



TURNING STREET OUTREACH DATA INTO

Better Housing Outcomes

Street outreach programs play a vital role in their communities. They build relationships with people experiencing unsheltered homelessness and connect people to housing. Importantly, they also generate data. Street outreach staff know who is outside, where they are, and what they need, better than anyone else.

Leaders can use this data to reduce unsheltered homelessness by:

- Revealing local dynamics of unsheltered homelessness, including demographic and geographic trends,
- Ensuring homeless assistance programs are accessible to unsheltered people and are serving people fairly,
- Facilitating collaboration across outreach programs and other local services,
- Identifying resource gaps,
- Supporting advocacy for policy change and targeted investments to help more unsheltered people move into stable housing, and
- Evaluating the success of these strategies and continually improving.

Here are 5 steps street outreach staff, program directors, and system leaders can take to make better use of local outreach data:

- 1. Establish strong street outreach data standards.** First, communities need to have confidence in their data. Data quality requires clearly defined expectations for staff and sufficient support to operationalize them. At a minimum, guidance should cover how data is collected, stored, shared, and reviewed. Policies should be created in partnership with people with lived experience and direct service staff. To the extent possible, standards should be aligned across all providers operating in a community.
- 2. Analyze current street outreach performance.** To understand strengths and growth opportunities, pull together existing outreach data from System Performance Measures, Annual Performance Reports, and other sources. Examine individual-, program-, and system-level data to answer:
 - Are all people (regardless of race and ethnicity, prior living situation, and other household characteristics) able to access services and housing?
 - How well are different outreach programs contributing to housing goals? (see *Housing-Focused Performance Indicators*)
 - How much street outreach and housing capacity exists relative to the need in the community?
- 3. Engage the community through qualitative data collection.** It's important to understand the 'why' behind the numbers. Talk to people who are currently or were formerly unsheltered to hear about the barriers they faced to permanent housing, support, and services. Learn about ways to improve programs from the direct service staff doing this work every day. Use these insights to better understand trends in the numbers and identify growth opportunities.
- 4. Set improvement goals.** Based on the information gathered, prioritize 1-3 focus areas where staff time and attention will make the most impact to improve housing outcomes for people who are unsheltered in the community.
- 5. Regularly assess progress and make adjustments as needed.** Policy and resources should not be static. [Data and Impact Analysis to Inform Decision-Making](#) is an essential component of [Housing Focused Street Outreach](#). These steps help ensure that systems can plan strategically and deploy resources intentionally, rather than reactively.

Housing-Focused Performance Indicators

Successful outreach helps people access stable housing and provides important resources and services along the way. Here are some key performance indicators to assess:

Housing outcomes: Number and percentage of people who exit street outreach programs to permanent housing.

Engagement rates: Number and percentage of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness who are actively engaged with a street outreach project.

Interim services provided: Number and percentage of people who are connected to benefits and referred to services like healthcare. This can also be analyzed by exit destination to see if receiving certain services leads to a higher likelihood of successful exit.

Housing access: Percentage of system-wide housing move-ins with a prior living situation of unsheltered homelessness.

Length of time to housing: From first experience of unsheltered homelessness to permanent housing placement (and each step with street outreach in between).

Housing retention: Number and percent of people who exited to permanent housing from street outreach who retain housing and did not return to homelessness within 6-, 12-, and 24-months.

Learn more about the [HFSO Framework](#)

Learn more about [Data Collection and Management for Street Outreach Providers](#)