make ends meet.

Recidivism Rate – Returns to Homelessness

- Recidivism is when a household moves into permanent housing, but then has another housing crisis, causing them to become homeless again. This measure is used to identify which interventions make a lasting impact on ending homelessness and to identify which cases may need additional support.
- Recidivism rates vary considerably for the different program types, with returns to homelessness being the highest for people who stay at shelters and do not also receive financial assistance. Longer-term transitional housing has the lowest recidivism rate, which is very promising considering that TH is primarily for veterans, youth, and people in recovery. PSH and RRH fall in the middle. This is partially because PSH units are prioritized for people who are chronically homeless and have the highest barriers to maintaining housing. For RRH, many people are living paycheck-to-paycheck and unplanned events, such as an illness or a car repair, may lead to a housing crisis. It is important for assistance to be flexible to meet the unique needs of each household on a case-by-case basis.

Looking Forward

With an estimated 20% of the Ingham County population living below the federal poverty level, and 26% in the City of Lansing, there is an urgent need for adequate, affordable housing. The City of Lansing Human Relations and Community Services Department, the Greater Lansing Homeless Resolution Network, and our community partners strive to serve those experiencing homelessness with compassion, respect, and efficiency. Yet the need for help outweighs the resources. We work to continue making progress and measurable impacts on ending homelessness for as many households as possible. In order to continue the many positive trends, agencies are targeting resources, advocating for more affordable housing, and seeking additional grant funding. New partnerships are being fostered to broaden the array of services available and to identify ways to improve access to assistance before a housing crisis turns into homelessness. Concerted efforts are being made to end chronic homelessness and veteran homelessness by implementing best practices and proven strategies. Reducing homelessness in our community is an attainable goal, reachable by continued cooperation and strengthening relationships between agencies and those we serve, the most vulnerable in our community.



Andy Schor, Mayor

Prepared by the City of Lansing Human Relations and Community Services Department

With Information provided by agencies of the Greater Lansing Homeless Resolution Network

www.glhrrn.org