



DATA COLLECTION AND MANAGEMENT

Community Examples

1.

DALLAS CITY AND COUNTY, IRVING CoC: A DATA-DRIVEN APPROACH TO DEVELOPING COORDINATED STREET OUTREACH

In 2021, nearly 1,500 people in the Dallas City & County, Irving Continuum of Care (CoC) experienced unsheltered homelessness on the night of the Point in Time Count. The CoC set a goal to reduce unsheltered homelessness in half by 2026. This plan centers on a coordinated **“street to home”** approach to connect unsheltered people directly to housing.

The CoC sought qualitative and quantitative data to figure out the financial and human resources they would need to adequately scale up their street outreach. First, the CoC met regularly with street outreach staff to define different types of outreach (for example: general, health and safety, encampment-focused) and create a standardized program model for each. They also began discussions with system leaders to examine the existing landscape of street outreach programs, and where capacity could shift to align with the different types of outreach they had defined. These conversations included considerations around existing funding sources and what would be required to adequately pay staff.

Next, the CoC analyzed their HMIS data. To get a fuller picture of current unsheltered homelessness, they combined and de-duplicated enrollments in street outreach with enrollments in coordinated entry of people identified as unsheltered. From there, they determined how many staff would be needed to work with everyone identified. They conducted a detailed analysis, specifying staffing needs for outreach, Coordinated Entry access, and housing pre-navigation.

Then, the Dallas CoC calculated the funding required to staff up according to this plan. They took these figures to potential public and private funders to make the case and ultimately secured the funding they needed. So far in implementation, the CoC has reduced unsheltered homelessness by 24% and is on track to meet their goal of 50% by 2026.

2.

CHARLESTON/LOW COUNTRY CoC: REGULARLY USING DATA IN DAY-TO-DAY STREET OUTREACH ACTIVITIES AND LONG-TERM PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT & SYSTEM PLANNING

New funding in 2023 enabled the Charleston/Low Country Continuum of Care (CoC) to establish robust street outreach — referred to as “**street-based case management**” — across its seven-county geography. The Outreach Program Director works to create a culture of data for the team. Clear expectations are outlined: street outreach staff must record contacts, a date of engagement, service transactions, and case notes and plans in HMIS. Staff enter data within 24 to 48 hours of collection. Policies are in place to help street outreach projects maintain clean data in HMIS, for example, by exiting people who have not been contacted within the last 90 days. Training is provided for staff to support their familiarity and confidence in these practices. Data topics are covered in daily briefings about their work.

Focusing on data helps the Charleston CoC’s outreach in several ways. First, it influences how the street outreach teams prioritize their time in terms of who to follow up with. Case conferencing and

housing referrals, known as the “**Housing Solutions Meeting**,” pull directly from HMIS. So, street outreach workers know that data entry is a key step to accessing resources. Second, the data also helps the street outreach team identify which locations to visit next. They’ve recently started using Microsoft Teams to pin locations, which has been especially helpful in their work in more rural areas.

The Charleston CoC also uses street outreach data to better understand who is experiencing unsheltered homelessness across the geography. This information helps them better tailor their approaches. For example, they’ve recently noticed more women experiencing unsheltered homelessness and more people residing in vehicles. The CoC also intends to set performance measures for street outreach focused on positive exits to permanent housing. After they establish baseline numbers, they’ll set targets for future years to continually improve their work.

3.

HOUSTON, PASADENA, CONROE/HARRIS, FORT BEND, MONTGOMERY COUNTIES CoC: FINDING NEW OPPORTUNITIES TO COLLECT AND USE DATA TO INFORM THE COC’S WORK

The Houston Continuum of Care (CoC) operates comprehensive and standardized street outreach and encampment response efforts. The CoC uses a variety of platforms to track different data. For example, the CoC collects geographic data to better understand trends in unsheltered homelessness throughout their region. Additionally, every resident housed through an encampment decommissioning effort is tagged with an encampment-specific service in HMIS. That way, the CoC can monitor their housing journey and track outcomes, including housing retention.

The CoC regularly uses data to improve their work. One recent example was an effort to reduce the length of time between housing match and lease up. Data revealed that approximately one-third of housing referrals were lost because they weren’t able to find the people who had been referred to housing. In response, the CoC enhanced housing pre-navigation efforts. Within six months, they saw

the rate of “unable to find” decrease to close to 10%. Because they saw success, they will continue with the added housing pre-navigation.

In strategic planning efforts, the CoC realized there were some questions they couldn’t answer with existing data, such as: What makes some shelters more inviting than others? If they added resources outside of Houston city limits, would people go? To answer these questions and more, the CoC conducted a “Mini Point in Time Count.” As part of this effort, surveyors went out at different times of day to ask a series of questions about people’s perceptions of certain areas and the resources available there. The CoC continues to innovate on this approach, doing a Youth Point in Time count and conducted it in additional neighborhoods. This rich qualitative information helps the CoC’s future planning efforts and communication with the public and elected officials.