

1st Annual Report

HSBC

Homeless Solutions
for Boulder County



March 2019



March 1st, 2019

On behalf of the Homeless Solutions for Boulder County (HSBC) Executive and Management Boards, I am pleased to share the following report describing HSBC efforts from the 2018 project year. This is a follow-up to the Six Month Status Report dated May, 2018¹ which summarized early implementation efforts. As way of introduction, the current report provides general background on research related to homelessness and an overview of the HSBC system response structure. This introductory information is followed by year-end evaluation findings that focus on individuals served and progress made to secure additional housing-related and service resources. In concluding the report, we describe some of the challenges we are likely to encounter moving forward and provide an overview of future work.

Core to the HSBC approach is the recognition that homelessness is fundamentally an affordable housing issue. In Boulder County, for example, the costs of housing have increased dramatically over the past ten years and currently more than half of all renters spend 30% or more of their income on housing. To address the needs of individuals currently experiencing homelessness, HSBC relies on a Housing First model. This approach prioritizes access to housing as the first step in addressing homelessness and has been shown to result in greater long-term housing stability for individuals experiencing homelessness when compared to other approaches.

The first full year of HSBC implementation saw many notable successes. For example, a total of 383 individuals received assistance and transitioned out of the shelter system, including 188 who moved into Permanent Supportive Housing. Additionally, 66 new rental assistance vouchers became available to make housing more affordable for people involved with HSBC, and 82 housing units are being added to the affordable housing stock. HSBC staff also led a number of collaborative grant writing efforts with one leading to a \$2.4 Million award for Permanent Supportive Housing services from the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (Department of Health and Human Services).

We are encouraged by some of the early successes described in this report, but also recognize that there is much hard work left to do. HSBC has benefited from the dedicated work of many government officials and non-profit agencies, and we look forward to deepening our collaborative efforts in the coming year. We are blessed to live in a community that prioritizes long-term strategic efforts and related investment to tackle difficult issues, and welcome others in the Boulder community to join us in our commitment to ending homelessness.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robin Bohannon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robin" and last name "Bohannon" clearly distinguishable.

Robin Bohannon
HSBC Executive Board Chair
Director of the Boulder County Community Services Department

¹ The Six Month Status Report can be accessed at the following URL:
<https://www.bouldercounty.org/government/boards-and-commissions/boulder-county-regional-homeless-systems-management/>

HOMELESSNESS

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

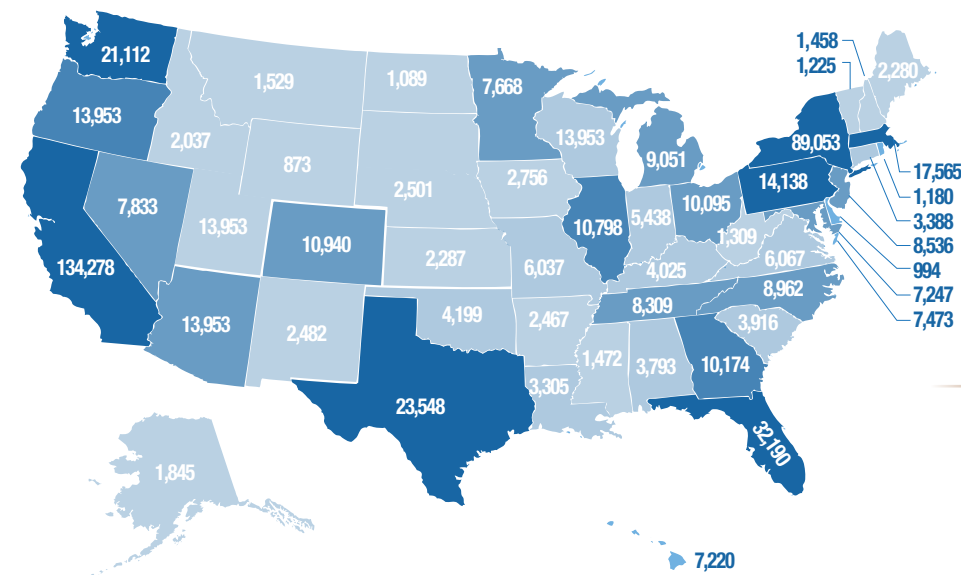
Homelessness is a national housing crisis, affecting every state in America. Across the country, 553,742 people slept in shelters, in transitional housing programs, in their cars or on the street on

a single night in January 2017. About 2%, or 10,940, were counted in Colorado that year. While homelessness is a widespread challenge, because it is a housing issue it is solvable.

HOMELESSNESS IS RARE.

Individuals and families who experienced homelessness in Colorado comprise less than 1% of the State's population. In 2017, 600 of these individuals and families were counted in Boulder County. Because the size of the challenge is small, it is possible to scale resources to address this need.

Total People Experiencing Homelessness on a Given Night in 2017



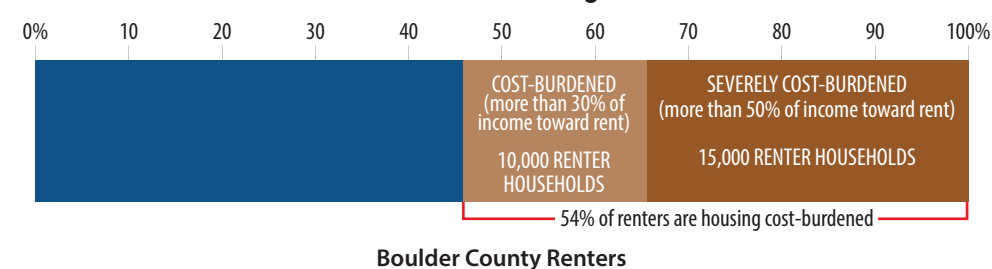
Every year during the Point in Time survey, the number of people experiencing homelessness in the U.S. are counted. In 2017, 600 were counted in Boulder County, almost 11,000 across Colorado, and more than half a million nationwide.

Source: 2017 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress.

THE CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS ARE WELL UNDERSTOOD.

Researchers have been studying homelessness since the 1980s. The evidence is clear: homelessness is fundamentally a housing affordability issue - communities with more affordable housing have less homelessness. Though other factors like physical and behavioral health issues can make someone more vulnerable, homelessness would not be at its current level if more homes were available at prices community members could afford.

Lack of Access to Diverse & Affordable Housing



About 52,000 Boulder County residents live in households where more than half their income goes to housing (rent or mortgage). This is nearly one out of every six people in our county.

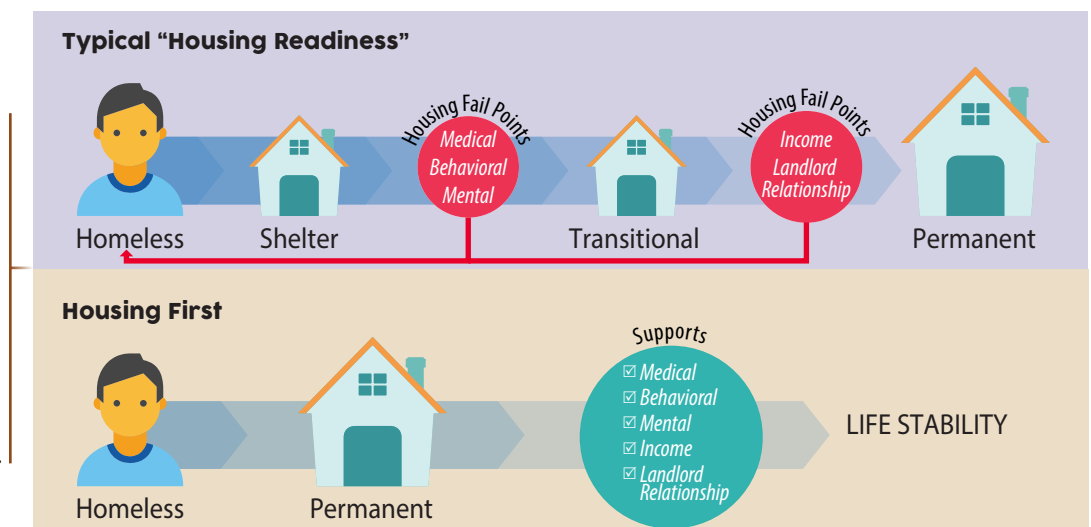
HOMELESSNESS

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

WE HAVE EVIDENCE-BASED SOLUTIONS.

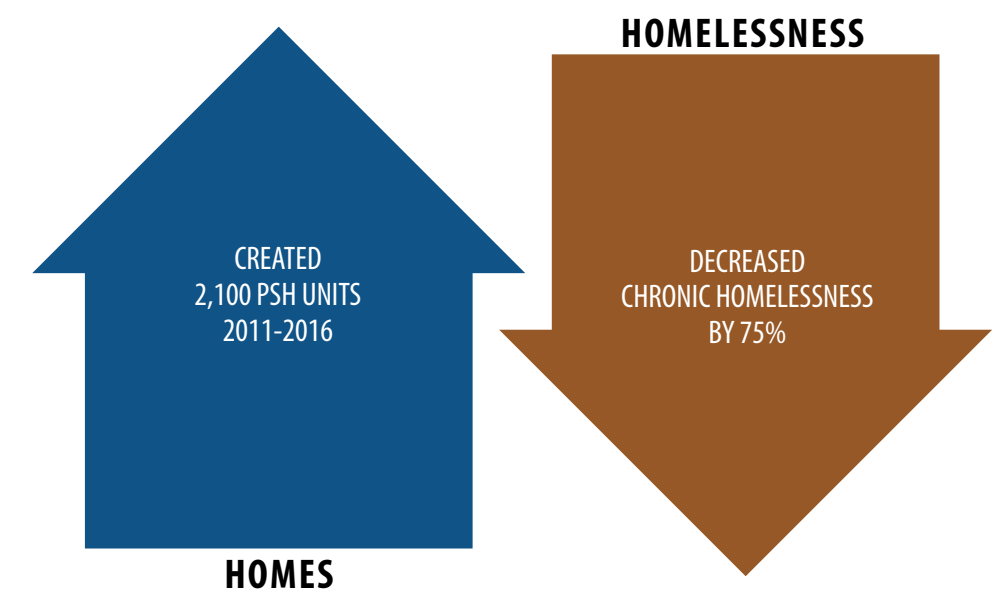
A home with appropriate supports is the solution to homelessness. Research shows that taking a Housing First approach - prioritizing access to permanent housing as quickly as possible and providing supports that help to maintain housing - works! Providing stable housing as the first strategy creates a foundation from which individuals and families can more successfully improve their wellbeing in other areas, like getting a job, addressing health needs, or reconnecting with family.

In the typical housing readiness model, people experiencing homelessness progress through programs until they are ready to maintain housing on their own. In these programs, they may face numerous obstacles that prevent them from obtaining housing. The Housing First approach focuses on helping individuals obtain housing first, removing these fail points.



COMMUNITIES MAKING HOUSING INVESTMENTS ARE HAVING SUCCESS.

Other communities are showing that investments in housing reduce homelessness. Between 2011 and 2016, Houston created 2,100 new Permanent Supportive Housing opportunities for people experiencing chronic homelessness. Over that five-year period, the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness fell by 75 percent.



SOLUTIONS FOR BOULDER COUNTY

WHAT ARE WE DOING LOCALLY?

HOW DOES HSBC WORK? HOW DOES A CLIENT RECEIVE ASSISTANCE?

HSBC provides clients with access to one of two service paths:
Navigation Services, or **Housing-focused Shelter (HFS)**. Each of these paths is accessed through an initial **Coordinated Entry** assessment.

Coordinated Entry provides single-entry access into the homeless services system. Individuals go to locations in Boulder or Longmont for an assessment that determines their most appropriate service path – Navigation or HFS. Coordinated Entry is also designed to support prioritization of resources to those with ties to Boulder County and for those with greatest need. Collected data are used to improve system performance and identify resource gaps.

Person
Experiences
Housing Crisis

COORDINATED
ENTRY

HFS is provided to individuals with strong links to Boulder County who need more intensive supports to obtain and maintain housing. Eligible individuals can reserve a bed and stay at the Boulder Shelter for the Homeless (BSH) until they are housed. Services provided by BSH staff include housing-focused case management and wrap-around supports. BSH provides: nighttime shelter all year long; day shelter services; meals, showers, and storage lockers; and late morning and early evening hours for clients to meet with onsite case managers and community service providers.

"Since getting off the street, being housed, and with your help, my physical AND mental health have greatly improved. Thank you."
Boulder Shelter for the Homeless Client, Currently Housed

"I succumbed to knowing I can't do this alone. I feel supported and cared for, which helped me be successful."
Bridge House Path to Home Client, Currently Housed

"When I found myself homeless, alone, hungry and cold, the people at HOPE gave me what I needed to stand up, chin up. They will give you a hand up, not a handout, which I find so important towards your self-esteem."
HOPE Client

SOLUTIONS FOR BOULDER COUNTY

WHAT ARE WE DOING LOCALLY?

Local stakeholders are working collaboratively to implement proven strategies through the new HSBC system. Launched in October 2017, HSBC is a Housing First approach that provides housing solutions and supports needed to reduce homelessness. HSBC is a partnership between Boulder County, the cities

of Boulder and Longmont, nonprofit partners and other stakeholders to provide adults experiencing homelessness with targeted, responsive services that support quick, stable housing solutions.

Navigation Services provide short-term resolution assistance to lower need individuals who have fewer barriers to obtaining and maintaining permanent housing, or for those who recently arrived in Boulder County. Services can include case management, mediation, financial assistance, legal assistance, reunification assistance, and linkage to mainstream supports. Short-term shelter (approximately 7 – 14 days) and help with basic needs are also provided if needed.

Navigation Services

ARRIVAL
AT NAVIGATION
SERVICES

Bridge House Path to Home in Boulder
OUR Center &
HOPE in Longmont

COMPLETES INTAKE PROCESS WITH CASE
MANAGER TO CREATE CLIENT-FOCUSED
HOUSING PLAN WHICH INCLUDES:

Temporary Shelter if needed. This is
year-round in Boulder, winter only in
Longmont

Regular Case Management Meetings to
make progress on their Housing Plan

Services including Meals, Showers, Laundry,
Transportation related to their Case Management Plan

LEADING TO
HOUSING
SOLUTIONS WHICH
CAN INCLUDE

Self Resolution

Family Reunification

Income and Housing
Resolution

CHOICE OF SHELTER ON A NIGHT-BY-NIGHT BASIS
OR RESERVE A BED AND STAY EVERY NIGHT

Short Intake Process

Housing-focused Case
Management (voluntary)

Services including Meals, Showers, Laundry,
Mail, Storage, Transportation related to Case
Plan, and Co-located Services for physical
and behavior health support and veterans
services

LEADING TO
HOUSING
SOLUTIONS WHICH
CAN INCLUDE

Rapid Rehousing

Transitional Housing

Permanent Supportive
Housing

Housing-focused Shelter

HSBC ASSESSED 2,448
PEOPLE FOR SERVICES
DURING ITS FIRST YEAR

75% sought services in Boulder

25% sought services in Longmont

ON AVERAGE, HSBC CLIENTS
WERE 42 YEARS OLD WHEN
THEY SOUGHT COORDINATED
ENTRY SERVICES

70% of those seeking HSBC
services are male

29% are female

Less than 1 percent were transgender or
gender nonconforming



Meals are one of the
Navigation services available,
including at HOPE in
Longmont.

64% OF HSBC CLIENTS ARE WHITE

Because the population of Boulder County as a whole is 89 percent white, people of color
are overrepresented among those seeking homeless services. 12 percent of HSBC clients
identified as Hispanic or Latino.

MANY HSBC CLIENTS
ARE BOULDER COUNTY
COMMUNITY MEMBERS

41% have been in the County for
two years or longer

25% report having family in the
County

57% of Longmont clients report
being in Boulder County two
years or longer

48% of Longmont clients report
having family in the County

FOR MOST,
SHELTER ALONE
WILL NOT BE
SUFFICIENT TO
RESOLVE THEIR
HOMELESSNESS.

The vast majority of HSBC clients seek services after already becoming homeless.
Many report experiencing homelessness for extensive periods and have a disabling
condition, and will likely need assistance exiting the shelter system. Research shows
that those who spend less time experiencing homelessness are more successful
staying housed. Given this, investments that help HSBC clients exit shelter as quickly as
possible are critical to success.

86% came for a Coordinated Entry screening after having spent the previous night
sleeping on the streets or in a homeless shelter

70% reported having a disabling condition (e.g., physical health, mental health,
substance use issue, etc.)

55% reported experiencing homelessness for more than 12 months out of the past
three years

Housing solves homelessness.



Lee Hill is a two-story
apartment building in Boulder
with 31 fully-furnished
one bedroom Permanent
Supportive Housing units.



HOUSING SOLUTIONS

A FOCUS ON HOUSING SOLUTIONS RESULTS IN NOTABLE SUCCESSES!

OVERALL, **383** PEOPLE, **15%** OF ALL CLIENTS ASSESSED, RECEIVED ASSISTANCE AND TRANSITIONED OUT OF THE SHELTER SYSTEM

188 individuals got into their own housing

145 people who reunified with existing social supports

50 entered other programs (Ready to Work, the Inn Between of Longmont, and residential substance use treatment)



Permanent Supportive Housing provides a home as well as the services that can help to keep someone housed.

HOUSING SOLUTIONS

A FOCUS ON HOUSING SOLUTIONS RESULTS IN NOTABLE SUCCESSES!

HOUSING RESOURCE PROGRESS TO DATE

NEW RENT ASSISTANCE RESOURCES

- 28** new Housing Choice Vouchers for people under age 62 who have a disabling condition (Boulder Housing Partners) with a preference given to individuals experiencing homelessness or institutionalization
- 20** existing units being converted to Permanent Supportive Housing via state funding (Boulder County, Boulder Shelter for the Homeless, the Inn Between of Longmont, and Mental Health Partners)
- 11** new Permanent Supportive Housing vouchers (city of Boulder). By September 30, 2018, eight clients had moved into housing and one was looking for an apartment
- 7** additional U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development—Veterans Affairs Supportive housing vouchers (Boulder County Housing Authority) – PSH to veterans experiencing chronic homelessness in Boulder County

NEW UNITS

- 70** units of proposed PSH production over the next three years (City of Boulder working with developers of new housing)
- 6** existing Boulder Housing Partners' units with a set aside for chronically homeless individuals receiving services through Boulder Shelter for the Homeless and BHP
- 6** affordable rental housing units with the creation of a master lease program between Bridge House and Congregation Har-Hashem to those earning 30% of the area median income and are graduates of their Ready to Work program

NEW SUPPORT SERVICES DOLLARS

\$2.4 MILLION Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHSA) grant received to provide needed supportive services to individuals exiting to housing

CHALLENGES AND THE COSTS OF INACTION

LARGER SCALE PROGRESS WILL BENEFIT THE COMMUNITY BUT WILL REQUIRE UPFRONT INVESTMENT

This initial progress is promising for the Boulder County community, and these new investments have provided many community members with the invaluable comfort and opportunity of a stable place to call home. They will be able to use that stability as a platform for their wellbeing in other areas of their life, such as finding a job, engaging

with behavioral health services, treating a chronic health condition, or reconnecting with family.

Despite efforts, however, many HSBC clients continue to remain in the shelter system and on the streets. This, is costly for both the individuals experiencing homelessness and the larger community.

For example, the nine clients housed to date using City of Boulder PSH vouchers had stayed 4,100 nights at the Boulder Shelter for the Homeless, had a total of 1,250 jail bed nights, and averaged 20 ambulance trips to the emergency room every year. Cumulatively, they had lived on the streets for 100 years.



Case managers and staff provide personal support for Navigation clients in Boulder and Longmont.

Case managers and staff are an important aspect of Navigation Services, including at Bridge House Path to Home in Boulder.

CHALLENGES AND THE COSTS OF INACTION

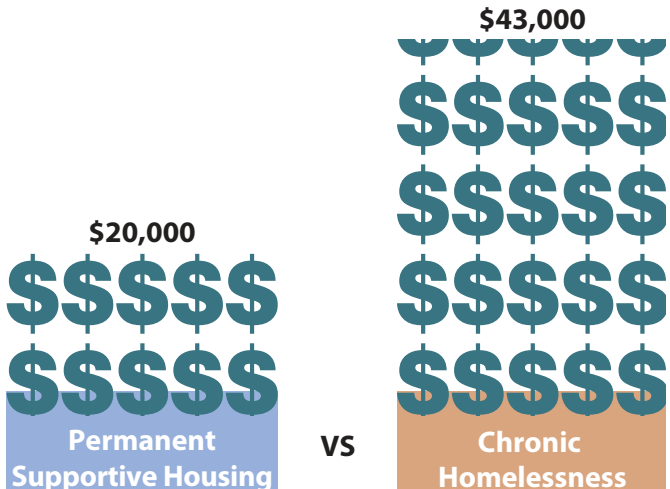
LARGER SCALE PROGRESS WILL BENEFIT THE COMMUNITY BUT WILL REQUIRE UPFRONT INVESTMENT

The good news is that by housing community members experiencing homelessness, costs are greatly reduced for both individuals and the impacted systems. Research has shown that investment in Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) is cost effective due to cost offsets in other systems. In the Denver area, someone experiencing homelessness costs the community about twice as much as PSH.

Thus, investments in housing can pay for themselves over time. To get these benefits, the community needs to make an upfront investment in housing opportunities. To this end, HSBC has developed a strategic plan that seeks to expand housing opportunities. The plan was informed by data collected through Coordinated Entry screenings, and in consultation with service providers, public housing authorities, and other stakeholders.

In Denver a person living on the streets costs \$43,000 per year for detox services, incarceration, emergency room visits, outpatient and inpatient care, and shelter. PSH only costs about \$20,000 annually.

Source: Denver Housing First Collaborative Cost Benefit Analysis and Program Outcomes Report



WHERE ARE WE GOING AND WHAT CAN THE COMMUNITY DO TO HELP?

Reducing homelessness means getting people into stable housing with supportive services. To this end, the HSBC Executive Board has adopted an aggressive plan of action that includes:

- *Creation of 200 new supportive housing opportunities for long-term Boulder County community members experiencing chronic homelessness;*
- *Investments in staffing to provide supportive housing services;*
- *Increased responsiveness to landlords to ensure greater access to units for HSBC clients;*
- *Development of procedures to streamline access to housing opportunities for HSBC clients; and*
- *Exploration of opportunities to help supported individuals transition to greater independence to free-up existing supportive housing opportunities for others.*

While HSBC aims to provide rent assistance and support services to help its clients maintain stable housing, success also requires the creation of new and preservation of existing affordable housing opportunities. The Boulder County Regional Housing Partnership (RHP) is working to ensure that by 2035, 12% of all homes in Boulder County are permanently affordable (visit www.HousingOurCommunity.org). This means tripling the current number of affordable homes within the next 15 years. HSBC is coordinating efforts with the RHP to aid these efforts.

It is also critical that investments result in a robust continuum of services. While shelter is a critical component of this continuum, it is not a permanent solution. Focusing more resources on housing opportunities allows more individuals experiencing homelessness to exit the shelter system more quickly. Additionally, housing more people lessens the need for ongoing investments in shelter services over time.

Finally, resources available to address homelessness are limited, as is the case with funding for all critical social issues. It is therefore vital that there be ongoing focus on system and service refinements, and review of those served by the HSBC system. To this latter point, efforts will continue to prioritize individuals who have strong ties to Boulder County. This means making difficult choices regarding access to more comprehensive system services to ensure that Boulder County community members become housed.

WHAT CAN THE COMMUNITY DO TO HELP?

Homelessness is a solvable issue. We know what works, and efforts of the HSBC Executive and Management Boards and project staff, and county and municipal partners have resulted in significant progress for HSBC participants. However, the broader community and citizens can also play an important role in helping to make HSBC efforts successful.

This includes:

- *Educating community members on the need for affordable housing in Boulder County, and the Regional Housing Partnership's strategies and efforts to meet that need.*
- *Championing the development of new affordable housing that is accessible to low- and moderate-income families and individuals by publicly communicating your support to policy and decision-makers, and to the broader community.*
- *Supporting regulatory changes and innovations that help produce additional affordable housing across the community.*
- *Helping identify opportunities for land donations and funding to support the creation and preservation of additional affordable housing, and supportive services for homeless individuals and the organizations that provide those services.*

